

# MICHIGAN COMMUNITY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

## Alumni Newsletter



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# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTORS

MCSP fills a unique space in higher education, especially in these times of societal polarization combined with the increasingly stressful academic pressures of a UM education. We work overtime to create a welcoming community in MCSP to support each student's well-being so as to encourage them to flourish and thrive personally and academically. The special dialogic and diverse academic community we build in MCSP seems more important and urgent than ever for our students and our nation.

We need your support more than ever – your support is essential for sustaining and strengthening our diversity, service, and community building initiatives!

We are proud of our national recognition as a uniquely engaged, diverse and dialogic learning community. MCSP “interrupts the experience of segregated residential communities from which the students typically come. (It) serves as an excellent model that could be expanded at Michigan and certainly replicated on other campuses. (Beverly Daniel Tatum. 2017. *Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria: and Other Conversation About Race*. P. 353-357)

Among our highlights this year is the MCSP collaboration with the UM Wallenberg Award, honoring representatives from Parkland, Florida and B.R.A.V.E in Chicago. MCSP students hosted 100 students from over 20 high schools for a Youth Empowerment Workshop. As part of the workshop, MCSP Alum Samantha Edwards moderated a panel with the 4 Wallenberg Medalists.

Our MCSP Regional Alumni Groups continue to take shape – we are so pleased that our Detroit club, with the leadership of Takisha Lashore and Shubhum Siddhar, held its first event and is planning more for the coming year. David visited the DC club twice last year, and Chicago MCSP alumni have been helpful to recent graduates searching for jobs. Please let us know if you'd like to take a leadership role in Ann Arbor, Atlanta, Boston, New York, or California.

We've had so many welcome visits this year from alumni this year, including Luke Higgins, Allison Kimmel, Danny Lambouths III, Dan Morse, Kelly Pearson, Shreya Wadhvani, GS Suri, Devon Degraffenreed, Dan Green; David even got to present at a conference at UMD/College Park with Deborah Slosberg who works there. And MCSP is super proud that 3/5 of the Five Under Ten Awards from the UM Black Alumni Association went to MCSPers - Laura Kupe, Philip Gray, and Briana Stuart. Congratulations!!!

Please think MCSP when making your charitable donations – including Giving Blue Day.  
<https://lsa.umich.edu/mcsp/parents-alumni-friends/donate-to-mcsp.html>

We'd love to hear from you! We know you'll love the inspiring alumni spotlights and current student updates in our newsletter. It's important to keep ties to MCSPers who hold a hopeful, equitable and peaceful vision of life together across our different backgrounds.

David Schoem  
 Director

Wendy Woods  
 Associate Director



## MCSP Hosts Youth Empowerment Workshop with Local High School Students



On November 14, MCSP students hosted the UM Wallenberg Medalists along with over 60 students from several different high schools for a Youth Empowerment and Activism Workshop. MCSP students met weekly at 8am to plan out the details of the gathering, including a panel with the medalists on their activism, a workshop just with MCSP students and high school students exploring their top social issues and plans to achieve their goals (with a concurrent session involving the MCSP staff and high school teachers), and structured networking across schools. This year's Wallenberg Medalists include Alex Wind and Sofie Whitney from March For Our Lives, Parkland, Florida, and Rie'Onna Holman and Ke'Shon Newman from B.R.A.V.E Youth Leaders, Chicago, Ill.

## MCSP Students Get Out the Vote

MCSP hosted Dr. Nancy Thomas, Director of the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education for a September visit. Dr. Thomas met with all 1st year MCSPers and MCSP student leaders, as well as deans and program directors across campus, to discuss her nation-wide research on voting rates of college students. In the 2014 midterm elections, UM student voting rates were a mere 14%. Our students brainstormed with Dr. Thomas various strategies to get out the vote, by increasing overall civic and political learning and engagement as part of k-16 curricula, and very specific ideas such as having a plan for getting to the polls and voting on election day. MCSP participated in U of Michigan's 90% challenge and the Big Ten Voting Challenge.



# INTERGROUP RELATIONS COUNCIL (IRC)

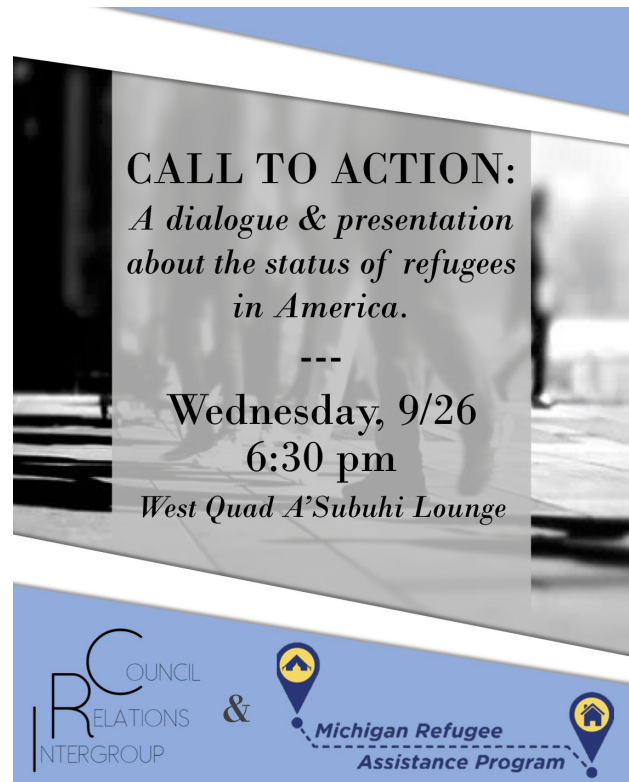
This year's Intergroup Relations Council (IRC) is off to a great start! These six sophomores, all studying different programs, have successfully planned and facilitated 5 dialogues. They've brought MCSPers together to discuss and learn about important, and often ignored topics such as gender in the classroom, the world refugee crisis, sexual assault, mass incarceration, and Native American life at U-M and beyond. The IRC team also chose to include representatives from student organizations and student life programs like the Michigan Refugee Assistance Program and the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC) within their dialogues to discuss campus resources and ways to get involved.

## MC SPOTLIGHT



INTERGROUP RELATIONS COUNCIL

2018-19 MCSP



In addition to dialogues, IRC has also led various lounge chats within both the Alan and Chicago Lounges about adjusting to college, cultural appropriation, and getting involved in dialogue and social justice programs on campus. IRC collaborated with the Programming Board to put on MCSPooky, a Halloween themed event where students discussed inclusive halloween costumes while enjoying arts n' crafts and candy. We're excited for our upcoming dialogue on mental health, Detroit Day in December, and our new Freshman IRC council. There is a lot more to come from this proactive and creative group of students!

Coordinator of Diversity Initiative - Gabe Colman



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (PACS)



## MCSP Connects With Kids

We continue to develop this year our partnership with Scarlett Middle School in Ann Arbor. We go every week to mentor and tutor sixth-graders learning from each other and growing in community. WolveReaders has begun a new partnership with Ypsilanti International Elementary School, an IB public school in Ypsilanti. The program will maintain its pen-pal relationship with young people but we will now be working with a fifth grade classroom that also emphasizes social justice, community, and dialogue.

## MCSP Explores The Meaning Of Sustainability

Through our community engagement, we have begun to understand how sustainability encompasses not only environmental justice but also has social, ethical, and interpersonal dimensions. We have worked with Growing Hope on their urban farm in Ypsilanti witnessing how sustainable food production strengthens communities and engenders hope. Our work in Detroit with Keep Growing Detroit and Earthworks Urban Farm has shown us how gardening and community has the power to revitalize neighborhoods. The Farm at St. Joe's, a working organic farm on the grounds of St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor, has helped us experience the connection between good food and wellness. We have worked on the Campus Farm, partnered with the Sustainable Learning Experience, and participated in Sustainability Roundtables building sustainable relationships with campus partners and allies.



Coordinator of Community Engagement - William Alt



# Programming & Community Building (PB&U)



## HEART + SOUL + FUN = PB&U

MCSP wouldn't be home if it wasn't for the time we spend together building a community. This fall, PB&U has held several MCSPfamily Nights, travelled to Dexter Cider Mill, collaborated with IRC to host lounge chats and overall provided welcoming spaces and yummy treats for all MCSPers. PB&U is comprised of an amazingly driven and dedicated group of young women who want nothing more, than for their fellow MCSPers to feel right at home in West Quad! <3



### What drives us?

In a place like MCSP, all you need is an encouraging word from David, a warm hug from Wendy, and a reassuring nod of support from Shane, to know you can accomplish anything! PB&U loves serving the 1st year community of MCSPers and their fellow student leaders in the facilitation of FUN. Beyond that each PB&U member has diverse interests, like IM sports, Health & Mental Wellness initiatives, and leadership opportunities; but most importantly being a part of PB&U and the MCSPfamily! On long days, when midterms are looming and the weather is wet, PB&U bands together to make sure there are places and spaces for MCSPers to gather. We are so excited for winter term and believe there is so MUCH MORE fun to be had!



**Coordinator of Community Building, Programming, & Social Justice - Laura Lee Smith**





# Samantha Edwards

2010-2012 (participant, Peer Mentor), 2013-2014 (RA)

## What have you been up to since graduation?

Following graduation, I knew I wanted to gain hands-on experience working with youth and communities, so I moved to Chicago to serve as a City Year corps member at a high school on Chicago's South Side. In that role, I supported a 9th grade Algebra classroom by providing individual and group academic instruction, behavior interventions and supporting students to increase their daily attendance. During that year, the meaningful relationships I built with students and newfound love for Chicago prompted me to remain in the city for graduate school. I went on to the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration where I earned a Master's in Social Work in June 2017. During my time at the University of Chicago, I worked with high school youth as a personal counselor intern in a high school and in the community as a co-facilitator of a violence prevention youth council. Since then I have continued to work to elevate the voices of young people and empower them and their communities to reach their fullest potential.



## What are you currently doing now?

I currently serve as the Violence Prevention Coordinator for the Illinois Collaboration on Youth (ICOY), a membership organization that supports children and youth service providers across the state of Illinois through legislative advocacy, technical assistance, and training. In this role, I support the capacity building of violence prevention organizations by strengthening internal evaluation, assisting with evidence-based program selection, and facilitating collaborative learning.

## How do you integrate social justice into your life post college?

Social justice is embedded in my work and daily life. As an agency that serves as the largest collective voice for children and youth service providers in Illinois, it is our duty to stand up against social injustices that impact Illinois' children, youth, and families. Specifically, in my role I work alongside community-based organizations who are not only doing violence prevention and juvenile justice work, but also work to address the systemic injustices that have caused violence, segregation, and disproportionate incarceration in their communities. Outside of work, I remain involved with local violence prevention efforts.



## What is your favorite memory about MCSP?

I can't point to a single memory because there are too many to count. The best part of MCSP was meeting amazing people who remain my friends today.



# Amanda Hooper

Student 2003-2004; Peer Mentor 2004-2005; Alumni Advisory Board 2005-2007; Administrative Assistant 2007-2008

## What have you been up to since graduation?

I graduated from Michigan hungry to get to work in applying the principles I learned in MCSP and in my Women's Studies concentration in the "real world". I took a job as a community organizer and ever since I have been working in politics, higher education, Congress, and in nonprofit organizations to effect policy change. I've been in Washington, D.C. for the past seven years with my husband, who I met in MCSP, and our community of friends, many of whom are MCSP alumni.



## How do you integrate social justice into your life post college?

Social justice is a pervasive theme in both my personal and professional life. My career is dedicated to making grassroots-informed policy change, particularly in gender, racial, and economic justice. In my personal life, activism, dialogue, and civic engagement is a priority for me, my husband and my friends: sometimes that looks like going to protests, other times it's meeting up with MCSP alumni in the DC area, or engaging friends, family, and colleagues in dialogue about hard topics, donating to causes I believe in, and finding ways--both little and big--to dismantle systems of oppression and work for our collective liberation.

## What are you currently doing now?

I am Senior Director of Advocacy and Outreach at City Year, which is an organization that connects young adults who want to serve their communities to high-need schools where they provide additional support for students to succeed. I work with a broad coalition of organizations that work with AmeriCorps members (for example, Teach for America, Habitat for Humanity, as well as many local programs) to ensure that elected officials in Washington understand the importance of service programs in their communities. It feels very connected to MCSP because it's driven by principles of community, service, and social change--plus I served two AmeriCorps summer terms through the Ginsberg Center!



## What is your favorite memory about MCSP?

It's so hard to pick a favorite because MCSP was my home at Michigan and there are so many great memories--but lately I have been thinking about the many Fridays I spent with the SHOCK troupe. We had the best time writing and rehearsing skits (like Woo Woo--a classic!) and performing our show at elementary schools in Ann Arbor.

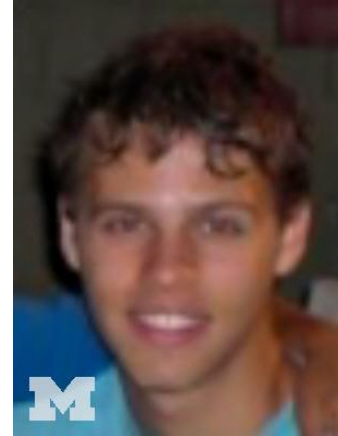


# Dan Morse

2009 member, 2010 PACs, & 2011 Peer Mentor

## What have you been up to since graduation?

Since graduating I moved to Washington DC to work for LearnZillion, a K-12 teacher professional development company. Now I'm living in the Bay area with my free roaming bunny Emma.



## What are you currently doing now?

Now, I teach at Make School - a 2 year bachelors of computer science college. We have an income share agreement model where students do not pay tuition upfront and instead pay a portion of their salary upon graduating. This structure aligns incentives between the students and college, and ensure that we tailor the curriculum to what the market needs. Make School's student population is diverse, represented by >40% underrepresented minorities and a third non-male, which is low but above the industry average. We are working to bring diversity to the tech industry!



## How do you integrate social justice into your life post-college?

We've built the curriculum at make school to be responsive to different identities. Students come from many regions of the country and different cultural traditions. We work to ensure that everybody has a voice feels respected and recognized for who they are. We also have daily morning meetings with prompts related to social justice as "which part of your identity influences your decisions the most?" and "What's a perspective you don't understand well? Take ten minutes to research that perspective and then share your findings with your peers." I am also hoping to bring an IGR style class to the program too.

## What is your favorite memory about MCSP?

I loved taking a trip to Detroit to volunteer in the Brightmoor community. It was inspiring to see their urban agriculture work and we formed such strong bonds with community members. We took buses of students to clean up yards, paint houses, and plant garden beds. We all shared laughs while playing music, taking part in community events and celebrations, and learning the tactics of effective community organizing. We even made a video together: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OA32-baHmq4&list=PLunSwp4k3Cndbpsiz4ie\\_WbWtWR5SscFB](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OA32-baHmq4&list=PLunSwp4k3Cndbpsiz4ie_WbWtWR5SscFB). Riet, the Detroit non-profit's leader, exposed me to the book Community by Peter Block which totally opened my mind to effective ways to convene people so they feel a sense of identity and ownership over the group. I really appreciated all the support MCSP provided in connecting us with this initial partner, and providing resources along the way to develop the partnership.



## Shubhum Sidhar

2012, 2013 as PACS, 2014-16 as Alumni Council

### **What have you been up to since graduation?**

I went directly to a Masters program at Michigan and now I have begun my career! Lot's of fun staying at Michigan and being able to walk into Wendy & David's office throughout that time :).

### **What are you currently doing now?**

I am currently working as an Administrative Fellow for Trinity Health - a one year Fellowship where I am exposed to senior leadership & their decision making process, get to work in various departments and locations of the Healthcare System, and refine my skills while working to find an area of focus for my career.

### **How do you integrate social justice into your life post college?**

This can be answered in two ways. The first is in my personal life. I continue to try to make small behavior changes. Additionally, I am a firm believer that using my rights as a Citizen and Consumer can affect big changes. That is, I always vote and I am unafraid to change my spending patterns based on whether or not the money is going to a company that has people trying to further or hinder the cause of a more just society.

Professionally, it is now clear that many social justice issues ARE social determinants of health. Healthcare Systems are attempting to address this and it is an honor to be a part of the work to help create solutions.

### **What is your favorite memory about MCSP?**

Along with meeting my best friends and all of the memories we had, I will always be grateful for David & Wendy's presence and guidance. I remember feeling lost and unsure about what I wanted to do after Graduation, among other things, and walking into David & Wendy's Office. They would provide amazing direction for me as well as a firm show of support and comfort. I do not know if I would be here professionally if it wasn't for their support!





# Heather Camhi

2006-2010

## What have you been up to since graduation?

After graduation, I attended the School of Public Health at the University of Michigan where I focused on dental public health issues such as the role of a mid-level provider in dentistry, the prevalence of HPV-associated cancers in the United States, and the tools we can develop for patients to monitor their own health behaviors. My passion for public health led me to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention where I worked to improve oral health outcomes through a tobacco cessation campaign. My interest in oral health disparities and serving underrepresented communities motivated me to attend New York University for dental school. While at New York University, I had the opportunity to participate in local and global outreach programs where our team provided dental treatment to children and adults at no cost.

October 2018- Pediatric Dental  
Residency U of M

## What are you currently doing now?

After graduating from dental school in 2017, I returned to Michigan for my residency in pediatric dentistry. I am currently in my second-year of residency and work at Mott Children's Health Center in Flint, Michigan. I love providing dental services to children. I will be returning to Ann Arbor in June 2019 for the last 6 months of my program and plan to return to my home state of New York to begin my career in pediatric dentistry.



December 2009- Michael's  
graduation party

## How do you integrate social justice into your life post college?

I am passionate about working with underserved and vulnerable communities to improve health outcomes.

The Flint Water Crisis has made the children in our clinic sick. Studies have shown that there is a link between increased lead intake and increased incidence of dental caries or neurotoxic effects. Using education as a means of prevention is essential in this population. It is especially important to target prevention efforts through oral hygiene instructions, sealants, fluoride, and behavior modification. Having the opportunity to serve the beautiful and resilient Flint community is incredibly rewarding and I hope to help reduce the health disparities that these children continue to face.



December 2014- Fellow MCSPer Jessica Feldman  
and I in South Carolina

## What is your favorite memory about MCSP?

MCSP was my home away from home. I loved living in Couzen's Hall with my fellow MCSP friends. During my sophomore year, we lived in a hall we dubbed "Hollywood Boulevard." We would stay up late studying for our exams, working out at the CCRB, and ordering cheesy bread from Pizza House. One of my favorite memories was throwing our friend Michael a surprise graduation party before he returned to South Korea. We truly were a family and cheered each other on through the good and bad times. My MCSP friends continue to be my closest friends.

# Cullen O'Keefe

2012–13: Participant, 2013–14: Peer Advisor for Community Service,  
2014–16: Resident Assistant

## What have you been up to since graduation?

I have been attending Harvard Law School, and will graduate in May. At Harvard, I am heavily involved in the Effective Altruism community.

## What are you currently doing now?

In addition to my studies, I work as a Research Affiliate with the Governance of Artificial Intelligence Program at the Future of Humanity Institute. We work to ensure that advanced AI is developed safely and brings about a just, flourishing future for all earthly life.



## What is your favorite memory about MCSP?

Late-night discussions in West Quad and East Quad lounges, and bonding with the MCSP RA teams!



## How do you integrate social justice into your life post college?

In many ways! My decision to get involved in Effective Altruism (“EA”) was motivated by social justice concerns. EA works a lot in global poverty, but takes seriously the challenges that come with that. We focus on evidence-based interventions that we can be sure are improving the lives of others, while maintaining a self-critical mindset and awareness of potential risks. More generally, EA works to do justice for the groups least well-represented in American social and political discourse: the global poor, farmed animals, and future generations. This focus on the most marginalized aligns well with social justice values.







MCSP will participate in the **University of Michigan's Giving Blueday!** We are very excited about this opportunity to give back to our students and community. On **November 27**, there will be a number of matching opportunities and various fundraising challenges for all to participate in. We are hoping you will consider donating to MCSP on Giving Blueday to support our mission in creating a community in which our students learn to dialogue with one another and explore social justice and community engagement.



For more information, please visit <https://givingblueday.org/> for more information about the specific fundraising challenges and opportunities. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Laura Lee Smith at [llsm@umich.edu](mailto:llsm@umich.edu).

Thank you so much for your continued support! For the MCSP link to donate, click on <https://www.givingblueday.org/campaigns/michigan-community-scholars-program-mcsp-strategic-fund-308782>