

MCSP Alumni Newsletter

Fall 2022



Director's Note

Dear friends and alumnx of MCSP,

One of the delights of being a relative newcomer to a vibrant community like MCSP is getting to meet alumnx whom I've never had the pleasure to know as students. MCSP alumnx are carrying forward the MCSPIrit wherever they are, and I've been fortunate enough to meet MCSP alumnx who happen to live in my neighborhood and who live in many cities across the United States. All of them testify to the impact MCSP has had on their lives through Wendy and David, through the faculty, and through their fellow MCSPIers, like you.

As you'll see from this newsletter, MCSP students and student leaders continue to be as creative and dedicated as ever in this changing world. Despite the challenges of the past year, our students have found new ways to engage in dialogue with each other, have focused on wellness as an important part of community building, and have contributed about 825 hours of community service. Our student leaders and our RAs provide social support, connection to campus resources, and outstanding programming. Our professional staff provide structure, coaching, and a vision for the program. Together, these leaders sustain the mission of MCSP, and you can read more about all their good work in this newsletter.

This edition of the MCSP alumnx newsletter features the stories of several of our on-campus alumnx. In the spring 2023 edition of the newsletter, we'd like to include updates from our alumnx who have graduated from the University of Michigan and are carrying the MCSPIrit into their post-graduation lives. If you'd like to share your story with other MCSP alumnx, please fill out this form.

[Submit Your Alumni Update](#)



Associate Director's Note

Dear MCSP Alums,

It has been an honor and privilege to serve our Michigan Community Scholars Program for almost a year. When joining the community in the midst of the pandemic, there was still much uncertainty about what community-building and intentional in-person engagement would look like. However, one thing that I quickly learned (besides our love for MCS Puns!) is that we are a community committed to positive change no matter what. Whether remote or in-person, we have continued to cultivate spaces of care, critical reflection, dialogue, and meaningful civic engagement. I am constantly inspired by our MCSPhamily.

As I look forward to future semesters, I am excited to deepen relationships within our community. I've had the opportunity to learn about some of the amazing work that you all are doing. The breadth and depth of our collective experiences are a gift that connects us to advance our shared commitment to positively impacting those around us. So as you read about the work that has been happening in MCSP this semester, I invite you to reach back and be in community with us whether virtually or in person.

- Joshua Thurman

MCSP Program Updates



The PACS Team Highlights

As we continue to navigate community engagement in the midst of COVID, PACS has focused this fall semester on re-engaging with community partners while developing deeper and more sustainable relationships.

We reimaged with [Community Action Network](#), helping with their food assistance program and cleaning and preparing the Bryant Community Center

in preparation for the neighborhood's end of summer celebration. We did home repairs in Ypsilanti and assisted in the ReStore with [Habitat for Humanity](#). We visited [Gleaner's Food Bank's Mercado Food Hub](#) in southwest Detroit and distributed food to over 100+ families and individuals. We did farm chores with the [Farm at Trinity Health](#) and [Earthworks Urban Farm](#), learning about how these unique programs are addressing the social determinants of health and food justice. We built relationships at the [St. Louis Center](#) with community members who have intellectual disabilities through doing crafts and playing games. Finally, we continued our long-standing commitment to environmental stewardship by serving with [Natural Area Preservation](#).

At every site, MCSP began to learn about this place, this community we call home.

Throughout the fall semester, PACS led over 22 community engagement opportunities with partners throughout southeast Michigan. Beyond this direct service, PACS envisioned ways to develop deep and sustainable relationships with primary community partners. We have identified [Ann Arbor Public Schools](#), Community Action Network, Gleaner's Food Bank, the Farm at Trinity Health, and [Jewish Family Services](#) as our primary partners and we look forward to developing our relationships with these communities.

--Bill Alt, Program Coordinator for Community Engagement



The PBnU Team Highlights

MCSP's Programming Board, also known as PBnU, has offered a variety of activities to foster community-building and well-being so far this semester. Under the supervision of former MCSPer and current MSW student, Lydia Goff, PBnU is made up of a vibrant team of student leaders: Zainab Ahmad, Hannah Gorman, Megan Huber, and Sana Simkani.

Each month, PBnU offers 3-4 events that provide informal opportunities for students to get to know one another and learn skills to promote their individual well-being, following a biweekly structure of "MCSPfamily Nights" and "Wellness Wednesdays." PBnU student leaders have the opportunity to plan and execute events regularly and have come up with creative, engaging activities for our community.

Phamily Nights for the Fall 2022 semester have included tie-dyeing game day gear, a painting party, a Halloween party, and the MCSPheast (in collaboration with the IRC). For Wellness Wednesdays, PBnU has a goal of touching on all areas of the [Wolverine Wellness Wheel](#), including physical, emotional/mental, environmental, financial/occupational, social, intellectual, and spiritual. To

achieve this goal, our wellness programming has included: "MCSPeed Dating," an Arb walk, a visit from a therapy dog, guided meditation, a resume workshop, yoga, and a study night.

PBnU aspires to make each member of our community feel a part of the MCSPhamily and help them build skills to incorporate wellness into their daily lives as college students.

–Lydia Goff, Program Coordinator for Community Building, Programming, and Social Justice



The IRC Team Highlights

Recognizing the challenges of having dialogues in an informal setting, this year's IRC team found alternative strategies to engage first-year students in thoughtful and meaningful conversations.

By utilizing already conventional means of gathering, such as watching a film, eating a meal, and attending campus events, IRC student leaders were able to help first-year students explore how their social identity and positionality interact with each other, identify what it means to be an American and the importance voting plays into it; and process the culture shock and adaptation of attending a predominantly white institution as students of color.

Building on this momentum next term, Student Leaders will host the IRC Interfaith Series, where they gather a group of students to participate in existing student-organized religious and faith celebrations. Additionally, they will continue to support the MLK Day Circle of Unity and host dialogues requested by first-year students.

–Christina Mozumdar, Program Coordinator for Diversity Initiatives

Scenes from the MCSPheast





On Campus Alumni Updates



Gretchen Ascher

Living in a dorm hallway (team Chicago house!) surrounded by 150 MCSPeers not only gave me instant friends on campus, but also connected me to a network of people determined to use their education and futures to make a difference. I was exposed to courses that solidified my interest in social impact and justice and became an IGR dialogue facilitator, which helped me become a better listener and communicator.

A mentor’s connection led me to join Net Impact, a club focused on growing leaders at the nexus of business, social impact, and sustainability. MCSP set me up for success in finding a career that I am genuinely passionate about.

I still remember walking into West Quad on my move-in day freshman year and being welcomed by MCSP student mentors with open arms. Although my freshman year got cut short by the pandemic, MCSP hugely shaped my UMich experience, and I couldn’t be prouder to be an MCSP-alum!

I spent last summer interning in community development finance in rural Maine. I was able to apply the lessons learned from my experiences in MCSP to my work creating a racial justice framework for lending and community investment. While it’s not a traditional career path for a business major, I combined my interests in business and sustainability and passion for equity and justice to discover opportunities where I could make an impact. I’m excited to graduate in the spring and continue to work in this space!

I’m beyond grateful for the experiences MCSP has provided, and of course for all of the MCSPfriends I was able to make along the way!

Camille McMurty

Greetings MCSP alumni and donors,

I am a third-year student from Detroit, Michigan, studying Community and Global Public Health with minors in Community Action and Social Change and Science, Technology, and Society. My passion for social justice and community service learning led me to apply to the Michigan Community

Scholars Program. As a second-year, I returned to MCSP as a Peer Advisor for Community Service and built relationships with the PACS team and first-year students.



In this role, I engaged the first-years in service opportunities and reflection to challenge our notion of community service, discuss the effects of one-time volunteering, and question why these gaps in our society exist.

MCSP also gave way to my involvement with other social justice spaces on campus after matriculating out of the program. After my first semester, I began facilitating social justice dialogues with CommonGround, a program through Intergroup Relations. I was simultaneously taking my Intergroup Dialogues course for MCSP and through both of these experiences, I recognized the power and necessity of dialogue in social justice spaces. MCSP brought together folks from all different majors and pathways yet bound together by an interest in social justice, which is reflective of the areas where I see former MCSPer and the change-making we are involved in on campus. We serve as advocates, activists, and co-conspirators fighting for the causes that we believe in.

One path with which I focus my energy is through food justice and food sovereignty in my work with the [UM Sustainable Food Program](#). UMSFP has allowed me to envision what a food sovereign future would look like and what small things we can co-create to move us there. Since then, I have conducted research for [Keep Growing Detroit](#), an aggregator for Detroit's urban growers, and studied food security and sustainable development in Montespertoli, Tuscany in Italy. These experiences offered new perspectives on food sustainability and food justice and ways in which I can contribute.

After graduation, I plan to continue my studies and pursue a Master of Public Health and a Master of Urban and Regional Planning. I enjoy engaging with diverse communities, and taking on new experiences, both of which I was able to do through MCSP and will continue to as I move throughout life.

Mya Richards



This past April, I got the exciting opportunity to travel to Israel with Michigan Hillel. It was an incredibly rewarding and fulfilling experience. Along the way, I got the chance to meet new people and travel to a region I had never previously traveled to. We went to several different places including Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, and Bethlehem, and got the chance to speak with several locals and visit historical sites.

This trip overall was intended to learn more about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Reading about it through news articles is one thing but going in person and observing it for yourself (especially for the first time) was an entirely new experience. Speakers came in and spoke to us students, sharing their perspective and personal stories about what they have witnessed and how they feel. Hearing their stories enhanced my understanding significantly overall. In addition to the educational aspect, we got to dive deeper into Israel's culture, seeing their various traditions and trying their many cuisines. Overall, I had a positive experience and I am so glad I got to go!

Tess Carichner

I am a disability and neurodivergence researcher and advocate. I am also an RA in Chicago House! As a nursing major, my dream is to get a PhD researching ableism in healthcare environments targeted at neurodivergent women and gender diverse people.

Some ways I stay involved in disability justice work are through:

- Disability Nursing Association
- University of Michigan Eisenberg Depression Center Student Advisory Board

- Digital Accessibility Future Lab
- Writing a Literature Review through the UROP Research Scholars Program
- As a Sweetland Center for Writing Student Advisory Board and Course Design accessibility consultant

If you are interested in learning more about disability related resources and events on campus, please join the DNA Google Classroom. You do not have to be disabled, neurodivergent, or a nursing student to join! Here is the [link](#). Additionally, if you have any interest or questions about disability studies on campus (classes, resources, events), let me know! My email is carichnt@umich.edu.



Hugo Quintana

My name is Hugo Quintana and I'm a senior studying Public Policy. I was in MCSP my freshman year (2019-2020) before becoming a dialogue facilitator for the Intergroup Relations Council during my sophomore year (2020-2021).

Currently, I'm focusing on my studies while handling different positions such as an editor for Michigan in Color, serving as the Vice-Chair for Students of Color in Public Policy, and working as a Student Admissions Ambassador for the Ford School! Following graduation, I hope to move to DC and work for the federal government in any way possible.

I will forever be grateful for MCSP and what it has provided me. Being a dialogue facilitator taught me how to not only lead difficult conversations, but most importantly how to promote special connections for communities I care about. Whenever I see a fellow MCSPer around campus, that's how I know how special this community is to many people. We all shared a special and fun bond living together and are passionate about the values of MCSP. One of my goals postgrad is to find a community, and MCSP was very important in allowing me to grow as an individual and know who to surround myself with. I hope to work in an environment that is passionate about diversity, social justice, and service. Going into the government, these values are extremely necessary and special to have, and participating in MCSP has the right community, support, and set of tools to work and learn as a community-oriented individual.

Dan Green

I currently serve as an Assistant Director in the [Office of Student Conflict Resolution](#) (OSCR). I received both my Bachelor of Arts in Organizational Studies and Master of Social Work degrees from the University of Michigan. While part of MCSP, I was a Peer Advisor for Community Service (PACS) and a Residential Advisor (RA) during undergrad and the Coordinator of Diversity Initiatives during graduate school.

I was born and raised in Detroit, where community development and service was central to my upbringing. When looking at opportunities to be part of learning communities, MCSP stood out as the perfect place to continue growing in this. In my current work at OSCR, three goals lead the work of



the office: building trust, promoting justice, and teaching peace. These goals align with MCSP's goals of deep learning, engaged community, civic engagement and promoting dialogue. Each day, I aim to lead restoratively so that students have a chance to learn and grow from their conflicts. MCSP has had a huge part in cultivating this mindset from the beginning of my college career and continues to be an inspiration for my current work.

South Africa Trip, May 2023

After a year's delay due to the worldwide COVID pandemic, the planned trip to South Africa offered by MCSP and our campus partner, the Global Scholars Program, is ON!



Inkululeko, a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization incorporated as Freedom Through Education NPC in the Republic of South Africa, is working with GSP and MCSP to plan and run a three-week-long experiential learning program for up to fifteen of our GSP and MCSP students in Makhanda, South Africa, in May 2023.

While in South Africa, students will learn how a nonprofit works through first-hand experience, participate in cross-cultural activities with Inkululeko students, learn about and support their youth entrepreneur program, have meaningful dialogues about individual and shared experiences to prompt empowerment, and learn about the lasting effects of apartheid and the local organizations working to improve the future of Makhanda and the country.

We expect this to be a transformative experience for all the students who participate, those from South Africa and those from the United States, and we hope to provide financial support to put this program within reach of anyone who wants to participate. Your contributions to the MCSP Travel Scholarship Fund will help to make that possible. Please consider a gift to the Travel Scholarship Fund today!

Connect with MCSP Students!

Would you like to meet current MCSP students? Do you have advice to share about navigating campus, your major, your school or college, summer internships, or vocational decisions?

The [LSA Opportunity Hub](#) has an easy, convenient, and secure way to connect with MCSP students, called [LSA Connect](#). To connect with other MCSPErs, select MCSP under "Learning Communities in the "Additional Information" section of your profile.

Know an incoming U-M student?



Hello MCSP Alumnx and Friends,

If you know of any incoming first-year students (siblings, relatives, friends, etc.) to the University of Michigan next Fall ('23) please feel free to fill out the form and let us know who they are. We will only contact the student one time and we will not add them to an emailing list unless they tell us otherwise.

We are always looking in expanding our MCSPhamily and one of the best ways we've done that in the past has come from word of mouth.

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