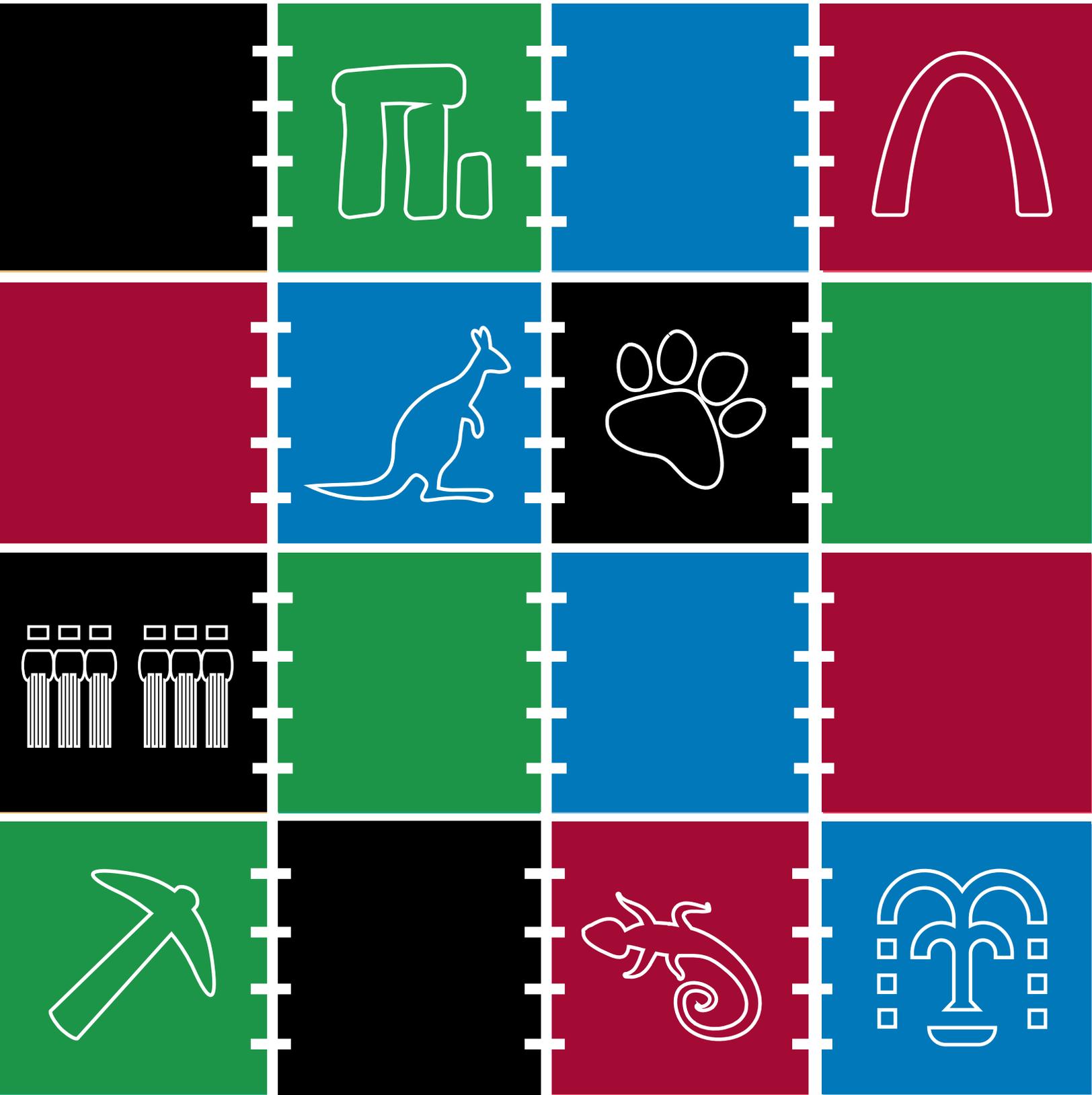


tapestry

UM SYSTEM DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION BIENNIAL



tapestry

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from UM System Chief DEI Officer Kevin McDonald

Dr. Kevin McDonald



“ We should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must all understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter their color. ”

MAYA ANGELOU

The chief diversity officers for MU, UMKC, Missouri S&T and UMSL have worked to collaboratively produce this epublication in an effort to highlight people engaged in creative and innovative efforts that impact diversity, equity and inclusion efforts on each campus. These efforts are transforming policies, processes and people, and we are delighted to share them with all of you.

Selecting the name for the UM System DEI epublication was not an easy feat. Naturally, we wanted to identify a title that reflected a clear picture of how we are working across our campuses and the state to impact prospective and current students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members. After months of deliberation, a quote from poet Maya Angelou elicited a favorable response among the contributors:

“We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must all understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color.”

In this inaugural issue of **TAPESTRY**, we feature stories written by campus communications staff who have worked to accurately depict experiences of the audiences we serve. All of their contributions are intertwined and have been packaged here to show you the breadth and depth of this important work across our campuses.

I hope that each article you read increases your awareness and appreciation for the wonderful work of the constituency connected to the campuses, and compels you to want to know more and do more in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion to serve our System and our state.

To learn more about the UM System’s Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, visit umsystem.edu/ums/dei/.

Sincerely,
Dr. Kevin McDonald
Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer, UM System

OPPORTUNITIES.



UMSL's first diversity, LGBTQ+ coordinator looks to build on institutional commitment to inclusion

Photo by August Jennewein

WORDS BY: Evie Hemphill, University of Missouri-St. Louis

Ask Harry Hawkins' supervisors why they are so excited to have him on campus and they're quick to reference what he was doing before he got there on behalf of the Human Rights Campaign. For the past several years, as one of the civil rights organization's few field directors based in the south, Hawkins was at the forefront of the push for LGBTQ equality in his home state of Mississippi.

Now he's applying his expertise at UMSL as the university's first-ever diversity and LGBTQ+ program and project support coordinator. He stepped into the position in July and is already collaborating closely with colleagues in the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the Office of Sexuality and Gender Diversity – plus students involved in PRIZM, the queer-trans-straight alliance on campus.

But it wasn't so long ago that Hawkins was content to sit back and let others take the lead on some of the issues that matter to him most. His freshman year at Mississippi State University, where he would go on to earn a graduate degree in clinical mental health counseling, stands out as a turning point. Mostly in the closet at the time, he started to get involved with Spectrum, MSU's gay-straight alliance.

"I would go to the meetings and think, 'We have people who are out and proud, pushing for things on campus. And you know, let's let those folks – and the Human Rights Campaign and the ACLU and GLAAD – let's let all of them make the ruckus and push for stuff, and I'll just be an armchair

activist and reap the benefits,'" Hawkins recalls.

Even as he remained less than exuberant about the nitty-gritty work of advocating for change, he felt inspired by what other students were doing – particularly one of them, whom Hawkins describes as happy and buoyant and unafraid.

"I remember thinking, 'I hope I can be that person one day,'" Hawkins says. "He was just the life of our group."

Over spring break that year, Hawkins got a phone call with horrible news: That friend, someone he'd looked up to, was dead.

"He had been beaten to death in Memphis – it was a hate crime – for being gay," Hawkins explains. "And that moment really changed my thinking, because I said, 'People are dying for being who they are. This is a thing. I can't just sit back and be quiet when people are dying.' And so I really jumped in at that point.

"That really pushes me to do this work. We have to protect people who are just living, just being who they are. And as far as bringing that into UMSL, we have to ensure that our students are thriving. Their job is to come here, learn, meet new people, expand their minds, get that degree and then go out in the world and do great things. They need to focus on that. We don't want them worrying about whether they're going to be discriminated against or anything like that."

Hawkins notes that while much has changed for the better in the decade since he was an undergraduate, there's still work to do in terms of making campus environments as open and welcoming as they can be.

As a southerner, he thinks about the recruitment and retention of LGBTQ students, faculty and staff much like he does hospitality.

"We need to welcome folks here and keep them here," Hawkins says. "Because we know that if you don't feel welcome somewhere, and you don't feel like you are validated holistically as a person, you're not going to stay there."

“ We know that if you don't feel welcome somewhere, and you don't feel like you are validated holistically as a person, you're not going to stay there. ”

HARRY HAWKINS

At UMSL, one key issue he hopes to address is communication. He's impressed with "a lot of great programs, a lot of great initiatives" taking place but sees a need for a more streamlined, collaborative approach to the work being done.

Toward that end, he's currently working to reconvene UMSL's Students with Disabilities group and the LGBTQ Advisory Board. A call for applicants for the latter that he sent out at the start of the school year has already generated over 80 eager responses, many of them from students.

That early success isn't surprising to Associate Teaching Professor Kathleen Nigro, director of the Gender Studies program and the Office of Sexuality and Gender Diversity. She says his ability to act as a liaison among all departments and units on campus is key.

"Being that vehicle for communication is one of Harry's skills, and he has the experience to work with people who resist change as well," Nigro says. "He's already proving to be proactive - he has awareness of a need and acts on it. His vision for UMSL is that we be the leader in diversity. And we will be, because that is the only equitable solution to social imbalance."

Deborah Burris, chief diversity officer for the university, echoes this confidence in the role that Hawkins can play. She sees him as instrumental in advancing diversity on the campus and ensuring that UMSL is a welcoming living, learning and working environment for everyone. It's part of a renewed commitment across the entire University of Missouri System as it seeks to serve diverse populations - the LGBTQ community, minorities, women, people with disabilities and others.

"Staffing becomes critically important to implement effective diversity strategies at the campus level," Burris says. "This position is part of building the infrastructure to support diversity administration."

Along with reinvigorating and guiding UMSL's LGBTQ Advisory Board and helping to plan Hispanic Heritage Month events and Constitution Day, Hawkins is busy prepping for LGBTQ History Month (October) programming efforts. He's also exploring ways to create some education

around preferred pronouns, enhance Safe Zone training and, more broadly, boost the university's Campus Pride Index score.

"It's like being on the U.S. News list or the Forbes list for research universities - it ranks schools on how LGBTQ-friendly they are, and it looks at everything from residential life to the academic end of things," Hawkins explains. "Our score right now is 3.5 - not bad - but we've got to go higher. And the index suggests some things we are doing really well but also some areas that we might want to look at to get our score higher. So that's one of the first things for me."

Associate Teaching Professor Lynn Staley, the assistant director and adviser for Gender Studies, says she's delighted with how knowledgeable, politically savvy and friendly Hawkins has already proven to be. Students find him extremely approachable, and that's fitting since it was their idea in the first place.

"Many students involved in PRIZM have been advocating for a full-time LGBTQ+ position for some time," Staley says. "And while the chancellor and chief financial officer deserve a great deal of credit for recognizing the need for this position and finding the funding for it, the real credit goes to the students who advocated for it and the staff in the Office of Student Involvement who identified the need and took action."

Staley is especially grateful for the vision demonstrated by recent graduate Nat Smith, who approached UMSL Chancellor Tom George about creating the position after researching what other institutions were doing to support and recruit LGBTQ+ students.

"They are the true visionaries," Staley says of Smith and the other UMSL students who encouraged the administration to invest in the position. "Now we owe it to them to ensure Harry is able to build strong programs and make UMSL the go-to campus for this vibrant community."

“ Staffing becomes critically important to implement effective diversity strategies at the campus level. This position is part of building the infrastructure to support diversity administration. ”

DEBORAH BURRIS

The new role speaks to UMSL's "profound commitment," Staley adds, to celebrating, not just supporting, diversity and inclusiveness - which she sees as one of the biggest reasons students and families choose the university.

"We are an institution that creates positive social change, one student at a time," she says. "The fact that our administration has the vision to support the creation of this position, in direct response to student appeals for it, tells the world that we stand behind our rhetoric, and that our campus provides a safe and welcoming space for everyone - as, indeed, all institutions should." 🌈

University of Missouri providing resources to make campus more inclusive and diverse

School leaders launch Missouri Land Grant Compact to increase accessibility to education for underrepresented students in Missouri

WORDS BY: Ryan Gavin and Morgan McAboy-Young, University of Missouri-Columbia



Originally published in Savoy magazine

If you ask higher education professionals to identify one obstacle that keeps students from completing college coursework, they will likely mention lack of available financial resources first. Three new leaders at the University of Missouri are changing how industry professionals and in-state students view college access and affordability with the innovative Missouri Land Grant Compact.

Chancellor Alexander Cartwright; Vice Chancellor for Inclusion, Diversity & Equity Kevin McDonald and Vice Provost for Enrollment Management Pelema Morrice are new to the campus community, but the trio is not unfamiliar with implementing initiatives that impact students for generations to come. These top-level administrators—none at Mizzou for more than a year and a half—are leveraging years of experience in higher education to build relationships that increase opportunities for current and prospective students.

“As the founders of this university did nearly 180 years ago, we are reaffirming our pledge to provide access to higher education with the belief that an educated citizenry is the key to advancing the state of Missouri, our nation and world,” Cartwright said. “It is a tremendous honor as chancellor to sign this historic compact and invest in attracting the state’s best and brightest.

In the spirit of collaboration, the group partnered to foster internal and external support for grants that reaffirm the university’s pledge to fulfill its land-grant mission to offer affordable education to Missouri residents. Earlier this fall, the Missouri Land Grant Compact was presented to the campus community with an expected roll out date in fall 2018.

The concept for the Missouri Land Grant Compact was modeled after the MU Division of Inclusion, Diversity & Equity’s Inclusive Excellence Framework, which McDonald first introduced to the campus community in fall 2016. Objectives outlined in the strategic framework target several improvement areas, including increasing access to under-served and underrepresented students in rural and urban portions of the state. The

Inclusive Excellence Framework was adopted by MU administration in spring 2017, paving the way for new statewide efforts aimed at expanding access for students with limited financial resources.

“Inherent in the diversity of lived experiences that come to Mizzou are opportunities to equip our students, faculty and staff with the tools to navigate their experiences and interactions with people,” McDonald said. “Our goal is to graduate our students to operate as effective

“ **An educated citizen is key to advancing the state of Missouri, our nation and world.** ”

ALEXANDER CARTWRIGHT

citizens in a global marketplace. To do that, organizations are wanting students with multicultural competencies and the ability to work in interdisciplinary teams. We are going to create these opportunities.”

As part of the compact, MU will offer the Missouri Land Grant and Missouri Land Grant Honors for Missouri residents. The Missouri Land Grant will cover all tuition and fees for all Pell-eligible Missouri residents who qualify for admission to MU. Missouri Land Grant Honors will meet 100 percent of unmet financial need, including tuition, fees, books and room and board, for Pell-eligible students enrolled in the MU Honors College. The compact means that thousands of students will be able to attend the university tuition-free. Based on current enrollment, it’s expected that more than 3,500 Mizzou students from Missouri will qualify for the grants annually.

“We are at a special time in our institutional history — one that requires all of us to be very reflective about why we are here, and who we are here to serve,” Morrice said. 🌈



Photo by Brandon Parigo

Human is Human: Staceyann Chin addresses diversity, acceptance, love at Pride lecture

WORDS BY: OFFICE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-KANSAS CITY

Artist, poet and political activist Staceyann Chin delivered a message of diversity, acceptance and love at the 11th Annual Pride Lecture at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Chin is widely known for her work as an out poet and political activist. She has spoken candidly about her experience growing up in Jamaica, and the effects of coming out there. She has been featured on the Oprah Winfrey Show, co-written and performed in the Tony Award-winning Russell Simmons' Def Comedy Jam on Broadway, and received rousing praises around the world for her poetry.

Rather than lecturing, Chin engaged the audience in an evening of honest exchange in an informal storytelling format that was often laced with expletives. She talked about being a woman, lesbian, Jamaican and mother. She interjected poetry, anecdotes and life experiences to show that she is human, just like everyone else in the room.

"Everything I say comes from somewhere in my experience," Chin said. Chin moved to the United States because it was illegal to be a lesbian in Jamaica. She talked about her early days in New York. Using her five-year-old daughter as an example, Chin talked about the labels and how children do not recognize labels.

"She just knows that everybody in the world has the choice to choose whatever sweetheart they want," Chin said. "So it's not that we tell her this person chooses men and this person chooses women. I tell her every day, you have the option to choose whatever one you want on whatever day you choose. And under that definition, under that conversation, all of a sudden everyone's LGBTQI."

Because for Chin, LGBTQI is not an identity. Instead, she says, "Human is Human. I would like the rights that I rally for within the LGBTQI community to be the rights afforded to every person on the planet. Where the choice becomes irrelevant and the freedom becomes the rule."

Chin said she is not judgmental about what people do. She notes, "I keep moving through the terrain of America hoping there is a (expletive) utopia somewhere. I'm not sure. But I'm hopeful. We can't really drown in the sorrow and the despair."

After Chin veered away from her speech with musings and more conversation, she brought herself back and read from her memoir, *The Other Side of Paradise*. The passage was from her childhood. Her mother

had abandoned her and her father was not present. Her grandmother cared for her until she could no longer do so, and Chin went to live with an aunt and her dysfunctional family. It was in this home that Chin was sexually violated by her cousin. Chin retaliated by stabbing him in the hand with a pencil. He was 20 and she was nine. Chin said the incident threw the household into chaos, less by the incident itself but by her response.

"Everyone knew about the incident but never talked about it," Chin mused. Now that she's older, Chin said she has a little more understanding for the situation her aunt was in. "This is the world she inherited and no one quite knew what to do. It was a very difficult time for me. And I still have such a hard time understanding how I survived such a thing."

Chin transitioned into discussion about recent mass shootings and violence in the United States. She read one of her poems written to show solidarity for the victims of the Orlando shootings. The poem began with her arrival to New York City in 1997: "I remember landing uncertain in a small town called New York City. Within weeks I fell into the arms of other feminists and activists of the LGBT people who believed in a global fight for freedom. It was here, in this country, that I learned to use my words, my voice, to speak out against bigotry and prejudice and injustice and discrimination wherever it happens, whenever it happens, to whoever it happens."

Chin discussed changes over the last 20 years – LGBT people in more countries can marry and love the person of their choosing, can openly hold office, can have children and be more secure in jobs. Yet in light of the progress, recent incidents have shaken the LGBT community.

"We were sure the world we had created would eventually triumph over the right wing," Chin said. "We were shaken from our complacency." The deaths will always be senseless, Chin said. But still she asked, "How do we make sense of a senseless thing?"

"One, we pick up the pieces of each other. Keep holding onto each other. If there's ever a year to celebrate pride, this is a good year to do it. Courage is the cornerstone of progress. Find your rainbow, freedom flag, to live for who you are. Let us fight for spaces where all our bodies are. Shout out the power of being human. Living loudly is choosing love."

As Chin's presentation came to a close, she left the audience with these words – "What does not kill us, will only make us stronger." 



Photo courtesy of UMKC Strategic Communications

Dispelling myths to break down barriers

WORDS BY: OFFICE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-KANSAS CITY

What happens when a diverse group of people gathers to discuss the implications of bias from various perspectives? Minds, eyes and hearts are opened.

That's what happened when the University of Missouri-Kansas City Division of Diversity and Inclusion hosted "Dismantling Islamophobia," a dialogue intended to unpack and dispel myths associated with Islamic faith and culture.

Nearly 40 faculty, staff and students came together in Bloch Executive Hall on Monday Sept. 25 to hear hip-hop activist, poet and social justice advocate Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. cultivate dialogue centered around Islamophobia. Ahmed is an Ohio native born to Indian Muslim immigrants. According to his official biography, he "draws on lived experience, deep theoretical analysis and practical application to guide institutions, leadership and workplaces on a path to transformative change." Ahmed also serves as Director of Intercultural Teaching and Faculty Development at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

Throughout his presentation, Ahmed provided the foundational background of Islamic faith, unpacked myths and realities about Islam as a religion and culture, and encouraged open and safe discussion among attendees.

"When Dr. Ahmed talked about reshaping our lenses, he helped me learn how I got to where I am in my feelings, and not that I was a culprit and my feelings were wrong," said Bonnie Branson, UMKC School of Dentistry

professor. According to Ahmed, there is a lack of context in American society that leads to Islamophobia and drives laws affecting Muslim communities. Ahmed offered suggestions attendees could use to become an ally for Muslim communities.

Those suggestions include:

1. FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS WITH MUSLIM CITIZENS
2. PARTICIPATE IN MUSLIM CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN YOUR COMMUNITY
3. BE AN ALLY IN YOUR PERSONAL LIVES
4. HAVE BROAD-BASED CAMPUS OUTREACH
5. UTILIZE AVAILABLE OFF-CAMPUS COMMUNITY RESOURCES
5. CREATE SPACES FOR OPEN DIALOGUE
7. ESTABLISH A REPORTING SYSTEM FOR RACISM AND HATRED

"The opportunity for alliances is more likely than we realize because we see different things happening across various cultures," said Ahmed. 🌈

UMKC Diversity Statement:

"UMKC values diversity as central to its mission as an urban-serving research university and as a driver of excellence in teaching and learning. UMKC embraces a broad spectrum of diversities, including race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, linguistic ability, learning style, religion, socioeconomic and veteran status, life experiences, educational level and family structure."

LEARNING



Photo by August Jennewein

Eye on UMSL: Lifelong Learning

WORDS BY: UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS

Diversity of age among students has always been a point of Triton pride at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, but the campus community recently took that commitment one step further with the Spring 2018 launch of the Senior Scholars Program.

An initiative spearheaded by UMSL faculty member Tom Meuser (pictured above, standing at far right), the pilot project aims to make local seniors a more integral part of academic life and campus activity. Participants enjoy regular gatherings throughout the semester and audit courses of their choosing ranging from Philosophy 1180: Science vs. God to Anthropology 1034: Introduction to Ancient Egypt.

More than 30 older adults make up the first cohort, and 25 of them gathered on campus Jan. 10 for a full day of orientation, conversation and fun. 🌈

UMSL Diversity Statement:

The University of Missouri-St. Louis is committed to an inclusive campus community that values and respects all its members and achieves educational excellence through diversity.

The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ODEI) supports the teaching, research and service missions of the University of Missouri-St. Louis by providing services to the campus community which will ensure compliance with all federal, state, and local equal opportunity laws and regulations and promote campus diversity.



Photo courtesy of Ron Stodghill

Learning through Inclusion: How a team of J-school students became their own best source

WORDS BY: Ron Stodghill, University of Missouri-Columbia

Early this fall, 11 student journalists at Mizzou launched a series of tough conversations around race, class and culture. The setting was Advanced Writing 4986-1, a capstone course taught at the university's School of Journalism; the objective was figuring out how these writers might fashion a series of stories that captured changing attitudes and perceptions about life at MU two years after 2015's racially charged student protests.

On the surface, my class seemed sure-footed about taking on such a project. Journalistic instinct told them that the two-year milestone necessitated a fresh look at MU's push to make the campus and the community a more equitable and inclusive place for everyone. But that certainty masked deeper reservations about their ability to write honestly and accurately about the cultural realities that had fractured the campus. Ironically, the racial composition of the class seemed to underscore their perceived editorial drawback: with the exception of two students of color (one Asian American and the other an international student) the class was entirely white. Could a group of nearly all white writers, with similar socioeconomic backgrounds, provide quality coverage to readers on a subject as complex and divisive as race and class in America?

The answer to that question was featured prominently this past November, a week before Thanksgiving, within the pages of Vox magazine, the weekly Columbia Missourian insert, which published a collection of student essays about the protests and aftermath. The pieces, which balance first-person narrative with hard-boiled reportage, wrestle thoughtfully about how race and class shape life at the university and the surrounding community, in the classrooms and courts system, public parks, churches and elsewhere.

"So much has been written about the 2015 protests, and so much of what happened shapes our perception of race resides in the minute, personal moments of our shared experience as humans," Brooks Holton, a Louisville native, writes in the introduction. "Nobody has all the answers to the solving the race issue in America. It's an issue so complex and multifaceted that it'd be problematic to approach a package such as this and not allow time for genuine contemplation."

For me, perhaps even more memorable than their cover package, was

the journey leading to its creation. As teacher and editorial leader, I was inspired by the students' courage as they dug deep for stories that challenged them intellectually and emotionally. In a few short weeks, I watched these young writers, initially feeling somehow unqualified to weigh in on the painful divisions of race and class, find ways to access the topic through their own experience and biography — along the way, surprising themselves with truths they unearthed.

For example, Colorado-born senior Linsey Jenkins grappled with the limitations of white privilege by writing about her struggle to gain acceptance in the church as a queer white woman; Dan Schwartz wrote candidly about how his parents' affluence bought resources that helped him survive and thrive in school despite a learning disability — an unearned advantage that plays out in how Missouri doles out merit-based scholarships; Miranda Moore chronicled her previous life as a former federal prosecutions paralegal, lamenting her role in the prison pipeline.

"I spent several years of my life as part of the system that purports to dole out justice," Moore writes. "People are in prison because I helped put them there. I believe, based on the evidence I helped present against them, that they are guilty of the crimes they were convicted of. But I can no longer find it within myself to work towards convictions that separate families, knowing that I contributed to their disintegration."

As my students discovered important truths about themselves, I learned some valuable lessons about the power of inclusive teaching; about recognizing that all students should have a real stake in the topics we want them to engage and explore. No matter our ideals, classrooms don't exist inside a culturally neutral bubble; teaching strategies and pedagogy should reflect the reality of their differences — even, when on the surface, they appear quite similar. Here's what's most gratifying about what students have shared: beyond the thrill of participating in a high-profile magazine feature, the exercise brought them closer to their own true thinking about social inequality that they'll carry through life.

To be sure, our project was far from perfect. By now, like any fussy editor, I've had time to re-read the pieces many times over only to discover, alas, paragraphs that could have used more trimming, language that could have been more precise, ideas that deserved a bit more of fleshing out. Overall, though, through inclusive learning, we pulled off what good journalists endeavor to do in our profession: we sought the truth and told it as best we could. 🌈



Photo by Jesse Cureton

STEM Monologues depicts hurdles for women in science, tech, engineering and math — in their own words

WORDS BY: Alan Scher Zagier, Missouri University of Science and Technology

The challenges faced by women in the male-dominated fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics are well-documented, and pervasive. While more than 56 percent of college students on U.S. campuses are female, the percentages of women earning degrees in the fields collectively known as STEM hover at less than half that rate. In the workplace, women represent nearly half of the U.S. workforce but account for just 28.4 percent of American scientists and engineers, according to the National Science Foundation.

Beyond statistics are countless personal stories: withering accounts of casual discrimination; demeaning remarks that continue to sting; diminished expectations by classmates, professors, coworkers and supervisors; and in the most severe cases, sexual harassment and sexual assault. Those stories are at the heart of “The STEM Monologues,” a new play being performed over the next two weeks by Missouri S&T’s Miner League Theatre Players.

Jeanne Stanley, an associate professor of theater at Missouri S&T and the play’s writer and director, interviewed more than 50 people — both men and women — in Missouri and North Carolina’s Research Triangle Park, including students, professors and administrators at S&T, the University of Missouri-Columbia and Northwest Missouri State University. From those conversations, she culled firsthand accounts of 26 different monologists, who are identified in the play by only first names.

Michelle, a recent engineering management graduate, describes her struggles with “imposter syndrome” — the notion that one’s accomplishments are rooted in luck, or other external factors. Jane recounts a male administrator responding to her transfer request with the comment that “we didn’t expect girls to succeed anyway.” And Megan, an early-career engineering professor, outlines the pressure she faced when working in industry to join a group of male colleagues at an out-of-town strip club while on company business.

“Everyone’s story is different,” says Stanley, who teaches in the university’s arts, languages and philosophy department and is also its associate chair of performing arts. “Sometimes they’re funny, with a lot of laughter. Sometimes you just want to cry. Sometimes you learn things you would never have known, particularly as a male, about what women go through.”

The title is an overt nod to “The Vagina Monologues,” a 20-year-old play based on interviews with women that explores issues of sex, gender, body image and more that has become a staple on college campuses in recent years. The diverse

cast includes aspiring engineers and liberal arts majors as well as several professors and Rolla community members. For many, the lines they recite from memory ring true to their own experiences.

One of the performance’s actors, Arden Hawley, a senior from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, described an encounter she had with a male student she didn’t know who followed her from the campus library to her car late one night. The student, who asked for her phone number, thought he was being friendly; for Hawley, the exchange left her in fear. “I understand that you don’t think you’re being threatening,” she says of the other student’s reaction. “But there’s this duality.”

Hawley adds the play is not intended to scold or rebuke audience members, but to instead highlight the persistent hurdles women in STEM face in the classroom and the boardroom, while also celebrating their achievements.

“It’s not necessarily pointing out to everyone what people are doing wrong,” says Hawley. “But people do need to see that this is a problem, even if you don’t personally face it, that’s still here.”

For Jamie Schwartz, a sophomore cast member from Chesterfield, MO, the play’s power resides in its authenticity. “It’s more personal,” she says. “All of these people are real. All of these stories are real.”

Cast member Olivia Holdman, a junior from Festus, Mo., majoring in geology and geophysics, says that while her parents actively encouraged her interests in science and math as a child, others continue to struggle against more outdated societal and cultural expectations. “A lot of women still feel like they have to go into teaching or nursing, she says.

Stanley first conceived of “The STEM Monologues” years ago, in part as a response to moving from a Kansas liberal arts college to a campus where men still greatly outnumber women. But she and several cast members are quick to recognize the performance arrives at an opportune time, with significant attention and media coverage aimed at sexual harassment and sexual assault allegations against top media executives as well as Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein and Oscar-winning actor Kevin Spacey.

“There’s definitely more urgency now,” Holdman says. “Women are finally feeling like they can speak out. For such a long time, it was taboo. I’m glad this story is being put out there.”



Photo by August Jennewein

Microaggression discussion pushes campus community to communicate across difference

WORDS BY: Marisol Ramierz, University of Missouri-St. Louis

When Susan Kashubeck-West asked a room full of University of Missouri-St. Louis students, faculty and staff for examples of microaggressions, hands shot up.

An African American woman recalled being asked if she intended to brush her hair. A queer student shared how a co-worker only thought to speak of queer topics with her. A nursing student told about a patient who requested to speak with the doctor, having assumed the white man in the room was a doctor when actually he was a man whom the nurse was training.

Kashubeck-West, a professor in the College of Education's counseling program, studies these subtle moments of discrimination that have become popularly known as microaggressions.

"They are all the ways of communicating to a member of a marginalized group in our society that they are second class, inferior or less-than in some way," she explained. "Examples often involve race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, social class and religion, to name a few."

A recent article in the New York Times on how universities are training against this form of discrimination inspired last week's campus discussion led by Kashubeck-West titled "Microaggressions: What Are They and Why Do They Matter?" The event was the latest in the What's Current Wednesdays discussion series sponsored by UMSL's student newspaper The Current and the New York Times, with support from Community Outreach & Engagement at UMSL. It served for a lively discussion.

The group devoted much time to determining what qualified as a

microaggression.

"The boundary depends on who you ask," Kashubeck-West said. And that became clear in the room when she posed the hypothetical example of a person in a group asking the Asian man there, "Where are you from?"

Some perceived the question to convey the prejudiced notion of the Asian man as different and not one of the group. Others read no preconception into the question but instead imagined the asker simply wanting to know where the man was from. Those who perceived "where are you from" to be discriminatory suggested avoiding the phrase altogether, which others felt was over-regulation of language. Kashubeck-West warned against such blanket bans but encouraged putting in effort not to offend.

"We shouldn't automatically say, 'You can't say these words,'" she said. "What we need to do is recognize the way in which those things are not equally received or true for different people in our society."

"If you don't belong to a stigmatized group, it's harder to connect this one little thing that might get said to the group's context," she continued. "If you belong to a group that has suffered historical trauma or historical oppression, then that one little comment or joke is in a context that is very different than if you're not a member of that group."

But that didn't keep the conversation from turning to questions of over-sensitivity and the thought that some should develop thicker skin – an idea that was not kindly received by many in the room.

"Who are you to say I am being overly sensitive?" one woman responded. Many people agreed that the intent didn't matter because hurt was caused



Photo by August Jennewein

and the microaggressor should work to correct his/her phrasing and behavior. Kashubeck-West later responded in an email about the fairness of ascribing automatic guilt.

“This issue of being found guilty no matter what is complex,” she wrote. “The majority of time a person does a microaggression, there is no intent to be hurtful or insulting or demeaning, and that person is not aware of having done something offensive. And yet the things that are said may be perceived by most people in that marginalized group as offensive or insulting. There are situations where a person might be looking to find offense in everything that is said to them and may create mountains out of molehills. That doesn’t take away from the reality that many people are reasonably hurt by many microaggressions a day. Both are real.”

During the discussion, Kashubeck-West stressed that a lifetime of moments could contribute to serious negative outcomes for people of marginalized groups. Research suggests microaggressions contribute to – but have not yet been proven to cause – psychological health problems such as low self-esteem, depression and anxiety. They also contribute to physical problems associated with shorter life expectancy, including coronary heart disease, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

“The more exposure, the more your body is in a stress-response mode, and that takes its toll,” Kashubeck-West said. She also pointed out that some good, in the form of healthy coping strategies, can come out of experiencing chronic microaggression.

“But that doesn’t mean let’s engage in all sorts of stigma,” she added.

Kashubeck-West stressed that having productive conversations like Wednesday’s impassioned discussion is the key to growth. But that first requires people to come to the discussion with an open mind.

“If we walk in assuming that the conversation is going to be adversarial or that somebody is my enemy in some way, then it’s going to be difficult to have productive conversations,” she said. “The assumption should be that we’re not here to hurt other people but rather foster better relationships.”

She was also sure to point to the greater good of the event.

“When I walked in and found this big crowd, I find that very hopeful,” she said. “It’s great that there’s a lot of people who are interested in this topic who want to communicate across difference.”



Photo by August Jennewein

(Top left) College of Education Professor Susan Kashubeck-West found herself surprised and encouraged by the high interest in the “Microaggressions. What Are They and Why Do They Matter.” discussion she led at last week’s What’s Current Wednesdays event. The discussion series is sponsored by The Current student newspaper and the New York Times, with support from Community Engagement and Outreach at UMSL.

(Top right) Student attendance was high for the discussion, where they openly shared their various experiences with microaggressions.

(Middle right) Many students agreed that people should change their language so as not to offend and discriminate.

(Bottom right) Faculty also had a healthy attendance. Here, political science Professor Marty Rochester asks if the recent guideline issued by the University of California to avoid the phrase “America is the land of opportunity” has gone too far in suggesting that the phrase is a microaggression in all contexts.



Photo by August Jennewein

TECHNOLOGY

Missouri S&T EWB group completes work in Nahualate

WORDS BY: Peter Ehrhard, Missouri University of Science and Technology

The student chapter of Engineers Without Borders (EWB) at Missouri University of Science and Technology traveled to Nahualate, Guatemala, this December to complete its 10-year effort to provide clean drinking water to the community. This past August, the team finished one of the largest EWB projects in the organization's history: a distribution system that includes a 430-foot well, 15,000-gallon storage tank, chlorination system and 8 miles of distribution pipe.

This trip is the final part of the Nahualate project, which the team has worked on since 2008. The water system now services over 500 homes with clean water. While there, the team performed final inspections of the system and recommended options for maintenance and operations to the community.

"Many donors have ensured that Nahualate will have clean drinking water for the foreseeable future," says Chadburn Barton, a junior in civil engineering from St. Louis. Barton credits support from Boeing and the Salvador Foundation as being especially helpful for this project. "Both the community and the Missouri S&T chapter are forever thankful for all the sponsors' support."

While in Guatemala, the team will visit its new partner, the community of Paraje Xecaxjoj. This new community had expressed a need for a school for its children. The project will include a rainwater diversion system and a school building for K-6th grade, complete with a kitchen. In December, the team collected information to design the school, such as topographical surveys and soil strength and consistency data.

Dr. Mark Fitch, associate professor of civil, architectural and environmental engineering at S&T, advised the team members during their travels. David Hoffman, a volunteer mentor in the civil, architectural and environmental engineering department, also accompanied the team to Guatemala.



Photo courtesy of Missouri S&T

The following Missouri S&T students traveled to Nahualate:

CHADBURN BARTON, A JUNIOR IN CIVIL ENGINEERING
FROM ST. LOUIS, MO.

BRANDON OCHTERBECK, A JUNIOR IN CHEMICAL ENGINEERING
FROM FENTON, MO.

NICHOLAS SCHMIDT, A SOPHOMORE IN CHEMICAL ENGINEERING
FROM UNION, MO.

ELYSIA SPARKS, A JUNIOR IN CHEMICAL ENGINEERING
FROM ROLLA, MO. 



No bullies allowed

MU students use technology to prevent bullying

WORDS BY: Calin Riley, University of Missouri-Columbia

Tucked away on the bottom floor of Townsend Hall on the University of Missouri campus, a new piece of technology is changing the lives of bullied kids in schools throughout Missouri.

Spanning across an entire wall of the Nureva room, the Nureva Span system acts like a projector that senses when people interact with objects projected on the wall and allows them to move things around as they please.

The software can handle up to 20 people interacting at one time, and the workspace can expand up to 200 feet. Although the system was designed by Nureva for businesses, the company has begun testing the system's potential in classrooms across the nation, including Mizzou's College of Education.

The Mizzou Ed Bullying Prevention Lab is led by Chad Rose, associate professor in the Department of Special Education. The five graduate and 22 undergraduate students on the team aid Rose with developing programs and interventions to combat bullying before putting them into practice in more than 25 schools.

Rose says more than 50 percent of their student team members are from Missouri towns, including places such as Fenton, Sedalia, Washington and Appleton City, that could benefit from their actions here at Mizzou.

Rose says because of the students' investment in their work in the lab, they have established a positive team atmosphere where everybody has some level of ownership over the project. Now, the Nureva Span System is helping the lab grow the college's outreach efforts.

Christine Terry, director of eMints, a national program that helps educators integrate technology into classrooms on campus, says the Nureva system allows the college to bring the expertise of the team out to even the most remote communities in Missouri.

Many of these rural schools do not have the resources to bring Rose out for a whole day, but the system allows his team to have a hands-on, face-to-face-like interaction with remote schools.

"For Chad to go out and spend an hour at a school in the Bootheel is a

day-and-a-half investment," Terry said. "But if he can do these types of experiences with the Span system, he can give any school in Missouri the same high-quality experience in only two hours at no additional expense."

In the middle of September, Rose's team piled into the Nureva Room to

“No longer do we have to have schools carrying the load of bullying prevention”

CHAD ROSE

video chat with Tyson Ellison, a seventh-grader at Laura Speed Elliott Middle School, to kick-start a program to help middle school kids become a liaison between bullied kids and counselors. Rose says his team plans to give support to Ellison's project because they believe the community has to become involved to stop bullying.

"My team and I have been working with Boonville for a long time, and what we've demonstrated is that bullying is a community issue that involves community members, schools and parents," Rose said. "Bullying doesn't just begin and end when students leave the school building."

Rose says the system can help him train counselors in remote schools so they can carry on bullying prevention techniques on their own. He believes that the technology not only will make his team more efficient, but it will also create a collaboration between higher education and communities that want to put a stop to bullying.

"No longer do we have to have schools carrying the load of bully prevention," Rose said. "Now what we can do is say let's enter into a partnership, where bullying prevention is part of our community, where we're all speaking the same language, because the issue of bullying impacts us all." 🌈

PROFILES.



George Holmes: A future in control

Photo by Sam O'Keefe

WORDS BY: Andrew Careaga, Missouri University of Science and Technology

As a high school senior, George Leno Holmes Jr. saw two clear paths for life after graduation. “I was either going to join the Air Force or become a mechanic,” he says. But his grandmother and a cousin saw a different path for the bright, mechanically inclined student.

“Granny,” as Holmes calls her, had been saving money to send him to college. She and Holmes’ cousin — whom he describes as “a brilliant engineer” who lacks a college degree — urged him to study engineering at Missouri S&T. So Holmes and his father made the trip from St. Louis to tour Missouri S&T. As he walked around campus, Holmes told his dad, “I could see myself here.”

Today, Holmes is still here, and he sees new possibilities for his future. After graduating from S&T in 2016 with a bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering, Holmes began working toward a Ph.D. in control system engineering, which focuses on the design of robotic systems, among others. He is studying under the direction of Dr. S.N. Balakrishnan, a Curators’ Distinguished Professor of aerospace engineering and a leading authority in the field.

Holmes is one of dozens of GAANN Fellows at Missouri S&T. GAANN (Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need) is a U.S. Department of Education program designed to get more Ph.D. students into the nation’s universities — and to eventually get them to pursue careers in research in academia, national laboratories or the private sector. Holmes applied for the program at the urging of Dr. Robert G. Landers, a professor of mechanical

engineering who taught one of Holmes’ favorite undergraduate courses, Modeling and Analysis of Dynamic Systems.

“George was that rare student who sought a deep understanding of the material and always came to my office hours to discuss the material,” Landers says. “George is a leader and has the curiosity and intellect to have a stellar career in research; therefore, I knew the GAANN program would be a perfect fit for him.”

Holmes also worked as a grader for Landers’ course the following semester. “Not only did he grade quizzes and assignments, he reviewed all of my notes and provided feedback on how the course could be improved to maximize student learning,” Landers says.

Improving processes and systems is something of a pastime for Holmes. While he has yet to decide on a specific direction for his GAANN research, he hopes his advanced studies will lead to a way to either “decrease inefficiencies or decrease drudgery.”

A former leader of the Black Man’s Think Tank student group, Holmes hopes to inspire students in high school — especially minority students — to pursue an education in engineering and science.

Education, too, is a system that could use some improvement, says Holmes. “I’m a tinkerer,” he reminds us. “If I can find a way to improve something, I’ll do it.”

A version of this story originally appeared in the Spring 2017 issue of Missouri S&T Magazine.



In Search of Belonging

Ashley Yong finds confidence in community, purpose in involvement

WORDS BY: Erik Potter, University of Missouri-Columbia

No one saw the tears coming. One evening when she was about 6, Ashley Yong was riding home with her family, staring at the suburban-Chicago cityscape from her back-seat window. They passed a Dunkin' Donuts restaurant, lit brightly in the darkness, empty save for one employee standing behind the counter. Her mind immediately processed, in her 6-year-old way, that the person was alone because he had no family or friends to go home to. She thought he was forsaken. Immediately, she started sobbing.

That story has become part of the Yongs' family lore. Variations of it have repeated throughout Yong's life, though as she grew, she learned to take action on her feelings. A version of the story showed up her junior year of high school, in Darien, Illinois, when she donated 26 inches of her hair to make wigs for people who had lost their own hair to chemotherapy. It appeared again her senior year when she took the \$250 she would have spent on prom and instead used it to make care packages for Chicago's homeless — and then raised \$6,300 online to do it again.

In a way, it also explains why, as a freshman in fall 2015, she wanted to leave Mizzou. It was a tumultuous time. She had trouble understanding what was happening and couldn't connect to her new surroundings. There were 35,000 students on campus, but she felt like that Dunkin' Donuts employee.

One October day, sitting in her room in Mark Twain Hall, she hit a low point. She sat at her desk and dialed her parents on Skype. She told them how she felt. Crying, she said she wanted to go to school somewhere else.

"My parents are very level-headed and strategic," Yong says. They listened to their daughter, but they told her to stay — at least through the end of the school year. If she still wanted to leave after that, she could.

It was good advice. The next month, Yong went to the Asian American Association's Thanksgiving potluck in Memorial Union. Dozens of students gathered in Memorial Union's Stotler Lounge to share food and play games to get to know each other. Yong felt a sense of warmth and acceptance from the students. She had found a home.

Looking back, the Thanksgiving potluck was a turning point for Yong. The acceptance she felt gave her the confidence she needed to get involved on campus. One of the first things she did was apply to become a Summer Welcome Leader, and it fixed her in her new direction.

The pivotal moment came when she walked in to her first Summer Welcome training session. Yong, still a freshman, looked at the other recruits. She saw she was the only Asian American in the room. She realized she was in a position to help prevent a new student, especially an Asian American, from going through what she had gone through. The knowledge filled her with a sense of responsibility. She moved past her tears and got to work.

Each evening during Summer Welcome, the student leaders put on a talent show. Yong spoke in a slam poetry-like format about what it meant to her to be an Asian American. The topic was something she had thought a lot about since joining the Asian American Association. One day, an Asian American incoming freshman and her father pulled Yong aside. "They told me how moved they felt by the fact I had enough courage to be vulnerable and share my experiences in front of an auditorium of people," Yong says.

She knew she was making a difference.

Yong didn't stop there. She also became a residence hall adviser and joined the Outreach Student Recruitment team, which goes to college fairs across the country to recruit students.

"I'm meant to be here," Yong now says.

Yong, a strategic communication major, plans to pursue a master's degree in student affairs after graduation. She wants to help others find the same sense of belonging in their college experience as she has found in hers. "I truly believe that the most important thing in life is the relationships we build," she says. "If I can build even small relationships — to make someone smile — that's huge to me." 🌈



MSW student Chelsey Jacox shares personal journey to internship at Youth in Need

Photo by August Jennewein

WORDS BY: Marisol Ramierz, University of Missouri–St. Louis

A famous quote by writer and editor Ayesha Siddiqi guides UMSL master of social work student Chelsey Jacox: “Be the person you needed when you were younger.”

Born and raised in Minneapolis, Jacox grew up in a low-income family. She remembers how her parents sacrificed to make sure she and her siblings had everything they needed. But she also remembers tense domestic situations that resulted in night terrors. Jacox specifically needed two things: a support system, which she found in her grandmother, and opportunity which she found through basketball.

Natural talent and drive resulted in Jacox playing varsity basketball by seventh grade. She played on junior college team in Iowa before quickly being scouted to play Division I basketball as a combo-guard for the University of San Francisco in California. Jacox played for USF until her graduation in December 2015, when she completed her bachelor’s degree in sociology. With one more year of eligibility, she received an offer from UMSL to play for the Tritons while earning a master’s degree.

“If it wasn’t for basketball I don’t know where I’d be,” Jacox said. “It’s a blessing to get through school for free.”

Deciding on an MSW degree came about after an eye-opening internship experience at the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in San Francisco. She worked with men and women serving 20-year or more sentences, helping prepare them for their transition back into society.

“That was just a very, very humbling experience for me, and that’s what really drove me into thinking social work,” Jacox said.

She also admits that her grandmother, a social worker for teen and young moms, played an influential role by exposing her to the field at such a young age. But it wasn’t until a UMSL class with social work instructor DeAnn Yount that Jacox knew child therapy was her calling. Yount, who teaches through stories from the field, recounted a story that resonated with Jacox.

“It sounded oddly familiar,” Jacox said, “and then I realized how similar it was to my life story.”

Inspired to be the person she once needed, Jacox landed an internship at

Youth in Need in St. Charles, Missouri, this semester. The agency helps youth up to the age of 19 and sees clients with a wide range of cases including homelessness, depression, mental and emotional health issues, traumatic stress, parenting conflicts, behavioral issues and grief.

Jacox’s internship has her helping in the office, the teen parent program and the racial equity program. She guides a teen parent support group and even carries a case load despite having worked at the agency only since August. That opportunity is something Jacox appreciates.

“The staff here is super, super supportive,” she said. “They know you’re a student, but they say the best way to get your practice is to get out there and be exposed to it.”

She’s putting the time toward her 600-hour practicum requirement at UMSL. With six cases, Jacox already has invaluable experience.

“The No. 1 thing I’ve learned is that relationship is everything,” she said. “You have to build a relationship to build trust. If you don’t have trust, you’re not going to be able to achieve the goals that you set together.”

The racial equity part of Jacox’s internship is inspired by Forward through Ferguson and the results of the Ferguson Commission report. Jacox is helping Youth in Need complete its Path to Racial Equity Baseline Assessment, developed by UMSL Assistant Teaching Professor Courtney McDermott’s collaborative grant work last year. Still in the early stages, Jacox is gathering data to determine where the agency might have areas of inequity.

“A lot of the time people can’t handle the facts,” she said, “and some people aren’t prepared and ready to talk about it. Raw data is in your face, so many agencies are wary about this. But I love that Youth in Need is one of those agencies that said, ‘We need something like this. Let’s get on board.’ Because really people from all types of backgrounds need services.”

Jacox will graduate in May 2018. She’ll be eligible to complete her exam a month before to become a licensed master of social work. Her end goal is to be a licensed clinical social worker. She’ll continue her internship at Youth in Need until her graduation. In the meantime, she’s happy to be making a difference in children’s lives.

“Hopefully a lot of them are able to one day see the support and love that we are pouring into them,” Jacox said. “Maybe they will want to give back as well.”



Photo by Jessica Luu

Through the Lens

Mizzou photojournalist enjoys a multicultural experience

WORDS BY: Sarah Sabatke, University of Missouri-Columbia

College is a place for making memories and stories that students can tell for years to come. While most students tell their own stories on social media, MU student Huong Truong, a senior photojournalism major from Oklahoma City, is training to tell the stories of others.

“When I found out that I could tell stories as a career, I knew there was nothing else I’d rather do than do so through words and photos,” Truong said. Truong began experimenting with photography in junior high but says she didn’t focus on the craft until high school.

“My Oklahoma Institute for Diversity in Journalism mentor Bryan Pollard handed me his camera and told me to go have fun and do good work,” says Truong. “That day changed my life.”

Truong made the move to Mizzou in the fall of 2014. She learned the mechanics of her craft from MU photojournalism professor Rita Reed. Truong says Reed taught her that photography was ‘more than a camera.’

“Photography is the art of light, and I love how simply complex that concept is to grasp,” said Truong. “Plus, it’s fun to pause time.”

Truong has also expanded her student experience far beyond the classroom. She has served as the programming assistant at the MU Multicultural Center, where she worked with other staff members to create events on

topics such as culture and social justice. She continues to help maintain the center as an inclusive space for students from marginalized communities.

“I’ve learned how to be a better leader who works to raise awareness for marginalized communities and how to be a better ally,” she said.

Truong also has been an active member of Alpha Phi Gamma Sorority since fall of 2015. The organization aims to bring together women of different backgrounds and “provide service and Asian awareness to the university and the surrounding communities for the betterment of society.”

Truong has held multiple positions within the active house. She also is the current president of the Multicultural Greek Council.

“Alpha Phi Gamma has been my support system for so much of my life that I couldn’t imagine living without it,” she said.

Over the years, Truong has learned to balance a hectic schedule and step beyond her comfort zone. Though friends and family have told her a creative career is a risk, Truong says she doesn’t let negativity deter her.

“I have encountered many people who told me pursuing photojournalism was not practical,” said Truong. “To them, I said, ‘So what if it isn’t?’ The impractical makes life fun.”