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tapestry

UM SYSTEM DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION BIENNIAL



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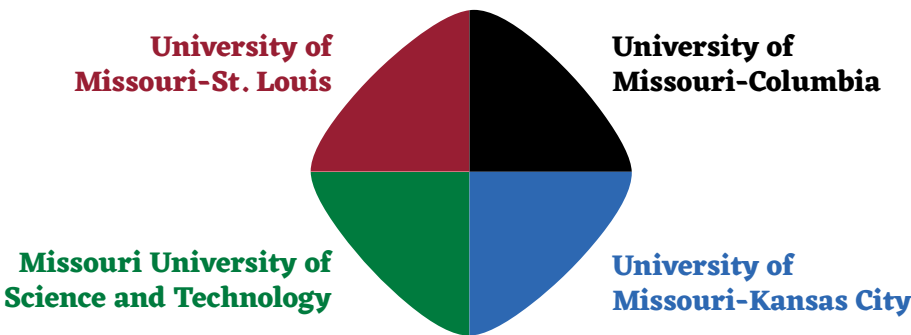
UMKC Engages in New Initiatives

On college campuses across the country, issues of tolerance and freedom of speech loom large. The upcoming political elections will only create more polarization on campuses. For this reason, UMKC’s Division of Diversity and Inclusion launched a new program entitled “Agree to Disagree: Engaging our First Amendment Rights Through Civil Discourse.” The program is a year-long initiative designed to educate students, faculty and staff about the First Amendment and how to have constructive discourse. Without this education, campuses can be one step away from a major incident. The “Agree to Disagree” program launched Nov. 5, 2019, with a panel discussion about the First Amendment. Missouri Representatives Dan Stacy (R), Barbara Washington (D), as well as a member of the

step, involving academic and administrative units is far more productive. All units convene a group to complete, review and revise diversity, equity and inclusion action plans. The plans are presented on a yearly basis to the chancellor’s diversity council for recommendations and feedback. Using this method, progress has been made. For example, the School of Biological Sciences increased retention rates by 10-15% by adding a new biology lab to strengthen the skills of students. This intervention also decreased grades of D, F or Withdrawal rates by 10%. The bottom line is making meaningful progress in diversity and inclusion is everyone’s job. We are proud that the UMKC campus has risen to the challenge.

ACLU were in attendance. Steve Kraske, from KCUR’s “Up to Date” program was the moderator. Law professors were utilized to do training throughout the university, including faculty, student groups and the chancellor’s Diversity Council. On Dec. 10, a 2020 Presidential Elections: Prepare for Passionate Disagreement & Perceived Acts of Bias & Insensitivity on Campus webinar was provided to prepare the campus for the upcoming political season. The Agree to Disagree program will be a year-long initiative. On another note, UMKC also spearheaded the Faculty Institute for Teaching Inclusive Curricula (FITIC). Led by Makini King, PhD, the Institute focuses upon infusing diversity into the curriculum on a campuswide basis. Faculty enter into a structure program that provides guidance, resources and peer assistance. The benefit of the program is that it responds to the needs of an increasingly diverse student body and prepares all students to develop broader perspectives to operate in a global environment. Faculty who complete the program and modify their curriculum will receive a stipend. Integrating “Inclusive Excellence” action planning across the UMKC campus has been an ongoing initiative. While having an inclusive excellence plan is a good first

UNIVERSITIES WITHIN THE UM SYSTEM



Know Us Better

Meet Cecily Hicks and Layla Padgett, your DEI and Title IX colleagues at the University of Missouri System

Cecily Hicks

Cecily Hicks serves as the UM System's Deputy Title IX Coordinator and Equity Officer. Hicks collaborates with counterparts systemwide to provide support and resources that enhance the university's mission of promoting diversity, equity and inclusion while also working to ensure a safe and secure university community. Prior to coming to the UM System, Hicks worked for almost 13 years as a Boone County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney with a primary focus on prosecuting domestic violence and sexual assault offenses.



Layla Padgett

Layla Padgett serves as the UM System's Senior Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Specialist. She completed her final practicum placement for a Master of Social Work through the UM System DEI office in 2019 and continued to work as a Program Support Coordinator at the system after graduation. Padgett works to design, develop, implement and support systemwide programs and initiatives to create and foster an open and inclusive environment.



Hail to the Chief

Colleagues, friends celebrate Deborah Burris' 36 years of service to the UM System



STORY BY: JESSICA ROGEN

PHOTO BY: AUGUST JENNEWEIN

A long line of well-wishers — colleagues, students and friends — queued up behind Deborah Burris in the Millennium Student Center Century Rooms to congratulate and celebrate the director of the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and chief diversity officer at the University of Missouri–St. Louis on 36 years of service to the University of Missouri System.

Burris, who retired on Nov. 1, has made her mark on each of the four UM System universities, in myriad roles including leadership positions in student admissions and financial aid, human resources, affirmative action, Title IX, diversity, equity and inclusive excellence. Establishing the Chancellor's Cultural Diversity Council and the university receiving the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award from INSIGHT into Diversity magazine three times are among her many noteworthy achievements at UMSL.

Interim Chancellor and Provost Kirstin Sobolik served as MC during the event and spoke of Burris' impact on UMSL.

"Most important, Deborah has helped us create a culture that encourages civil and constructive discourse, reason, thought and sustained dialogue and an environment of respect and appreciation," Sobolik said. "I'm going to reiterate those last two words because I feel that that defines Deborah: respect and appreciation."

Among the speakers were Ken Hutchinson, former UM System vice president for the Office of Human Resources; Alicia Turner Roberson, president of the St. Louis Industry Liaison Group and

Affirmative Action Specialist at Boeing; Catherine Wong from the St. Louis office of the U.S. Department of Labor; UMSL Chancellor Emeritus Blanche M. Touhill; Dorothea Scott, Compliance Manager, Equal Opportunity Programs in the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; and Jerome Morris, the E. Desmond Lee Endowed Professor of Urban Education in the College of Education.

The group called out Burris' attributes and achievements, which ranged from her vision, ethics and class to her contributions to the St. Louis ILG Disability and Veteran Vendor Fair and Black Writers Student Association to anecdotes about her relationships with colleagues and her handling of difficult work situations. In addition, Scott presented Burris with a scrapbook of memories from her UMSL career.

And she's not done helping people. Sobolik announced that Burris will be working at Episcopal City Mission as an ordained minister aiding incarcerated, adolescent black males to navigate the system.

Finally, Burris took the microphone to talk about her time at UMSL and thank her colleagues and collaborators.

"We do transform lives," Burris said. "Every single one of you have been a part of that, that process of helping to shape, transform the lives of students, as faculty and staff. I've been blessed to be on the journey with you. So, again, thank you all for being here. It's been awesome. I want to challenge each and every one of you to support one another, to encourage one another, to love one another, and again, to continue to do the good work that goes on here." 🌈

Engineering Success

New program offers summer research for students from HBCUs

Tennessee State University students Ahmed Osmand (foreground) and Sam Wreh were among the students selected for Missouri S&T's Summer Engineering Research Academy. They are shown here working on fiber optic sensors for use in their metallurgical engineering research.



STORY BY: ANDREW CARREAGA
PHOTOS BY: TOM WAGNER

Six undergraduate students from Tennessee State University in Nashville and Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Alabama, spent two months this summer conducting engineering research at Missouri University of Science and Technology as part of a new program designed to encourage underrepresented engineering students to consider pursuing graduate studies.

The six students took part in Missouri S&T's Summer Engineering Research Academy (SERA), sponsored by Missouri S&T's College of Engineering and Computing (CEC).

"This was a new program, and it was a tremendous success," says Dr. John Myers, CEC associate dean and a professor of civil, architectural and environmental engineering. "We wanted to introduce more undergraduate students from underrepresented groups to the exciting research going on here at Missouri S&T, in hopes of generating interest in going on to graduate school after they finish their bachelor's degrees. We plan to continue to offer this program in the future."

Myers credits much of the program's success to the involvement and support of the Missouri S&T faculty research mentors and their research teams, along with the engineering deans at Tennessee State University and Tuskegee University, both historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The deans are Dr. S. Keith Hargrove of Tennessee State, who earned a master of science degree in engineering management from S&T in 1987, and Dr. Heshmat Aglan of Tuskegee.

Dr. Kelley R. Wilkerson, assistant teaching professor of materials science and engineering, is the program director.

"Each of the students worked with an S&T research group based on their expressed interest areas of metallurgical engineering, automation or advanced manufacturing," Wilkerson says. "Each student spent about 30 hours a week on their research project, and spent their remaining time exploring the university, touring labs, attending personal development workshops and participating in social activities."



Summer Engineering Research Academy (SERA) participants, front row, from left: Langston Hines of Tuskegee University, Ahmed Osmand of Tennessee State University and Sam Wreh of Tennessee State University; back row, from left, Joshua Campbell, Chris Buford II (standing) and Brandon Currie, all of Tennessee State, and Dr. Kelley R. Wilkerson, assistant teaching professor of materials science and engineering at S&T and SERA program director.

The two-month program concluded with a poster session, during which the students presented the results of their research.

Dr. Richard W. Wlezien, vice provost and dean of CEC, credits Myers with developing the program.

"John deserves a lot of credit for establishing connections with Tennessee State and Tuskegee University to get this program off the ground," Wlezien says. "This was a very successful first year for the program, and I see great opportunities for it in the future." 🌟



IMSD Scholars Shine

Four IMSD Scholars receive Outstanding Poster Presentations at national ABRCMS Conference

STORY BY: HARSHA PAUL

PHOTO COURTESY OF: BRIAN BOOTON

Earlier this year, 23 students who are part of the Initiative for Maximizing Student Diversity (IMSD) Scholars program participated in the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS) in Anaheim, California. Of those, 19 presented their research, which was a record-best for the acclaimed MU program.

For the ninth year in a row, at least one IMSD Scholar from MU has been selected as an Outstanding Research Presentation Award Recipient in their category. Few participating schools have been able to do so consistently each year.

Four of the MU student participants were selected by judges for recognition. The ABRCMS Conference included over 2,500 undergraduate research presentations with only 395 presentations selected for the award.

The conference concluded with an awards banquet with a 5,100 ABRCMS attendees, which was a record number in attendance.

Undergraduate Director of IMSD Scholars Brian Booton noted, "The camaraderie and scientific prowess exhibited was an omnipresent reminder of the bright hope for our future!"

**Learn more about IMSD by
visiting imsd.missouri.edu.**

The MU award-winners for Outstanding Poster Presentation Award include:

BENJAMIN JONES, JUNIOR, B.S. BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Faculty mentor: Erika Boerman, Medical Pharmacology & Physiology

Poster title: Decreased Metalloprotease Expression Contributes to Impaired Sensory Vasodilation in Mesenteric Arteries with Inflammatory Bowel Disease

ABRCMS scientific discipline category: Physiology & Pharmacology

DOMINIQUE JOSEPH, JUNIOR, B.S. BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

MU faculty mentor: Charlotte Phillips, Biochemistry

Poster title: Postnatal Inhibition of Myostatin and Activin-A in the Osteogenesis Imperfecta Murine (oim) Model

ABRCMS category: Biochemistry

ALISHA PERRY, JUNIOR, B.S. BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Faculty mentor: Elizabeth Parks / Nutrition & Exercise Physiology

Poster title: Hepatic Short Chain Fatty Acid Oxidation (SCFA) in Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease

ABRCMS category: Physiology & Pharmacology

CLAYTON IVIE, SOPHOMORE, B.A. SECONDARY EDUCATION

Faculty mentor: Jaqueline Limberg, Nutrition & Exercise Physiology

Poster title: Sex Differences in the Effect of Intermittent Hypoxia on Sympathetic Baroreflex Control of Blood Pressure

ABRCMS category: Physiology & Pharmacology

Finding a Home

SREB helps minority doctoral students succeed

STORY BY: CHARLENE EMERSON

No matter your background, earning a doctoral degree is a demanding task. Many graduate students face challenges ranging from developing a productive relationship with their advisor to pioneering research in their chosen field.

Beyond the usual challenges of graduate school, minority students often feel isolated by the absence of underrepresented groups in their field. Since 1994, the Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB) Institute on Teaching and Mentoring has helped thousands of minority PhD candidates complete their doctorates and achieve success as faculty members.

The SREB Institute on Teaching and Mentoring is the nation's largest gathering of PhD students from underrepresented groups and faculty of color. More than 1,000 scholars attend the conference each year. Two-thirds of the participants are women, nearly two thirds are black, one in four is Hispanic, seven percent are American Indian/Native Alaskan and four percent are Asian.

This year, 16 students from across the University of Missouri System attended: Precious Hardy, Stephanie Hernandez, Darvelle Hutchins, LaShawnda Kilgore, Dena Lane-Bonds, Ransford Pinto, Cydni Robertson, Yanni Snowden-Bullock, Dana Thompson and Daphne Valerius from MU; Annie Derrell and Salome Wilfred from UMKC; Ontlametse Molathegi from Missouri S&T; and Ericka Cables, LaChrisa Crenshaw and James Jordan from UMSL.

The program has made a major impact on the fellows. LaChrisa Crenshaw, who will complete her doctorate in Social Work in 2021, said, "The support SREB has provided through mentorship, as well as additional workshop training to prepare me for the research and dissertation phase of my journey, has helped me understand some best practices to utilize to help me complete my doctorate degree with success."

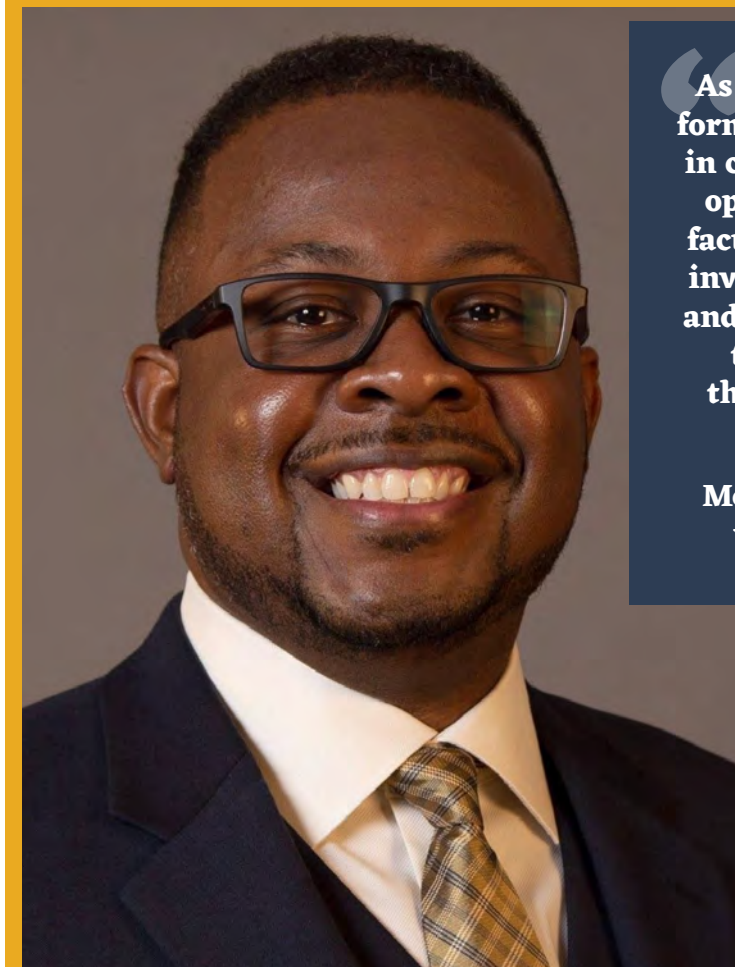
Being a part of SREB is like finding your tribe when you're lost in the wilderness. As a Black first-generation graduate student, the thought of a graduate education was so intimidating.

However, with the support, guidance, and connections I've gained being a part of this organization has made the journey so much easier.

Precious Hardy
Educational Psychology, MU

The SREB Doctoral Scholars Program hosts the annual conference to advance efforts to diversify the professoriate in universities and educational systems across the country. The program provides layers of support to underrepresented Ph.D. students, including mentoring, funding and career services. NaTashua Davis, MU interim vice chancellor for the Division of Inclusion, Diversity & Equity; Ty-Ron Douglas, MU associate professor for Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis; Jeni Hart, MU dean and vice provost for Graduate Studies and Jenny Lundgren, UMKC dean of the School of Graduate Studies, served with others as mentors to provide an educational support system for scholars of color in their respective fields. Significantly, 2019's fall semester was the first time that all four UM System institutions were represented by faculty and staff to recruit students, postdoctoral fellows and faculty to positions within the UM System.

Over the past 26 years, the SREB Doctoral Scholars Program has helped nearly 1,000 underrepresented students earn their Ph.D., and as of 2019, it is currently supporting 400 students pursuing doctorates. The program helps save both



As a member of SREB, I now have support in the form of financial assistance, but more importantly in career counseling and preparation, networking opportunities, and accessibility to mentors and faculty members for support. These resources are invaluable as I work through my degree program and prepare for a career as a minority educator in the college/university environment. I am so thankful for this opportunity and to the yearly SREB Institute for Teaching and

Mentoring for recharging me and providing me with the necessary tools complete this goal.

James E. Jordan Jr.
Business Administration, UMSL

time and money for students, the university and the state. SREB scholars finish their PhD two to five years earlier than the national average, saving up to \$120,000 per student.

In 2018, the National Science Foundation funded a study that confirmed the SREB's impact. The study showed SREB alumni closing the pay gap between minorities and the overall population. Women who participated in the study were significantly more likely than other doctoral graduates to earn salaries between \$80,000 and \$150,000 per year. Black participants also earned higher salaries than other doctoral graduates.

Through the Missouri Compacts, the entire UM System works to achieve excellence through several principles. The compact for Inclusive Excellence aspires to increase access and success for all students and recruit, retain and promote faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds. By participating in the Southern Regional Education Board conference, the UM System can help minority students achieve excellence in their education and careers. 🌈

Annie Derrell
History, UMKC

Being an SREB Fellow was life-changing for me. I am one of the only people of color in my department, and to be accepted into a community of scholars who look like me and can relate to some of the hardships that come with being a person of color in what is still a predominately white Academy was such an inspiration, motivator, and truly a comfort.

The Institute on Teaching and Mentoring is like "coming home" every year.



UMKC Recognized for Excellence in Diversity

Outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion brings national recognition



STORY BY: PATRICIA O'DELL

PHOTO BY: AUGUST JENNEWEIN

The University of Missouri-Kansas City has received the 2019 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) award from INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine, the oldest and largest publication focused on diversity and inclusion in higher education.

Each year INSIGHT Into Diversity evaluates universities' practices relating to recruitment and retention of students, faculty and staff. The process also considers the universities' leadership commitment and program support.

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.

Susan Wilson, Ph.D., vice chancellor of the division of diversity and inclusion, leads the university's diversity organizational development strategy.

"We are thrilled to be recognized for outstanding work in creating an inclusive environment for our students, faculty and staff," Wilson said. "This award is even more special as we remember how far we have come as an institution. This accomplishment is truly a team effort, as many across campus worked with the Division of Diversity and Inclusion to reach this milestone."

The HEED Award and the Health Professions HEED Award are the only national awards that honor individual institutions for being outstanding examples of colleges, universities or health professions schools that are committed to making diversity and inclusion a top priority across their campuses.

"The HEED Award process consists of a comprehensive and rigorous application that includes questions relating to the recruitment and retention of students and employees — and best practices for both — continued leadership support for diversity, and other aspects of campus diversity and inclusion," said Lenore Pearlstein, publisher of INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine. "We take a detailed approach to reviewing each application in deciding who will be named a HEED Award recipient. Our standards are high, and we look for institutions where diversity and inclusion are woven into the work being done every day across their campus."

UMKC is featured in the November 2019 issue of INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine. It was the only college in Missouri to receive the recognition. The UMKC School of Medicine received a HEED award in 2018 and the School of Dentistry received the award in 2016. 🌈



To better understand racial trauma, MU expert says we must also acknowledge skin tone

STORY BY: SHEENA RICE

PHOTO BY HARSHA PAUL

As the country continues to grapple with racism, one University of Missouri professor suggests that bias related to skin tone can lead to negative health and relationships for African Americans. Antoinette Landor, assistant professor of human development and family science, and a leading expert on colorism, says discrimination based on skin tone plays a significant role in the lives of African Americans.

"For a long time, colorism has been considered a 'dirty little secret,'" Landor said. "Our recent research illustrates the need to unmask skin-tone wounds and promote healing for individuals, families and communities that suffer from skin-tone trauma."

Landor's study looked at the historical context of skin tone to create the first model for understanding skin-tone trauma. Through this model, she found that colorist incidents might directly and indirectly lead to negative effects on the health and interpersonal relationships of African Americans. This is due to colorist incidents eliciting traumatic stress reactions.

The model looks at both the historical and contemporary role of colorism and how it impacts African Americans. While colorism has roots in slavery and colonialism, it has carried over into mainstream popular culture as well. Landor points to several examples in popular culture that illustrate colorism such as; casting of fair-skinned Zoe Saldana to portray dark-skinned Nina Simone; and magazines photoshopping pictures of Beyonce, Kerry Washington and others to make them appear lighter.

Landor points to differing portrayals of Steph Curry and LeBron James in sports media as an example of how bias about skin tone can impact how individuals are discussed. Landor noted that James has often been described in the media as "the villain and a braggart," while the lighter-skinned Curry was often described as "likable and approachable."

"When a phenomenon is nameless, individuals might doubt what they are experiencing," Landor said. "Naming these experiences as skin-tone trauma gives them a voice to speak about their experiences. Understanding skin-tone trauma also will help counselors or health providers develop tools to help heal these wounds."

LANDOR OFFERS THE FOLLOWING ADVICE TO HELP PEOPLE HEAL FROM SKIN-TONE TRAUMA:

- ◆ Acknowledge that colorism exists through individual, institutional and cultural encounters and that it occurs across races.
- ◆ Have difficult conversations about the implications of colorism.
- ◆ Identify and define words that might cause skin-tone trauma and be aware of how those words might affect others.
- ◆ Believe others when they are open about trauma implications of colorism they are experiencing.

"Skin-tone trauma: historical and contemporary influences on the health and interpersonal outcomes of African Americans," was published in Perspectives on Psychological Science, a flagship journal of the Association of Psychological Science. It is one of the top five journals in psychology. Shardé McNeil Smith, assistant professor of African American studies at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, served as co-author for the study. 🌈

International Honor

Professor E. Paulette Isaac-Savage inducted into The International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame



UMSL Professor of Adult Education E. Paulette Isaac-Savage (right) was inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame for her research on adult education and learning experiences of African Americans in church-based education thanks to a nomination from Mary V. Alfred, professor of adult education at Texas A&M University.

STORY BY: BURK KROHE

PHOTO BY: ALEKSANDAR LETIĆ

As a girl, E. Paulette Isaac-Savage didn't hang out with cousins her own age at family gatherings as one might expect. She preferred the company of older relatives – aunts, uncles and grandparents.

"I always navigated toward older people," Isaac-Savage said. "I've always enjoyed being around them. Even now, I do volunteer work with Meals on Wheels where I deliver meals to older adults."

This fondness developed into a storied career as an adult educator and pioneer in African American adult education. In recognition of her professional achievements, Isaac-Savage, a professor of adult education at the University of Missouri–St. Louis, was inducted into International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame in September.

She was one of 17 inductees – and one of only three Americans – honored by the IACEHOF at a ceremony held at the National Museum in Belgrade, Serbia. The nonprofit organization was established in 1993 to recognize unique contributions of adult and continuing education scholars and practitioners and has been headquartered at the University of Oklahoma since 1996. Isaac-Savage was shocked but grateful to be joining such esteemed colleagues.

"I was surprised and honored," she said. "As I reflected on some of the adult educators that are in the Hall of Fame, it was just such a great honor to know I would be joining them and other adult educators that I personally know."

While Isaac-Savage joins many notable peers, her CV is equally formidable. She is well known for her research on adult education and learning experiences of African Americans in church-based education and was one of the first adult education scholars to study the subject extensively.

Her work has focused on African American churches' contributions to the education, health and career development of congregants. In investigating these subjects, she has also highlighted the intersections of race and social justice in adult education.

In addition to her research, Isaac-Savage has actively contributed to academic publications, serving as co-editor of *Adult Learning* and as an editorial board member and reviewer for other journals such as *Adult Education Quarterly* and *Education and Urban Society*. She is also an executive board member for the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education.

At UMSL, Isaac-Savage was the first African American faculty member to be promoted to full professor in the College of Education. She has worked to expand the reach of the college by developing online curriculum for the adult education program and by increasing the number of African Americans admitted to the doctoral program.

“Adult education takes place everywhere, and it is defined in different ways. But one of the definitions I’d like to share with people is simply that adult education is looking at those activities that adults engage in, whereby they are gaining knowledge or skills.”

UNTOLD STORIES

Isaac-Savage was a doctoral student at the University of Georgia when she first realized the African American church could be fertile ground for research. She was attending a large church in Atlanta that was extremely active in the community and provided numerous educational offerings.

"Our doors were open seven days a week," she said. "There was something for everybody in the church, and as I was taking classes for my doctorate, I kept hearing how African Americans were not participating in adult education. I kept saying, 'Well, something is wrong with that because I'm seeing it take place every day at my church.'"

Her expertise grew organically from that personal connection and a desire to introduce a new perspective to the field. At the time, research was primarily focused on formal adult education and on white adult learners.

"I decided that I wanted to help tell the story of African Americans and also help tell the story of the church and this important educational role as it relates to African Americans," Isaac-Savage said.

She noted that the church has historically been the center of the African American community. It was a place where people could go for the things they were denied in everyday society – education, respect and support – often at great personal risk.

“I was surprised and honored. As I reflected on some of the adult educators that are in the Hall of Fame, it was just such a great honor to know I would be joining them and other adult educators that I personally know.”

"When you think about the historical church, we had the clandestine churches, where people who were enslaved were going to learn," Isaac-Savage said. "They were going there to worship, but they were also going there to learn, as well. So again, I just wanted to help tell that story."

COMING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

After finishing her dissertation on the subject and graduating with an EdD, Isaac-Savage came back to St. Louis to work at UMSL. It's where her work as an adult educator began – albeit not in academia. Before pursuing graduate degrees in Georgia, she worked as an academic advisor on campus and volunteered as a dance instructor at the Matthews-Dickey Boys Club and as a tutor and tutor trainer for the Literacy Council of Greater St. Louis.

“I decided that I wanted to help tell the story of African Americans and also help tell the story of the church and this important educational role as it relates to African Americans.”

The offer to return was too good to pass up.

Currently, Isaac-Savage is working on a new adult education EdD in workforce development, distance learning and technology. The program is expected to begin next fall and will be geared toward a variety of people including those working with adults obtaining high school equivalencies and people working as instructional designers.

Ideally, the work the cohort does will help expand common perceptions of adult education.

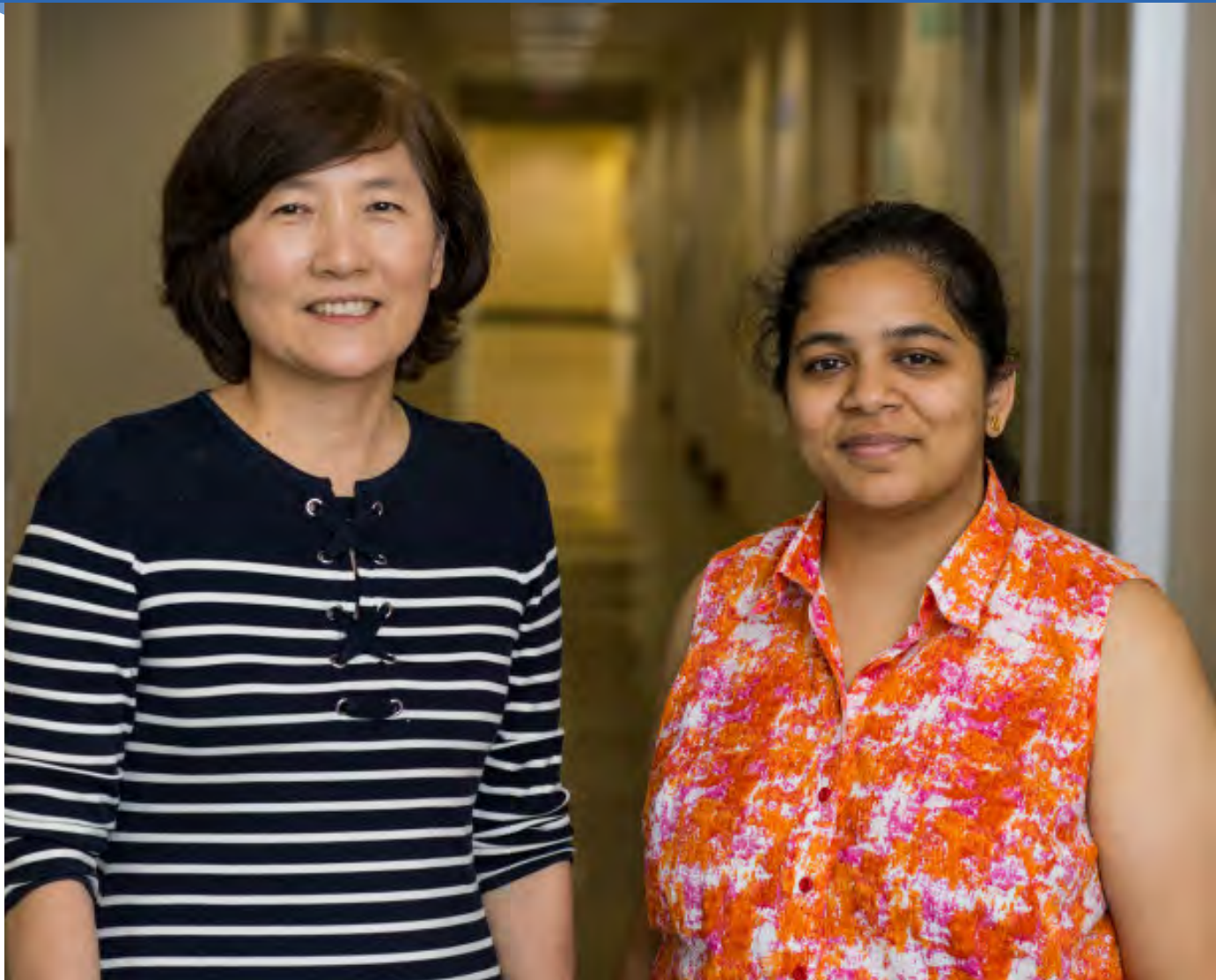
"As it relates to adult education, I think that a lot of people have a misunderstanding of it," Isaac-Savage said. "Adult education takes place everywhere, and it is defined in different ways. But one of the definitions I'd like to share with people is simply that adult education is looking at those activities that adults engage in, whereby they are gaining knowledge or skills."

Isaac-Savage's tireless work is worthy of recognition, but to her, helping others – whether as an educator or a volunteer – is its own reward.

"My mother was always involved in our school and community activities when I was growing up and my maternal grandmother was a caring and giving person," she said. "I think, in a way, it's somewhat innate for me to give back." 🌈

Computer Science Faculty Honored for Making a Difference for Women in STEM

Professor Yugi Lee receives Central Exchange award for her mentorship efforts



STORY BY: KELSEY HAYNES
PHOTOS BY: BRANDON PARIGO

The heart of UMKC is our campus community. With small class sizes and lots of opportunities, it's easy to develop student mentorship teams. And these rich relationships—our Dynamic Duos—are some of our best success stories.

As an internationally-recognized expert in computer science, Yugi Lee, professor of computer science at the School of Computing and Engineering, says her motto is that teaching and research are not separate.

Throughout her 20-year tenure at the SCE, she's continued to mentor and equip her students to survive in any work environment – teaching or industry – an experience she said also helps to inform her research and make a difference for women in STEM following her footsteps. It's her

impact and engagement with students that landed Lee among Central Exchange's 2019 STEMMy Award recipients.
Lee and mentee, PhD student Mayanka Chandra Shekar, sat down to discuss the importance of mentorship and its significance for women in STEM.

WHAT MAKES FACULTY MENTORSHIP CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS OF STUDENTS?

LEE: Students have their own goals. Sometimes they know what their goal is and they need someone to help guide and sometimes we help them identify their goals. That's why it's critical to have the right advisor, especially for graduate students. Sometimes their research may not be accepted, sometimes a project they're working on may not go right and they get down. Additionally, mentorship is really important for female students in engineering where there aren't many female faculty.

HOW HAS YOUR MENTOR INSPIRED YOU?

SHEKAR: How I perceive research is how Dr. Lee has taught me. She's the most approachable faculty I've ever encountered. Every time there's a new technology Dr. Lee says "let's teach it," because you become an expert through teaching.
I had limited exposure to research when I came to UMKC, but in my time here I've received a Google Lime scholarship, I've been selected to receive research funding from the School of Graduate Studies three times and has received the UMKC Women's Council's Graduate Assistance Fund scholarship five times.

LEE: Mayanka is one of the more popular students in our department. She's got a lot of energy and fresh ideas. Her presentation is great and she can teach almost anything. She's currently supervising 10 master's degree students and mentors five project groups, and will apply to a faculty position when she graduates. She even received a scholarship to attend the Grace Hopper Celebration, which is one of the largest conferences for women in technology. She is applying to some faculty positions. I think she will land somewhere great.

WHAT LED YOU TO UMKC?

SHEKAR: When I came to UMKC in 2014, I had limited exposure to research. Where I'm from, in India, UMKC had positive reviews. I am only one of two students from my master's program who came to the United States.

ONE OF TWO? WOW! HOW MANY OF YOU WERE THERE?

SHEKAR: I received my bachelor's and master's degrees from a women's college in India. We had 16 master's students. Some are



working, some got married and started families and two of us went on to pursue PhDs. There just aren't a lot of women in computer science. In the last five years I've been at UMKC, our number of female Ph.D. students in computer science has significantly increased. When I joined the program there were three of us, now we have between 15 and 20!
I'm getting married in December so I'll be learning to juggle marriage and completing my program. I graduate in May.

WHAT QUALITIES MAKE A GOOD MENTOR?

LEE: Understanding. It's important to understand the student's abilities and family situations. You have to be able to adjust to what's going on with them and work with them to persist. Build a relationship with your students and be a support system for them. Finally, it's important to be a good trainer and equip your students to be able to survive in any work environment – industry or teaching.

CONTINUED...



WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE PART ABOUT BEING A MENTOR?

LEE: Relationships. I've overseen more than 20 PhD students in 20 years. Every year we have new faces coming in and sometimes I get students that challenge me in different ways. Each year students will have new questions, ideas, problems ... Not all graduate students teach, but mine do. My philosophy is: teaching and research are not separate. Teaching is part of the life cycle of research.

HOW HAS YOUR MENTOR HELPED YOU GROW AS A PERSON?

SHEKAR: Dr. Lee has been a big source of support for me when I needed it – inside and outside of the classroom. When I was really sick, she supported me and motivated me to not want to stop learning. I was in the hospital coding! I was wheelchair-bound for a while and my mom came from India and stayed with me for close to a year. She and Dr. Lee helped me get around to my classes. They've been really fundamental women in my life.

IF YOU'RE GIVING ADVICE TO A STUDENT ON FINDING A MENTOR, WHAT WOULD YOU TELL THEM?

LEE: You have to meet every faculty member to find the best advisor or mentor. Sometimes without the right advisor, students won't complete their degree program. You need good chemistry and you should have similar work styles. But if you don't meet all the faculty, you won't know who that person is.

FINALLY, YUGI, WHAT DOES YOUR CENTRAL EXCHANGE RECOGNITION MEAN TO YOU?

LEE: Recognition for women in STEM doesn't come as often as it does for men. Computer science is a male-dominated field everywhere. I was the first female faculty member in our department only 20 years ago. While there are more women in the field than before, it's important for women to have support systems. Central Exchange helps to create that. Women contribute a lot to STEM – we have a lot of creativity and pay close attention to detail...things you need in computer science. Kevin Truman, dean of the School of Computing and Engineering, nominated me to receive a STEMMy Award and I'm honored to have been selected.

Truman said of Lee's honor: "Yugi is so deserving of this award, SCE and I are proud to have her as one of our leading faculty. All of her hard work has made such a difference in the lives of many."

Lee received the WISTEMM Educator Award for full-time faculty in STEM fields at the STEMMy Awards ceremony on Sept. 17. 🌈



ABOUT PROFESSOR YUGI LEE

Yugyung Lee is a professor of computer science and electrical engineering, co-director of Center for Big Learning (CBL) sponsored by National Science Foundation and director of the UMKC Distributed Intelligent Computing (UDIC) Lab at UMKC.

Her research interests include artificial intelligence, real-time big-data analytics, semantic web, large-scale software systems and biomedical applications. She is currently supervising 25 PhD students and MS thesis students.

She has also developed, coordinated and/or taught more than 15 courses in the area of big data and software engineering at UMKC. Lee has led numerous projects funded by National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, IBM, the Missouri Life Sciences Research Board, the Mid-America Heart Institute and Children's Mercy. Lee has published more than 130 refereed research papers. She has won the N.T. Veatch Award for Distinguished Research and Creative Activity in 2016, the IBM Smarter Planet Faculty Innovation Award from IBM and the CS4HS Faculty Award from Google in 2015.

Teaching and Making History

Dr. Kathleen Sheppard is Missouri S&T's 2019 Woman of the Year



STORY BY: SARAH POTTER

PHOTOS BY: BRANDON MORGAN

Missouri S&T celebrated Dr. Kathleen Sheppard, associate professor of history and political science, as the 2019 Woman of the Year during a campus ceremony.

The Woman of the Year award is given annually to a female full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty member in recognition of her efforts to improve the campus environment for women and minorities. As part of the award, Sheppard received a \$2,000 stipend funded by Missouri S&T graduate Cynthia Tang, founder and former chair of Insight Industries Inc.

Sheppard joined Missouri S&T in 2011, and her main field of study is the history of women in the sciences. She says her goal is to amplify the voices of women and minorities in history and to change students' perspectives on women in history.

Sheppard's colleagues and students praised her as a role model and for her contributions to educating students and wider audiences on the history of women in science.

"Her teaching assignment in the department of history allows her to present the history of science to her students while demonstrating a more inclusive perspective than is often the case in such classes," wrote a colleague in their nomination letter. "Her experimental course on Women in the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine, for example, created a valuable opportunity for students to learn explicitly about women's contributions to STEM-related accomplishments."

"Dr. Sheppard exemplifies each one of the qualities sought in the successful nominee, from her research agenda focused on bringing women out from the shadows of history, to her teaching that insists on students learning the significant but overlooked roles of women in science," wrote another nominator.

"Dr. Sheppard's willingness to engage actively in issues that affect women's lives, and her leadership by example in multiple arenas of research, teaching, mentoring and participating in activities that promote diversity make her an ideal candidate to be recognized by the Woman of the Year award," wrote a fellow faculty member.

Sheppard has published and presented on the history of women's overlooked accomplishments in science and engineering. She is a regular contributor to Lady Science," a monthly online magazine on women and gender in the history and popular culture of science, technology and medicine. Sheppard has earned numerous grants to study the history of archaeology, especially Egyptian archaeology and has two peer-reviewed books. Her most recent edited book, My dear Miss Ransom: Letters between Caroline Ransom Williams and James Henry Breasted, 1898- 1935, is a collection of letters that tell the story of the first American female Egyptologist Caroline Louise Ransom.

Sheppard has earned several S&T awards for research, teaching and service, including the 2017 Women's Inspirational Award. In 2018, she received the CERTI Service Award, and in 2016, she earned a Faculty Teaching Award.

Sheppard earned the 2018 Faculty Experiential Learning Award at S&T for her semester-long student assignment to edit Wikipedia articles related to science and Latin America. By the end of the first semester, the 26 students in the class added 28,300 words to Wikipedia in 11 different articles, ranging from Aztec society to Spanish Missions in the Americas. Their edited articles have been viewed nearly 1 million times.


Sheppard earned her master's degree and PhD in the history of science at the University of Oklahoma in 2006 and 2010, respectively. She earned a master's degree in Egyptian Archaeology at University College London in 2002, and she completed her bachelor's degree in anthropology and sociology at Truman State University in 2001. 🌈

Five Fearless Women Engineers on Fighting Impostor Syndrome

You've likely heard of impostor syndrome. There's a 70% chance you've felt it. We asked five women engineers to tell us how they fight this feeling head-on and succeed in a male-dominated field.



 **BE FEARLESS.**

 **University of Missouri**

STORY BY: KAYLA HENDERSON

Impostor phenomenon. Impostor syndrome. Impostor experience.

No matter what you call it, you've most likely felt it. The feeling that, no matter how much you have accomplished, you aren't worthy of the success you've earned.

You're not alone. The phenomenon was originally introduced as a feeling that affects only high-achieving women. Some recent research shows that men struggle with this feeling in the workplace as much as women. According to recent research, 70% of people experience impostor syndrome at some point in their lives.

Almost everyone experiences it. But how do we fight it? To find out, we asked five fearless women engineers at Mizzou.

TRUST THE EXPERT

When asked about impostor syndrome, Dr. Heather Hunt, associate professor in the Department of Biomedical, Biological & Chemical Engineering at Mizzou, is quick to point out that this popular name for

the feeling is actually not the original name. Dr. Pauline Rose Clance coined the name "impostor phenomenon" in a 1978 research article, and has since written various publications on the subject.

"When I give seminars about impostor phenomenon, I always go back to the book *The Impostor Phenomenon: Overcoming the Fear that Haunts Your Success* by Dr. Clance," said Hunt. "She's the leading authority on this subject. The book is evidence-based. It's practiced. It's practical."

BE EMPATHETIC

Hunt is part of the estimated 30% of people who haven't experienced impostor phenomenon. Despite that, she is able to use the book's suggestions when teaching and mentoring her students.

"Even if you don't experience it, it's really valuable to understand what your peers might be experiencing, because I think it helps us to

build empathy," she said. "Empathy is important to have in a field like engineering where everything we do leads toward this idea of making the world a better place."

TALK ABOUT IT

In addition to soft skills like empathy, critical thinking, and creativity, an engineering education can help you find a global network. Tojan

Rahhal, adjunct assistant professor, notes that the first step in overcoming impostor syndrome is reminding yourself of this network and realizing that you're not alone – and then sharing your feelings with others.

"Numerous CEOs, professors and executives will tell you they have gone through impostor syndrome at different stages in their careers," said Rahhal. "Talk about it, form a peer network or group you can talk through your doubts with because everyone deals with it."

SEEK OUT DIVERSE THOUGHT

As Assistant Dean for Inclusive Excellence, Rahhal works to help engineering students from underrepresented populations to overcome barriers in their college experience and beyond.

Christine Costello, assistant professor in the Department of Industrial & Manufacturing Systems Engineering, is on the university's Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) committee led by Rahhal. This committee helped establish the new Advocates and Allies (A&A) program at Mizzou. The program facilitates conversations among male faculty, staff and students about unconscious gender bias in STEM fields. The ultimate goal is to increase the recruitment and retention of female students, faculty and staff.

In addition to bringing A&A to campus, the committee hosts multiple events throughout the year to encourage a dialogue about shared experiences such as impostor syndrome.

Seeking diverse thought not only helps engineers learn more about the experiences of others — diversity can further the engineering industry as a whole. "The more we bring in different backgrounds into engineering, the better chance we'll have of discovering something new," said Hunt. "Diverse thought arises from diverse backgrounds."

BE A LIFELONG LEARNER

Costello embraces this idea of diverse thought to its fullest. She has degrees and experience in civil and environmental engineering and has held academic appointments in industrial engineering and biological engineering. But she didn't always know she would be an engineer.

"I started my college career as a fashion design and merchandising major," she said. "I loved the art form of high fashion. But I realized I didn't have the artistic flair for it. Through a process of soul searching, I realized that I really liked the field of environmental sustainability."

When students have feelings of self-doubt, Costello encourages them to continue learning and realize that their path won't always be clear. "A lot of you don't know what you want to do, and that's okay! You can come here and figure it out with us. Or take an online class to explore a subject area on your schedule."

Hunt, who leads a new online master's program at Mizzou, agrees that learning new skills helps engineers with not only fighting impostor phenomenon, but with furthering their careers. "The reason we encourage people to continue their education five years into your career, is because you recognize that the industry has shifted or you might need a different set of skills to move up or move into the area that you want. A master's degree can help set you apart from your peers."

BECOME YOUR OWN BIGGEST FAN

Kate Nolan, a materials and process engineer at Boeing, earned her undergraduate degree on campus at Mizzou. Despite having a successful career, Nolan experiences impostor syndrome. She fights it by reminding herself of her achievements.


"It's so good to look back at everything you've accomplished," she said. "I didn't get all of this just by being lucky. You didn't just get there by being lucky!"

Rahhal seconds this: "Own your accomplishments. If that means writing down a few accomplishments a month until you have an enormous list to look at when you are having a bad day, then do it."

FIND YOUR PEOPLE

Even though looking within is instrumental to overcoming this feeling, you can't do it alone. Elizabeth Lobo, the first female dean in the College of Engineering at Mizzou, encourages engineers to seek advice and guidance from those that inspire them. She welcomes students to reach out to her in times of hesitation.

"You will be scared sometimes, you will question yourself sometimes," said Lobo. "But the world will be your oyster when you're done. Stay with it and contact me if you get scared."

Nolan seeks advice from her fellow SWE members. "I've been able to become friends with people my age to people that have retired from their engineering career. Finding that really supportive network has been so important to me. There aren't that many things that have been a part of my life for 10 years, but SWE has." 

Hacking It

New UMSL Women's Hackathon organizers aim to increase participation in tech



PHOTO BY: JESSICA ROGEN

PHOTO COURTESY OF: NICOLE GAEHLE AND REBECCA CRAINE

One of co-organizer Nicole Gaehle's favorite parts of the Nov. 2 UMSL Women's Hackathon was acknowledging all the participants with certificates and announcing their names. However, when it came time to call out the winners of the whole event, the University of Missouri–St. Louis student had the participants, mentors and judges beat out a drumroll and then she paused.

"The final winner is, and I know I'm going to say this wrong," Gaehle said before a brief pause. "Team Balls?" Gaehle's announcement was met with a celebratory howl from one of the teammates, Alexius "Alexis" Gandy, which brought the humor of the moment to the next level and pleasantly shocked Gaehle.

"Team Balls," which was actually Team Balss, was so named for the initials of its four participants: UMSL students Becky Lin, Gandy, Leilani Klein and Stephanie Webber and friend Skylar Mays. They created a game that taught coding to K-12 girls.

The second-place team was Code Breakers: alumna Sherie Richards, alumna Violeta Valle, Kleida Haxhaj and Nadia Sani. Third place went to Women Hack Connection: Tasha Washington, Kathleen Scott and Epharra Mendoza.

The groups' projects all addressed the day's theme, Women of Tech, and one of four problem statements: diversity in the workplace, healthcare industry, industry of choice or freestyle – either a combination of the others or an original problem.

The problem statement structure is standard for hackathons – day- or weekend-long events where participants work with a large data set to try to quickly address an issue. Women's Hack took place over the course of a Saturday with check-in starting at 8 a.m. and judging beginning at 4:30 p.m.

This hack was founded by Brian Lawton, an Information Systems and Technology Department instructor, six years ago. After helping plan for the previous two years, Gaehle approached Lawton last year and asked if she could take it over. Shortly afterward, she recruited her roommate and UMSL College of Business Administration alumna Rebecca Craine to co-direct.

The two were inspired to take over after participating in previous years.

"A lot of people are afraid to go into a hackathon because they don't know what they can actually do," Gaehle said. "They think it's all about coding, when it truly isn't. A hackathon is actually good to have because

then you can learn other tools that you're not familiar with and also be able to network."

Craine, who is a non-coder, and Gaehle, a coder, explained that non-coders might help generate ideas, be a project manager or mockup a product or website on PowerPoint. In order to emphasize the event's universal appeal, they opened up participation to UMSL students of any major as well as to community members. They had five teams – each with four or five members – participate in addition to 20 mentors from companies such as Enterprise Holdings, Daugherty Business Solutions, Spry Digital, TD Ameritrade and Panera Bread as well as alumni.

Many of the same companies helped sponsor the event. Panera and Daugherty provided food while Spry and TD Ameritrade donated the prizes – \$100 Amazon gift cards for the winning team, \$50 for the second-place team members and \$25 for third. The Department of Information Systems and Technology provided the room and space.

For the companies, participating in the program also served as an opportunity to witness potential employees in action. For the hackathoners, it was a chance to get hands-on experience.

"You kind of learn what you want to do in the IT industry," Craine said. "The first year I participated, I just helped with building out the prototype that we actually showed in our presentation. The second year, I was actually the one that did the coding, and that told me that I didn't want to be a coder."

There were a few things that Craine and Gaehle changed up in their first year running the hackathon – a new icebreaker and adding more mentors who were women. They are looking forward to making more adjustments to next year's program such as looking for sponsors earlier in the planning process.

One thing they were proud of was how smooth the planning went. Except for some last-minute food orders, they had no problems, and the feedback from participants was uniformly positive.

Those good experiences mean that the event is halfway to accomplishing its goals.

"My honest opinion is that it helps diversify the women in tech itself," Gaehle said. "It's about really wanting to support women getting into the IT workforce and wanting to help them be like, 'Hey, we want to also support others getting into IT as well.' There is a higher number of women students in the IT department now than there was 10 years ago. That's great. That's why this is here." 🍌

Daring To Do More

Ashley-Ann Davis of Jefferson City, Missouri, doesn't shy away from a challenge



Ashley-Ann Davis in the greenhouse in Butler-Carlton Hall at S&T. As part of the university's Opportunities for Undergraduate Research Experience program, Davis studies how hyperspectral images of plants can be used to determine their chemical composition. The goal is to develop a technology that can be used in classrooms as early as high school that's both inexpensive and user-friendly.

STORY BY: MINDY LIMBACK

PHOTO BY: TOM WAGNER

As an Honors Academy student working on degrees in both civil engineering and engineering management, president of Missouri S&T's National Society of Black Engineers student chapter, intern with Turner Construction and research collaborator with Dr. Joel Burken, Davis is one of many students who are making the most of their experience at S&T.

"I'm very involved on campus," says Davis, who is also a member of Engineers Without Borders and a student ambassador in the admissions office. "I also maintain my social life and my GPA, and everything else while averaging 16-hour semesters. This has been the most challenging for me but also one of my greatest teachers. Balancing all things has forced me to learn to prioritize and knowing what and when to say no to."

Davis credits the lab lessons and group projects from her coursework with helping prepare her for the internship experience, as "those are most similar to what you'll see on an actual job."

"I had the opportunity to gain both office and field experience on both my internships, which is a phenomenal background to have if I do decide to pursue a career in construction management," Davis says. "Both experiences really helped me be more independent as both were away from home. They also helped me increase my technical knowledge."

Her experience this summer as a superintendent intern at Turner Construction wasn't her first internship. The summer after her freshman year, Davis worked as a project engineer intern at Clayco. At the time, she hadn't yet taken many of the technical classes related to her major.

"I learned much of the information that I would go on to learn in my classes at my internships, as well as things that can't really be taught in a classroom," she says.

Davis's interest in infrastructure was sparked when she was a young girl living in Jamaica, where tropical storms often caused damage to bridges and other infrastructure.

"I wanted to look into solutions," she says. "I thought there had to be something better because it's a reoccurring issue. Being in a developing country, a lot of times the real issue isn't fixed – a bandage is put on it."

As part of the university's Opportunities for Undergraduate Research Experience program, Davis studies how hyperspectral images of plants can be used to determine their chemical composition. The goal is to develop a technology that can be used in classrooms as early as high school that's both inexpensive and user-friendly.

"The technology would help students learn about the different parts of plants and how plants act as a chemical holder for the things in the environment around it," she says. "The plants can give information about location as well as other indicators of the environment in which it was planted and grew."

Despite all her hard work, Davis says the most rewarding part of meeting every day activities and challenges is how she's able to inspire and connect with those she comes into contact with.

"Being a black female in engineering, I always feel a sense of pride when my peers tell me that they are inspired or motivated by actions," she says. 🍌

Supporting Growth

FSP scholarships give faculty new opportunities

STORY BY: RYAN GAVIN

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: APRIL LANGLEY AND KIRUBA KRISHNASWAMY

The UM System Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion supports scholarships for the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity’s Faculty Success Program. This is an intensive virtual bootcamp where academics work directly with a coach and small group of other faculty to implement the skills and strategies to maximize their

success. Provided through the NCFDD, the program is for advanced post-docs, tenure-track faculty and tenured faculty who are looking for coaching and peer support to propel their research productivity and work-life balance to new levels.

Two Mizzou recipients have shared what the experience has meant to them.

April Langley

Chair, Department of Black Studies
Associate Professor, English

When I started my Faculty Success Program plan a couple of semesters ago, I was hoping to revise a conference paper into an article. Following the FSP program — and learning so much about time management, prioritizing my writing and research time, creating a plan of action for achieving my professional goals, as well as the community of small groups of peers and coaches across the nation, and a couple new colleagues I met locally — has been challenging at times, especially during my first semester as chair.

By the end of the first FSP, I had reached out to new mentors and potential sponsors, taken the advice of FSP program and asked others to read my draft. The comments they offered were amazing. And, something incredible happened: I spent so much time writing and researching that the article became a few draft chapters. This summer, I was actually able to fine tune, and revise and I currently have a draft of my next book — the one I hope will move me from associate to full professor.

I’ve written three chapters, an introduction, conclusion, and preface with tons of notes. I’ve actually increased my writing productivity to an average of 10 hours a week, and I now have a writing buddy I meet with over Zoom at 7 a.m. nearly every morning. I’ve a well-articulated strategic plan for the completion of this book, and I’ve also spent time working on a second book project. I’ve completed an introduction which I sent to a peer to read.

Although, it’s not always easy to prioritize research as a woman of color tenured professor, FSP has taught me how to better manage those resources and time I have. I’ve also began holding my junior faculty accountable to their strategic plans, and they have began using strategic plans to work with their grad assistants.

The point I want to make here is that FSP has been an invaluable resource, one that I wish I had access to sooner, but one that I am extremely grateful to have been supported by the Division of Inclusion, Diversity & Equity and the College of Arts and Science. It has been important to me to actually network with other faculty across the U.S. who share some of my same concerns, women of color, white women, first generation, and others who have common experiences, and also to be in groups with other “long in the tooth” associate professors working toward promotion.

Kiruba Krishnaswamy

Assistant Professor (Sustainable Food Engineering),
Department of Bioengineering and Department of Food Science

Just getting into the FSP made me feel like I’m not alone — there are so many people like me with all these questions. And I learned that there are no dumb questions because someone might have the same question as you. There are people who have overcome these struggles, and if they can do it, so can you.

Every week, there is an open module, and you can learn at your own pace — watch the videos and learn from that. The strategy plan was very helpful. With so many things to do, it helps you to see what is important. As a non-tenure tenure-track professor, you get so many things like research and teaching, how do you find time to allocate what is most important to help you reach your goals of tenure? There was also one particular module that says it’s not only about work, it’s important to have balance with your personal life. Little things, but it makes a big difference because you can forget when you’re loaded with so many things.

Connections with the group vary person to person. Unfortunately with my group, it was during summer and a lot of people were also traveling for things like conferences. But we know that we are connected with folks in different parts and that we can reach out to them.

My recommendation in pursuing this program is to find a time that works well for you. You want some options. Once the group is formed, then you can’t change your time slots. I picked a day during the week and it was difficult with meetings, but find some time you can dedicated to it. Also having the time allocated for yourself is very helpful.

I would definitely recommend this program to anybody considering it. The modules are good and then they have good resources. The website is great, and you can use the online tool to find a buddy to write and accountability buddies so you can get people who are similar to you to work with you. They’re doing their project, you’re doing yours, but it’s someone you can talk to, which is a unique feature.

I wish there were more programs like this. I appreciate the vision to come up with this because there were no programs like this here. Experience it, it will be really good! 🌈

Triumphant Return

STORY AND PHOTO BY: RYAN GAVIN



Eli Kean joined the Division of Inclusion, Diversity & Equity as the LGBTQ Resource Center's Coordinator in August 2019. They are an affiliate faculty member with Mizzou's Women's and Gender Studies department, serve as adviser for Queer Liberation Front, and are a member of several professional organizations such as AERA and ACPA.

Kean got degrees from MU (Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology, Environmental Studies minor), UMKC (Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration) and Michigan State University (Ph.D., Curriculum & Instruction) before joining MU's staff. Get to know them better!

WHAT LED YOU BACK TO MU AFTER GETTING YOUR BACHELOR'S DEGREE HERE?

I spent some time in the non-profit sector, I've done some faculty work, many iterations of higher ed administration work, and I'm really happy to be here to support LGBTQ students and serve as a resource for other students, faculty and staff on campus for queer and trans issues.

Working on LBGTQ issues is my biggest passion in regards to education, so working as the coordinator of the resource center is a really great opportunity to work with students, which I find really fulfilling. And I also get to serve as an education portal for folks who want to serve our LGBTQ students better; to educate folks on why the presence of LGBTQ students, faculty and staff really matter; and to make this a better place to be. I want to serve as someone who can provide advice, support and outreach on all issues no matter what your question is.

I didn't expect to be back. Columbia is a place where if you love it, you might stay a long time. I'm from Kansas City originally, so it's never been too far from home, but this passion that exists in this space drew me back in.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT HAVE SURPRISED YOU ABOUT THE WORK SO FAR?

I wouldn't say I've had any great surprises. Mizzou is in a pretty great place at the moment in terms of wanting to be inclusive and affirming of LGBTQ people. My colleagues are wonderful, and that makes the job completely worth all of the stress that comes from working in higher ed sometimes.

I will say that it's great to be back at Mizzou because the students are so passionate about social justice issues, and that's something I have not seen at other universities. It's just something very unique to Columbia, to Mizzou, and I am very grateful that this spirit is still here. I felt it when I was a student; just the fact that students are passionate about making the community a better place and fighting for social justice really empowers me to do my job and fight for their needs even harder.

WHAT DREW YOU TO HIGHER ED, BOTH AS A STUDENT AND A PROFESSION?

It's the impact you can have on future generations. Working for non-profits is great, working in politics is impactful in its own way, but there's just something about knowing that no matter how long you stay in higher ed, you will be impacting the next generation and everyone they interact with. It's very intriguing to me. As a trans person, the negative experiences I had as a student has really strengthened my conviction to work in this area.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR GOALS AS THE NEW COORDINATOR?

I would really like to strengthen the connections that the resource center has with faculty. I think there's a lot that can be done in terms of collaborating with them, working on how gender and sexuality are taught in our classes. I know a lot of departments have classes that talk about these topics, but at this point we're not really sure how they're being taught, whether they're using best practices, whether they're using the right terminology, so that's something I would like to work toward.

At the same time, I want to work toward affirming policies. We have the preferred name policy, we have some good movement on gender-neutral bathrooms, but what else can we do to really provide an affirming and safe space for LGBTQ students moving forward?

I hope that faculty will be more willing to consider my expertise in terms of curriculum and creating courses that are affirming and welcoming. I hope we can have some strong collaborations and relationships where maybe there hasn't been that before.

SO OUTSIDE OF THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT, HOW DO YOU LIKE TO SPEND YOUR TIME?

I love to be out in nature and consider myself to be an amateur nature photographer. I love taking photographs of trees and sunsets and flowers and whatever. [Note: You can give Eli a follow on Instagram at @eeveekay]. I like playing video games and just spending time with friends. When time and money allow, I like to travel. I enjoy learning about new cultures and thinking about philosophical questions, just growing as a person and doing things that make me feel fulfilled in myself and my relationships with others is really important to me. 🌈

Past, Present and Future

Panel discusses LGBTQ+ rights and history at UMSL



Panel members Mark Pope, Susan Kashubeck-West, Harry Hawkins and Cassidy Flynn pose with a University of Missouri-St. Louis poster, which had the words "sexual orientation" covered with Wite-Out.

STORY AND PHOTO BY: BURK KROHE

An important poster hangs in Woods Hall, but few people give it a second glance as they walk past.

It looks like an ordinary University of Missouri-St. Louis promotional poster from a previous era. A group of students is gathered, wearing the chunky sweatshirts and high-waisted jeans fashionable at the time. But look closer and a small detail reveals a much larger story.

Two words of the text at the bottom of the poster are censored with Wite-Out. Those words: sexual orientation.

The poster was the centerpiece of a discussion titled, "Queer and Now: Erasure and Reclamation" held at the Millennium Student Center. The event, which was sponsored by LGBTQ+ Initiatives and the PRIZM Queer – Trans – Straight Alliance, wrapped up programming for LGBTQ+ History Month.

The panel featured Cassidy Flynn, associate director of development, leadership giving; Harry Hawkins, LGBTQ+ coordinator; Mark Pope, retired Curators' Distinguished Professor Emeritus of counseling and former chair of the Department of Counseling and Family Therapy; and Susan Kashubeck-West, professor and associate chair in the Department of Education Sciences and Professional Programs.

Flynn used the poster as a jumping off point for a discussion on the historical push to get LGBTQ+ faculty, staff and students recognized as a protected class by the University of Missouri System. According to a discussion Flynn had with Chancellor Emeritus Blanche M. Touhill, sustained efforts began around 1986.

Around 1989, the first student LGBTQ+ student group was formed at UMSL. The poster was produced around this time, as well. However, it wasn't until the mid 2000s that LGBTQ+ faculty, staff and students were finally recognized as a protected group via a UM System resolution.

"This was a big deal because people had been working for this for 16 years trying to get a non-discrimination policy passed, so that people like me couldn't be fired because somebody didn't approve of my lifestyle," Kashubeck-West said.

She noted that until then, LGBTQ+ faculty and staff often lived in fear of being fired – to the point that many people completely hid their relationships at work.

"This sounds like something that that might have been happening in the '50s or the '60s, but I got here in '01, so this was probably around '05, somewhere in there, that this happened," Kashubeck-West said. "It was a big deal."

Before the discussion shifted to a Q&A session with the audience, the panel addressed the work that still needs to be done on LGBTQ+ issues. Hawkins specifically highlighted issues related to transgender and non-binary people.

"Being the LGBTQ+ coordinator, I work with transgender and non-binary students," Hawkins said. "I think when we look at our policies, we are, for the most part, good."

However, he said a lot of education still needs to be done on day-to-day interactions with transgender and non-binary students.

"Increasing the number of gender-neutral bathrooms on our campuses is an initiative that I think we need to really be looking at," he said.

But in general, UMSL faculty have been very receptive to being educated. Hawkins' Safe Zone training sessions, which cover LGBTQ+ issues, regularly fill up even though they are not mandatory.

"We have people that genuinely want to learn about this community," Hawkins said. "I'm currently looking at ways of expanding Safe Zone a little further and maybe having our regular Safe Zone training, then if you've taken that one, when you come back for another one, that's just trans specific issues."

Overall, Hawkins was pleased with the campus participation in the LGBTQ+ History Month, including the final panel.

"Our committee has done a fantastic job," Hawkins said. "I could not have done it without them. The events have been very well attended. We've touched on so many different topics that the LGBT community have to deal with on a daily basis." 🌈

UMKC Student President Means Business

With his eye on the Missouri governor’s mansion, Justice Horn has big plans to improve life on campus and beyond

STORY BY: PATRICIA O’DELL

PHOTOS BY: BRANDON PARIGO

Justice Horn ’21

Hometown: Blue Springs, Missouri

High school: Blue Springs High School

Degree program: Business Administration



Justice Horn went from being a transfer student to UMKC Student Government Association’s first black and openly gay president in one semester. A former college athlete, whose coming out received national attention, he has shifted his focus and determination to serving the UMKC and Kansas City communities.

You started college at Northern State University in South Dakota as a wrestler and transferred to UMKC after your first year.

HOW WAS THE TRANSITION, AND HOW WAS BEING A TRANSFER STUDENT DIFFERENT THAN YOUR EXPERIENCE AS A FRESHMAN?

I don’t feel as if I was treated differently when I came to UMKC even though I didn’t start as a freshman. I’m living proof that new people — black, white, Christian, Muslim — all over campus are accepted. I think that that is something that really makes us different from other schools. That’s why I’m happy to represent the university. There are so many examples of inclusion across campus.

ARE YOU A FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT?

I am not a first-generation college student, but my mother is. She returned to college at UMKC to finish her undergrad degree when I was in elementary school. I remember playing on the campus green with my dad and siblings while waiting for her to get out of class.

YOUR MOTHER WAS THE SOLE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR YOUR FAMILY BECAUSE OF YOUR FATHER’S SEIZURE DISORDER. HOW DID GROWING UP WITH THE UNCERTAINTY OF HIS HEALTH AFFECT YOU?

It was a really interesting environment. There was always some anxiety — you never knew what would happen next, or if this seizure would be the last one. But it gave me a constant feeling of understanding that you never know what people are going through. It made me aware of the need to always be kind.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE UMKC?

I chose UMKC for a couple of reasons. I had a life-changing experience that made me reevaluate what would truly make me happy and I realized that I need to serve others. Last fall, I lost my friend and teammate, Curtis LeMair. This changed my life and pushed me to reevaluate what

I was doing. I woke up one day and thought, “is being involved in wrestling really giving back to the world? Is that what I want to be remembered for?” That led me to UMKC.

DO YOU MISS WRESTLING?

I do miss wrestling and I’ve been grappling with that for a couple of weeks. I miss the camaraderie of my teammates and my coaches, especially because they really gave me the faith and the strength to come out.

YOU’VE SAID THAT YOU WERE INSPIRED BY MICHAEL SAM, WHO PLAYED AT MIZZOU AND WAS THE FIRST OPENLY GAY NFL PLAYER, WHEN YOU WERE CONSIDERING COMING OUT. WHILE IT’S IMPRESSIVE TO BE SO OPEN IN SUCH TRADITIONALLY MALE, HETEROSEXUAL ENVIRONMENTS, DO YOU EVER WISH THAT SOMEDAY SEXUAL ORIENTATION WON’T BE OF NOTE?

I have been the first at a lot of things, but I’m aware of the shoulders I stand on and how my actions affect the people who come after me. That’s why I do it. I wonder when we will get to a day that it’s not a big deal, but that only happens when someone is first. We don’t talk about who the first woman student body president was here because it happened. It was a big deal! But now it’s the norm. We have to move through these firsts and it does take time.

HOW DOES BEING BACK IN KANSAS CITY FEEL?

It feels great, but also like a responsibility. I feel as if I need to set an example. I don’t want to compare myself to President Obama, but a lot of people have stereotypes about what a gay, lesbian or transgender person is like. It’s almost like being an ambassador for my community to break those old stigmas. That goes for me being in the LGBT community, but also being a person of color.

SCROLLING THROUGH YOUR TWITTER AND INSTAGRAM FEEDS IT ALMOST LOOKS AS IF YOU WERE EMBEDDED IN THE KANSAS CITY MAYORAL ELECTION. RATHER THAN ALIGNING WITH ONE CANDIDATE YOU WERE ABLE TO INTERACT WITH SEVERAL OF THE CANDIDATES. WAS THAT INTENTIONAL?

Yes. During the election I knew that I wanted to run for student body president. There were people who wanted me to make an endorsement, but the city will be looking at transportation — including the new street car extensions — and housing around campus. I like getting involved, but I took a back seat and watched so that I would be better prepared in this role no matter who our next mayor was.

DO YOU SEE UMKC PLAYING A ROLE IN THE GROWTH OF THE CITY?

It seems like everyone is buying in at the same time. We have a new mayor and a new chancellor. We have a new athletic director, head basketball coach and Roo. The provost is launching her new student success plan. The best thing we can do is support each other and just — I’m not saying do nothing — but ride the wave. 🌈

Accessibility Partnership

Able-Disable aims to make UMSL more inclusive for students with disabilities

STORY BY: STEVE VALENTIK

PHOTOS BY: AUGUST JENNEWAIN



Able-Disable Partnership co-founder Jacob Smith received the Student Advocate of the Year Award last year for his work on behalf of students with disabilities.

Jacob Smith allowed himself a brief moment to marvel at the turnout when the Able-Disable Partnership gathered for its first meeting of the 2019-20 academic year. Only one or two chairs remained unfilled as a group of 30-some people packed into the small meeting room on the third floor of the Millennium Student Center at the University of Missouri–St. Louis.

There were men and women, students of different races and ethnic backgrounds — all inspired by the chance to raise awareness of people with physical as well as intellectual and developmental disabilities and advocate for ways to improve their experiences on campus.

“It’s been pretty amazing,” Smith says. “There was a time when this was just an idea in my head.”

About a year earlier, Smith, a triple major in psychology, history and secondary education, joined the Student Government Association as a means of getting involved. The Jefferson College transfer was meeting with Myrina Otey, then the SGA’s student director of diversity and inclusion, and they were discussing ways UMSL could be more inclusive for racial and ethnic minorities as well as LGBTQ+ members of the campus community. Smith urged her to also give a voice to students with disabilities.

There currently are 420 students at UMSL registered to receive accommodations from Disability Access Services, though the number of students with disabilities is almost certainly higher because not all disabilities are reported.

Smith remembers Otey asking him if there was a student organization devoted to disability issues. When he answered that there wasn’t, she told him he should start one.

“You’re right, I should,” he said.

That set the process in motion. Smith had been challenged by his own disability — autism — throughout his life. At the time, he was volunteering with UMSL SUCCEED, the post-secondary program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. He felt motivated to try to make a difference.

He met Luke Barber through the SUCCEED program and asked if Barber, a dual major in public policy and administration and social work, would like to help develop a disability-focused student organization. Barber had participated in the Missouri Developmental Disability Council’s Partners in Policymaking program in 2018 and was eager to join the effort. It was his idea to call it the Able-Disable Partnership. Jacob Brandt, a computer science major who’d befriended Smith while at Jefferson College, also got involved as the partnership was getting off the ground. So, too, did Kevin Hill, a business major who’d led an earlier effort to create such an organization.

They only needed to gather six more signatures from interested students before they could petition to become an officially recognized student organization. They won approval in January with Associate Teaching Professor Leighanne Heisel from the Department of Communication and Media and Assistant Professor Lauren Obermark from the Department of English serving as their faculty advisers.

Smith’s original vision for the partnership was to generate broad awareness for disability issues, and the organization has hosted a series of forums starting last spring on visual impairment and autism. But he and his co-founders have also seen specific areas where UMSL can improve to meet the latest Americans with Disabilities Act standards and become a more welcoming place for students with disabilities.

“This group has definitely opened people’s eyes,” Brandt said. “A year ago, I wasn’t very big in the disability access stuff at all, and now I’ve become a huge advocate. The more I saw, the more I immersed myself with this diverse group of people, I saw the problems that are in place. When we talk to people, they just go, ‘You know what? You’ve got a point there. I never thought about that. I never considered that.’”

Last semester, Brandt and fellow student Maxwell Agbakpem, who uses a wheelchair, worked with Dean of Libraries Christopher Dames and other staff members to help create an accessible study room in the Thomas Jefferson Library. They are also adding an accessible desk to the computer lab.

Hill had started a list of places on campus that were difficult to navigate for people with physical impairments.

The Able-Disable Partnership has been adding to it and next semester plans to hold a “Disability Walk and Roll” event — similar to the SGA’s annual safety walk — to move around campus looking for areas of concern.

Beyond the infrastructure issues that might exist, the Able-Disable Partnership has also been working with other student groups and educating them on being more inclusive for people with disabilities.

People at UMSL have been open to listening and making changes.

“Now that they’re hearing a lot of these issues, they’re very willing to work with us,” Smith said. “I know a lot of the people that we’ve worked with and met with, they’re really excited about this group. They love that this came together.” 🌈

A GEM of a Scholar

Mining engineering graduate student Jose L. Corchado-Albelo joins Missouri S&T as the first GEM University Fellow in over a decade



STORY BY: ANDREW CARREAGA

PHOTOS BY: TOM WAGNER

It seems appropriate that a GEM University Fellow would choose to study mining engineering. After all, gems must be mined. Jose L. Corchado-Albelo joined Missouri S&T this fall as the first GEM University Fellow in over a decade.

As a member of the National GEM Consortium, Missouri S&T is working to encourage students like Corchado-Albelo and others from underrepresented groups to pursue master's or Ph.D. degrees in engineering or science disciplines.

Corchado-Albelo is pursuing a master's degree in mining engineering at S&T. He earned a bachelor's degree in geology from the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez (UPRM) in July 2018 following an internship at the University of Texas-Austin, where he worked in the Jackson School of Geosciences' UT Chron Geo-Thermochronometry Laboratory. The lab's internship program provides students with experience in geochemistry, geochronology (studying the age of rocks) and thermochronology (the study of when and how rocks solidified).

"My attraction to Missouri S&T began when I was looking at my graduate school options and observed the great laboratory equipment and research options in mining engineering," says Corchado-Albelo, who is from Quebradillas, Puerto Rico. "After speaking to my professors and academic advisors, I concluded that continuing my graduate studies at Missouri S&T was the perfect option for me."

As a GEM University Fellow, Corchado-Albelo will hold a 50% graduate research assistantship position and will receive full coverage of tuition and fees.

Founded in 1976 at the University of Notre Dame, the National GEM Consortium's mission is to increase the number of engineering and science graduate students from underrepresented groups (African Americans, Native Americans and Hispanic Americans). Originally known as the National Consortium for Graduate Engineering Degrees for Minorities, over the years the consortium has supported more than 3,000 researchers, professors, entrepreneurs, inventors and business

leaders, including over 200 men and women with doctorates in the physical sciences, life sciences and engineering.

"We're very excited to have an exceptional scholar like Jose join our university as a GEM University Fellow," says Dr. Costas Tsatsoulis, vice chancellor of research and dean of graduate studies at Missouri S&T. "For more than 40 years, this prestigious program has opened doors of opportunity for many young engineers and scientists, who have gone on to successful careers in industry, government, research and education, as entrepreneurs, and as mentors to future generations. Jose now joins that long legacy of success."

Corchado-Albelo credits his academic advisor at UPRM, Dr. Hernan Santos, a professor of geology, as well as a UPRM graduate now in the mining industry, for encouraging him to consider graduate study in mining engineering. His research advisor, Dr. Thomas Hudgins, an assistant professor of petrology and geochemistry, "was the first to suggest Missouri S&T as a great university to research mining engineering," Corchado-Albelo adds.

"For the GEM University Fellowship, however, all credit goes to materials engineering Professor Marcelo Suarez," he says. "He is the person who introduced me to the GEM Fellowship and encouraged me to apply for the program. He highlighted all the great opportunities that come with becoming a GEM Fellow and how these could benefit my career."

Over 1,300 students apply for various GEM fellowships every year. Those selected have an average grade point average of 3.5 across a wide variety of majors.

At S&T, Corchado-Albelo plans to focus on mining reclamation – the process of restoring land that has been mined. He's also interested in rock mechanics, mineral characterization and mine planning.

"I look forward to gaining great research experience through evaluating and characterizing critical minerals from base metal processing streams," he says. 🍎

Beloved Community

UMSL volunteers make their mark around the region on MLK Day of Service



STORY BY: STEVE VALENTIK

PHOTOS BY: AUGUST JENNEWEIN

Demarcos Biggs pulled down the white dusk mask over his mouth as he lifted the mini roller out of the paint pan lying on the floor. He trained his eyes on the doorframe and went to work. His hand moved up and down quickly, purposefully, but he took care to lift the door latch out of the way to keep it clean from the fresh coat.

Biggs, a senior psychology major at the University of Missouri–St. Louis, could have been doing a lot of things on the final day of his winter break. Or he could have been doing nothing at all. Instead, he was doing his part to spruce up the walls of an old daycare space at the Signal Hill United Methodist Church across the river in Belleville, Illinois.

He was among the more than 120 volunteers, including students, faculty, staff and alumni, giving up a few hours of their time – more than 380 hours combined – on service projects around the St. Louis region as part of UMSL's 12th annual MLK Day of Service.

"Honestly, I said to myself, 'What am I going to be doing with today?'" Biggs said. "I'm not in school. I've got to work later on today, but I said I'm going to also give my time to the community."

Biggs was a first-time participant in the event – organized by UMSL Students of Service in observance of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday – but he'd felt the payoff from giving back last year while going on an alternative spring break trip to Louisville, Kentucky. He's sought out opportunities to help where he can ever since.

"It felt really rewarding giving back to the community," he said. "I didn't think it would. I thought it would feel like I was doing free work or whatever, but when you do it and actually see the lives that you're changing and the impact, it does something to you."

Dorian Hall, the associate director of the Millennium Student Center and an UMSL graduate, lives near Signal Hill and is involved in a local chapter of Blessings in a Backpack that uses the church for food storage and preparation. He recommended it as a work site for this year's day of service.

"This was really a way to help the church get some of the things done that they needed to be able to better support the community and better support other organizations that want to do things in the community," Hall said.

Hall, Biggs, recent graduate Taylor Milon and MSC guest relations coordinator Joshua Givens got plenty of help from a group of 26 high school students from Westchester County, New York. They were part of the organization J-Teen Leadership, a community service, leadership development organization for Jewish high school students from all backgrounds and affiliations, based in White Plains, less than 30 miles north of New York City.

J-Teen sends a group of teenagers on a national service trip each year to a different part of the country, and they had been in town all weekend doing service work around the region.

"We engage 200 teens in our monthly leadership circle meetings," high school senior Abe Baker-Butler said. "Each year we work with about a thousand of teens overall on projects ranging from local community service initiatives to service trips like this one to interfaith speakers and events. Today, while we're here in St. Louis, there are 200 of us back home leading an interfaith event packing supplies for disaster stricken areas."

The J-Teen leaders had been looking for a service opportunity to round out their weekend before returning to home.

"They found us online," said Milon, the site coordinator at Signal Hill. "If you Google us, we're the first people that pop up, and they got in touch with Dr. Ashlee Roberts, who's the advisor for UMSL Students of Service."

That speaks to the reputation and reach UMSL's MLK Day of Service has built over the past 12 years.

This year, it featured eight sites: two with the City of Florissant, Gateway Greening, Good Shepherd Arts Center, LifeBridge Partnership, Mid-County Family YMCA and the UMSL MSC, in addition to Signal Hill.

"Our key goal on MLK Day of Service is to serve organizations that serve every day," Roberts said. "Our guiding question is: Would this be completed without volunteers?"

There is never a shortage of organizations in need the help.

"There were a lot of options to do," said senior Elizabeth Younger, who volunteered with approximately 40 other members of the UMSL community at the City of Florissant Development Project.

She helped repaint the walls of the city's media center, used for filming public service announcements and other videos, in the basement of the Florissant Government Building.

Upstairs, volunteers constructed wood boxes that will be used as free libraries around the community.

"This seemed the most beneficial to where we go to school and live," said Younger, an education major studying middle school English Language Arts. "I wanted to do something local and that directly went back to the community that we're in."

Even closer to campus, a group of eight students and database program manager Chris Miller worked to apply fresh paint to the walls of the Good Shepherd Arts Center for the first time since its opening in 2015 in Ferguson, Missouri.

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd established the arts center in 2015, a year after the shooting death of Michael Brown, with the intention of creating a presence of peace in community. The center highlights the work of artists in north St. Louis County.

Executive Director Sister Glynis Mary McManamon and Program Director Patricia Johnson were grateful for the volunteers.

"We're looking at these gals, and they just have amazing energy and focus and dedication and provided a lot of reinforcement support to us," McManamon said. "We're just so grateful they signed up to take us on. This was our first year. With all these willing, young ladies and Mr. Miller, we just have seen an amazing transformation." 🍎

An App For That

Campus mental health and well-being a priority for UM System

STORY BY: ERIK POTTER

PHOTOS BY: SAM O'KEEFE



A student's well-being is closely linked to student success both academically and professionally. Recent news stories about student mental health awareness have become prominent across the country. Stories like the suicide of a graduate student at UW-Madison serve as a cautionary tale that the university environment can be a challenging and difficult place where students may suffer instead of thriving.

During the June 2019 Board of Curators meeting, the Intercampus Faculty Council (IFC) Roundtable discussed what faculty members are seeing in their classrooms when it comes to student mental health. This meeting featured a Critical Issues discussion on the topic, which included a panel, breakout sessions and a presentation on a possible new resource for students.

By working with mental health professionals at the four universities, the UM System Office of Academic Affairs, IFC and the Board of Curators identified strategies that would make a positive impact. Because of this focus on mental well-being, the UM System is expanding resources to address these issues. The newest resource available includes a systemwide app subscription called Sanvello, available for any student, faculty or staff member with a university email address.

Created by psychologists, Sanvello helps users with mild to moderate stress, anxiety and depression by providing real techniques to relieve

these symptoms. The app checks in with the user by asking questions to capture mood, identify patterns and self-assess progress. Sanvello takes the user's answers to create a roadmap for improvement by setting weekly goals and tracking progress on their mental health journey.

Sanvello also has special tools to help students cope with common stressful situations, like test-taking, public speaking or even morning dread - when a person wakes up with large amounts of anxiety about facing their day. There are even community support forums where users can post their feelings on different topics and categories, allowing them to interact with users who have similar experiences. These forums focus on a range of topics, from school stress and relationships to books, movies and mantras to help improve mood.

The Sanvello app, which launched systemwide on Nov. 1, is the newest resource the UM System provides for its students, faculty and staff. But this app is not the only resource available for students and staff in the UM System.

In addition to the app, professors and other academic leaders from all four UM System campuses are invited to sign up for RESPOND: Partners for Campus Mental Health. This free course provides a basic overview of symptoms associated with mental health problems and offers an action plan to help people to RESPOND effectively, empowering them to offer effective support to students and colleagues. 🌈

Williams On Board

Meet the UM System's new curator

STORY BY: TARA PRINDLE

PHOTOS BY: CLAIRE HASSLER

Michael Williams, the University of Missouri System's newest curator, is just getting acquainted with his new position, but he already has many goals and plans.

Appointed by Gov. Mike Parson in August, Williams was confirmed by the Missouri Senate in September to represent the Kansas City-based 5th Congressional District on the Board of Curators for the next six years. There is currently one vacancy on the nine-member board, which just elected Julia Brncic as its 2020 chair.

A double MU alumnus (he graduated with his bachelor's degree in 1995 and his Juris Doctor in 1998), Williams has returned to MU twice as an adjunct professor for the School of Law.

"I loved Mizzou. I spent eight years here, and it's the longest I've ever lived anywhere," he said. "My undergrad was fantastic. I had my fraternity, my other friends and my professors were people I've known since I went to Missouri Scholars Academy. There was always a community for me here at Mizzou, and I truly enjoyed it. Hopefully, we're going to make sure that people are enjoying it for decades."

So far, Williams has been getting familiar with the four-campus system. He still plans on making a visit to Missouri S&T for his orientation.

"I started by doing my orientation at the system, learning all my responsibilities," Williams said. "And then we go to each campus and spend a day getting orientated by that campus. I learn what the student population is, how it recruits its students, the graduation rates and how the curators can help the university."

As an alumnus, Williams understands the importance of keeping open communication goals with students, especially when it comes to diversity issues.

"One of the most important things is meeting the students to find out what the real issues are," he said. "My goal, and what I think our focus is, (is) if there's a problem, students have to be comfortable reporting it. The only way that we can make sure that students feel safe and want to be here is to make sure they have an outlet. So, if there is a problem, let's nip it in the bud. Whether it's something with a professor, other students or something happens in the community, we want to know, and we want to address it."

Williams currently lives and works in Kansas City. A founding partner of law firm Williams Dirks Dameron LLC, he specializes in labor law. His training influences the way he assesses issues.

"There's an old phrase that everybody hates, and it's, 'think like a lawyer,'" Williams said. "I get to know what the factual issues are. My first question always has to be, 'What are we trying to do? What is our end goal?' Then I gather the facts so that I can make a competent decision about the process I'm going to do to get that end goal."



After being at MU for many years and participating in the community, Williams said he wants to understand students' wants, faculty needs, how the administration is meeting those needs and what he can do to help them move forward.

"I've been involved in different committees for the university, and I'm always around town," he said. "So for me, it's people understanding that I want to do the best I can for the system. My goal is to make sure that we're in a better place when I leave than when I started this six-year term." 🌈

This story originally appeared in the Columbia Missourian.

UMKC Vice Chancellor Honored With Statue

Susan Wilson listed among contemporary icons of the African American community at sculpture site



The plaque below the sculpture is emblazoned with the names of giants, 18 in all, including Lucille Bluford, Julia Hill, Mamie Hughes, Leon Jordan, Ollie Gates, Bruce Watkins — and UMKC Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion Susan B. Wilson, PhD.

STORY BY: JOHN MARTELLARO

PHOTOS BY: BRANDON PARIGO

The plaque accompanies a statue, “Phoenix Rising Out of the Ashes,” erected earlier this year at the redeveloped Linwood Shopping Center at the intersection of 31st St. and Prospect Ave. Created by sculptor Ed Dwight, the artwork is a tribute to the perseverance and resiliency of the people in the surrounding neighborhoods, and their effort to overcome generations of oppression and neglect.

Several plaques surround the sculpture; the one that includes Wilson is a salute to “the contemporary contributors to the progress, the legacy, the culture and the economic viability of Kansas City.”

There was no blue-ribbon committee appointed to choose the individuals to be honored. The artist made the decision on his own.

“I looked for people who struck a chord within me,” as he did his research for the statue, Dwight said. He grew up in Kansas City, Kansas, but left decades ago and is a longtime resident of Denver. He combed through the Black Archives of Mid America, seeking inspiration.

Wilson “teaches people the value of diversity and inclusion,” Dwight said. “That’s what I do through my art, and as I read about her, I felt some kinship with what she was doing.”

Wilson has a long history as a diversity advocate, psychologist and educator. In her work as a community mental health director, she sought to bringing culturally competent care to central city African Americans. She led the implementation of Jackson County’s first-ever mental health court, working with municipal court to divert non-violent individuals with mental health issues to treatment, not jail. She has served as a treating clinician for the Kansas City Chiefs and the National Football League.

A UMKC vice chancellor since 2014, Wilson implemented a comprehensive, campuswide plan for diversity and inclusion, built

diversity and inclusion training programs and led efforts to conduct a climate survey. She has also worked with numerous school districts and community organizations to advance diversity and inclusion.



Wilson had no idea the honor was coming. Dwight did not reveal the names of honorees in advance of the unveiling.

“A friend texted me from the unveiling,” Wilson recalled. “I was shocked. It is very flattering to be on a plaque with some of the great leaders of Kansas City. With the kind of work I do, people don’t often know what kind of impact I make.”

Wilson said her post at UMKC is just one example of the university’s close ties to the metro Kansas City community.

“Some universities can be like ivory towers on a high hill above their community,” Wilson said. “UMKC’s practice of hiring people with community connections is a real plus.”