



PROGRAM IN THE  
ENVIRONMENT  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

# Crossroads

Volume 18

Summer 2018

## Student Engagement



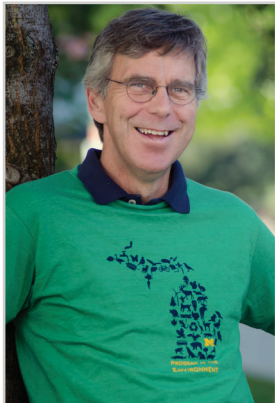
*PitE graduate Mike Rockwell  
working on conservation in  
Seattle with EarthCorps*

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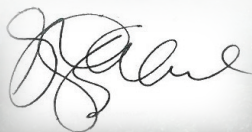
# Letter from the Director

Dear Members of the PitE Community,



This year PitE welcomed Assistant Professor Sarah Ensor who is jointly appointed with the Department of English, and Associate Professor Hernán López-Fernández who is jointly appointed with the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. In October 2017, PitE hosted Goldring Family Distinguished Visiting Speaker Professor James Salzman who spoke about conflicts over safe drinking water. Continuing the PitE tradition of hands-on engagement with energy issues, during this year's spring break, a group of PitE students working with GRID Alternatives, a non-profit organization, installed solar panels on low-income housing on the San Pasqual Indian Reservation near San Diego.

As I reflect about my time as PitE's Director, I'm struck by the continuing vitality and growth of the Program. A year ago, we had 315 majors and 231 minors. Now PitE is home to 348 majors and 271 minors. Over the past five years, PitE has added 15 faculty members. We have created three new minors (food, water, energy), changed prerequisite requirements, and worked steadily to improve student services. However, such facts only hint at the source of PitE's continuing growth and evolution. PitE's vitality derives, I think, from a passion shared by students, faculty, and staff, a passion to learn about, understand, and care for the environment that sustains life on our planet. Of course, this passion manifests itself in many different ways. It fuels creative as well as scientific interests. It animates the studies of future public health officials, policy makers, journalists, and teachers. It inspires would be wildlife biologists, entrepreneurs, organic farmers, and environmental lawyers. Just as there is no one type of PitE student, there is no one way through the Program in the Environment. Instead, PitE attracts students (and teachers) open-minded and curious enough to traverse disciplinary boundaries. Requiring PitE students to engage a variety of environmental topics and issues from the vantage points of the arts and humanities, social sciences, and the natural sciences, the Program, in my view, resembles the University of Michigan in miniature. PitE's "liberal arts" breadth together with the passion animating its students and faculty are what make the Program the success that it is. I am profoundly grateful to have been a part of it.



**Gregg Crane**

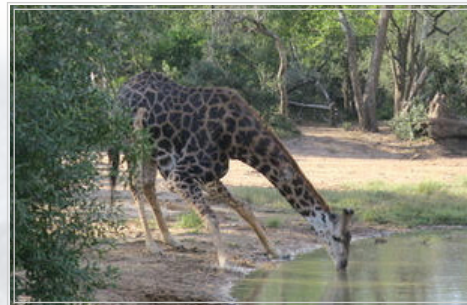
**Professor and Director,  
Program in the Environment**



# Student Feature: Practical Experience

## Sydni Joubran- PitE Major, Class of 2018

"I spent three months working in Southern Africa at the Naankuse Wildlife Sanctuary in Windhoek, Namibia and Phinda Private Game Reserve in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa. At the Naankuse Wildlife Sanctuary I got to travel to different research sites within Namibia, help with a leopard translocation, and attend meetings between the Sanctuary and a local farmer having problems with leopards preying upon his goats. At Phinda Private Game Reserve I was part of the reserve management team involved in keeping data on the movements of the Big 5 (elephant, rhinoceros, leopard, buffalo, and lion), keeping identification kits and genetics data on rhinoceros, lion and cheetah. I had a great time during my summer internships, and I learned a lot about human-wildlife conflicts and data management in regards to keeping variation within the genetic pool. In part because of my internship, I am now looking at graduate programs in wildlife biology in order to study large mammals and predators with the hope that I can work with large carnivores within the U.S. I would definitely recommend finding an internship or opportunity that puts you out of your comfort zone, and if you get to travel someplace exotic- that's a bonus!"



## Carly Rosenberg- PitE Major, Class of 2019

What started as a group assignment in her Environ 211 course turned into a project with an 'edible' outcome. This past winter semester, Carly connected with Michigan Dining to gauge actual interest for tower gardens in dining halls across campus. "I was eager to extend this project beyond my semester-long class," This past summer, Carly interned for LA Urban Farms and was tasked with tending to tower gardens in the Los Angeles area. This experience helped Carly solidify her idea for tower gardens at the University of Michigan. "I'm working with Michigan Dining to take data from the tower gardens to see if they're actually more efficient and sustainable than growing produce in the ground or in a hoop house during the winter. I'm specifically analyzing the energy consumption because of the gardens' grow lights to determine what impact that has. I'm also going to look at how much energy and water is used compared to the amount that is harvested to see if it is both productive and environmentally sound."



## Detroit Murals

Professor Joe Trumpey's Environ 464: Environmental Murals class partnered with the Great Lakes Office of the National Wildlife Federation and the Detroit Walls program to paint murals portraying environmental issues throughout the community.

The 48217 zip code in Detroit is known for being the most polluted zip code in the State of Michigan. Theresa Landrum, the Community Communications Liason for with The Original United Citizens of Southwest Detroit, took students on a 'toxic tour' around the industrial plants in this area. It has been a challenge over the years to keep the community clean due to the emissions from these industrial plants. Students were able to hear stories from local residents about the smell that lingers in the area as well as particulates that cover vehicles.

Professor Trumpey hopes these murals will inspire change and make important topics visible by not only letting people see and understand the problem, but how they can come together to help fix it.



# Sustainable Living Experience

The Sustainable Living Experience (SLE) residential theme community welcomed a cohort of approximately 25 first year students and nine returning SLE Peer Mentors. Based at Oxford Houses, this is the second year of the pilot residential theme community dedicated to providing a gateway for freshman to engage in interdisciplinary learning and leadership opportunities centered in sustainability. SLE residents enrolled in a sustainability seminar together taught by faculty Director Joe Trumpey during both fall and winter semesters. While students explored many issues and aspects of sustainability, their course culminated in community sustainability projects and presentations at the SLE Celebration & Open House in April. The presentations were themed to include food, water, energy, and “stuff.” Nine of the students in this year’s cohort will return next fall as Peer Mentors.

SLE students also had the opportunity to participate in co-curricular activities including the SLE Board, Environmental Justice dialogues and service learning trips with The Creature Conservancy and Nichols Arboretum. SLE Board pursued their interests by planning an insect-based cooking event known as “Cricknic,” installing washable towels and towel racks in each of the bathrooms, and initiating a mural project. Students were recognized at the 2018 Michigan Difference Awards with the group award for their sustainability efforts. In addition, SLE hosted regular events including monthly community dinners when residents would gather in the kitchen and prepare a locally-sourced meal onsite. This year also saw the start of a new faculty fellows program featuring recurring programming with Professor Raymond De Young in the School for Sustainability and the Environment.

Funded as a part of campus efforts to reach its 2025 Sustainability Goals, the SLE was awarded three years of funding in 2016. As SLE enters its third academic year, it will work with partners to review the University’s commitment to sustainability and the impact that the SLE has on campus culture and students. The students within the SLE community have taken on increased leadership of the program and have passed on sustainability projects and recommendations for the incoming cohort.

**To learn more about the Sustainable Living Experience, visit our website at [lsa.umich.edu/sustainable-living](http://lsa.umich.edu/sustainable-living)**



# PitE Honors



Eleven students completed and presented their honors thesis at the April 27 PitE Honors Symposium, and graduated with honors.



**Rachel Beglin**

**Thesis Topic:**

“Simulating a Dakota Access Pipeline Spill and Potential Impacts on Endangered Birds”



**Julia Berg**

**Thesis Topic:**

“Evaluating the Impact of the Los Angeles Expo Line”



**Graham BeVier**

**Thesis Topic:**

“Effects of Insularity on Morphology and Territoriality in Mediterranean Lizards”



**Sarah Dieck**

**Thesis Topic:**

“Perceptions about Hydraulic Fracturing”



**Casey Haggerty**

**Thesis Topic:**

“Earthworms Facilitate Plant Invasions”



**Sondra Halperin**

**Thesis Topic:**

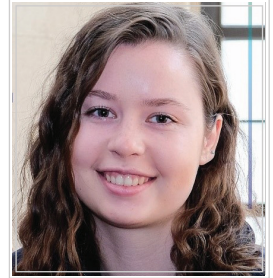
“Motivations & Reservations of Michigan Farmers and Sustainable Farm Practices”



**Etienne Herrick**

**Thesis Topic:**

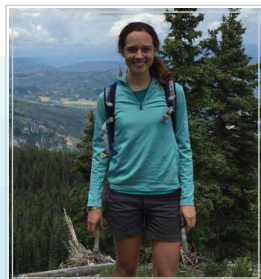
“Summer Cover Crops: Functional Traits and Ecosystem Services”



**Clare Kucera**

**Thesis Topic:**

“GIS Modeling of Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) Reporting Facilities”



**Kayla Mathes**

**Thesis Topic:**

“Bracken Fern as a Structural Barrier Against Deer Herbivory”



**McKenzie Powers**

**Thesis Topic:**

“Microbial Interactions in Lake Erie: Cyanobacterial and Harmful Algal Blooms”



**Nick Simon**

**Thesis Topic:**

“Low-to-Moderate Income (LMI) Community Solar Programs”

# Crossroads

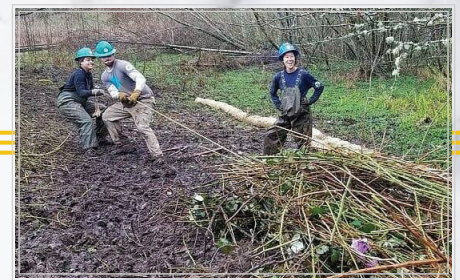
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## Alumni Feature: Mike Rockwell, Class of 2017

After studying abroad through the School for Field Studies in Australia and doing field research in Greece for his practical experience, Mike just moved to Seattle to begin his environmental career. As an ecological restoration crew member through EarthCorps, he will have the opportunity to get his hands dirty, apply his PitE knowledge, and get to know the people making a difference in environmental conservation. He plans to apply to graduate school and look for programs in human ecology and environmental leadership.

"I've got a one way ticket to Seattle right now. Leaving Michigan, the place I've called home nearly my entire life. I'm ready to embrace discomfort as the prerequisite to growth, fail forward, and open my eyes to a new environment in which I can adapt to and learn to thrive."



## Let's Get Social!



UM Program in  
the Environment



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