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FALL 2024

A publication of the Division of Student Life
& Engagement at Michigan State University

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Culinary Services

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging

Residence Education and Housing Services

Student Development and Leadership

SVP Student Life & Engagement

sle.msu.edu

Serving State is an online publication for guests and partners of the Division of Student Life & Engagement at Michigan State University. Our goal is to share divisional news and initiatives with Team MSU. Serving State is produced by Division of Student Life & Engagement Strategic Communication, 550 S. Harrison Road, Michigan State University, 517-353-1694.

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We collectively acknowledge that Michigan State University occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Lands of the Anishinaabeg — Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi peoples. In particular, the university resides on land ceded in the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw. We recognize, support and advocate for the sovereignty of Michigan's twelve federally-recognized Indian nations, for historic Indigenous communities in Michigan, for Indigenous individuals and communities who live here now, and for those who were forcibly removed from their homelands. By offering this Land Acknowledgement, we affirm Indigenous sovereignty and will work to hold Michigan State University more accountable to the needs of American Indian and Indigenous peoples.

Cover photo: The sun rises and lights the top of Beaumont Tower.

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DESIGNING A PLACE OF GROWTH

A MESSAGE FROM THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR THE DIVISION OF STUDENT LIFE & ENGAGEMENT



THROUGH CONTINUOUS EDUCATION, PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, AND UNWAVERING SUPPORT FOR UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS, WE PRIORITIZE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING (DEIB) IN EVERYTHING WE DO.



Each semester, the Division of Student Life & Engagement (SLE) strengthens its commitment to “provide a safe and inclusive environment while holistically enriching and advancing the life of every Spartan.” Our team members are deeply passionate about this mission, and I am excited to share some of the incredible projects they have accomplished over the past few months to support our Spartan community.

This edition of *Serving State* highlights the impactful work of our team and the milestones that unite us. Through continuous education, program development, and unwavering support for underrepresented students, we prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) in everything we do. To keep pace with a rapidly changing world, we are constantly improving our technological capabilities and professional development through annual training, sustainable projects, campus enhancements, and celebrations of student success.

Our dedication to DEIB is evident in initiatives such as the Inclusive Impact Conference and the Restorative Justice Symposium, which foster collaboration and drive meaningful change. Sustainability is also at the forefront, with projects like the Skin Smart sunscreen dispensers promoting health and environmental care. Meanwhile, campus improvements throughout the summer continue to enhance the Spartan experience for all.

From celebrating the 35th anniversary of Impact 89FM — our national award-winning student radio station — to launching the Transgender Residential Experience in South Neighborhood, we are creating a more inclusive environment. Programs like MAGIC empower incoming BIPOC students, and the revitalization of the 1855 Community Garden is nurturing both cultural identity and friendships across campus.

Each story in this issue reflects the creativity, passion, and dedication that define our community and embody what it means to be a Spartan. I am immensely proud of our team’s care and commitment to making MSU a place of growth, connection, and opportunity. Together, I am confident we will continue building a brighter future for every Spartan.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vennie Gore'.

Vennie Gore
*Senior Vice President for the Division
of Student Life & Engagement*

Skin Smart Pilot Program Provides Touch-Free Sunscreen Dispensers

Michigan State University (MSU) is taking a proactive approach to sun safety with the launch of the Skin Smart pilot initiative at Spartan Greens and the Varsity Tennis Courts. This collaborative effort between University Health and Wellness (UHW), Student Life & Engagement’s Recreational Sports and Fitness Services (Rec Sports), and Infrastructure and Planning Facilities (IPF) aims to increase awareness of sun protection and encourage healthy habits across campus and the greater community.

STUDENT RESEARCH SPARKS INITIATIVE

The idea for this initiative came from an MSU medical student working on a research paper assessing photoprotective measures among skin of color populations. Recognizing the need to address potential knowledge gaps on campus, the student approached UHW, aligning with the division’s commitment to student voices and data-driven programming.

“UHW believes in elevating student voices and using data to drive programming,” says Executive Director for Health Promotion, Engagement, Accessibility Kristin Traskie. “The division agreed that becoming a Skin Smart campus would provide a positive impact on the community.”

COLLABORATION BRINGS SKIN SMART TO LIFE

Collaboration between UHW, Rec Sports and IPF was a natural fit, with each division playing a pivotal role:

- UHW spearheaded the initiative, identifying an opportunity to enhance campus health.
- Rec Sports pinpointed high-traffic outdoor areas frequented by students, staff and the community, which led to the strategic placement of the touch-free sunscreen dispensers at Spartan Greens and the Varsity Tennis Courts.
- IPF ensured the dispensers were installed and will maintain their stock.

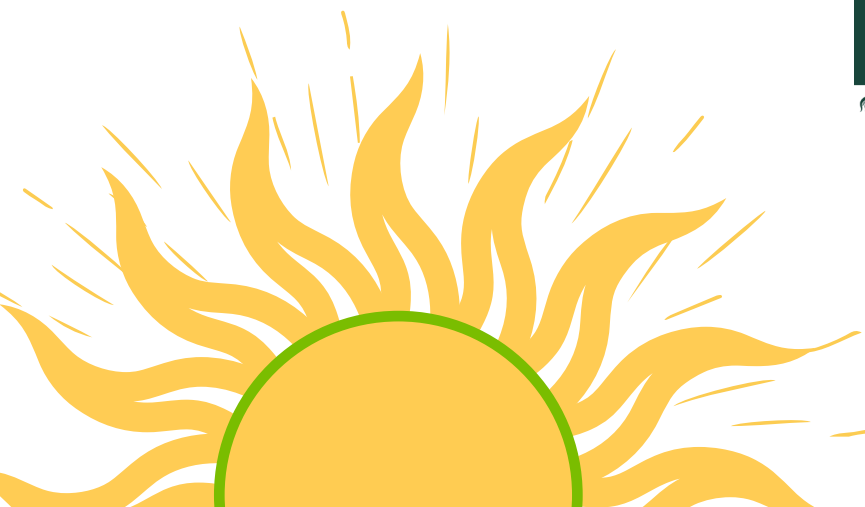
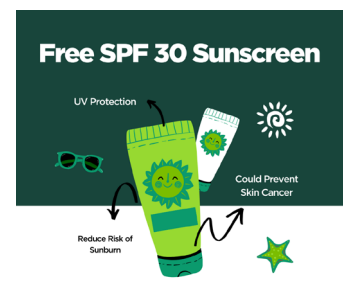
STUDENT HEALTH

The program’s launch in May was purposeful. As warmer weather encourages outdoor activities, it coincides with National Skin Cancer and Melanoma Awareness Month, highlighting the importance of proactive measures like sunscreen use to safeguard against harmful UV rays and potential skin cancers.

According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, over five million cases of skin cancer are diagnosed every year, making it America’s most common cancer. Additionally, having five or more sunburns doubles the risk for melanoma, so wearing sun protection is crucial.

“While 56% of MSU students reported not wearing sunscreen in a 2022 survey, wearing sunscreen is one easy way to protect your skin,” says Traskie.

For further information on student health data, visit the National College Health Assessment data: healthpromotion.msu.edu/data/index.html. 🌞



A DIVISION IN MOTION: SLE Keeps the Gears of MSU Turning Throughout the Summer Months

While students were busy taking a well-deserved break soaking up the summer sun, Division of Student Life & Engagement (SLE) team members were busy working on exciting improvements and initiatives to make the upcoming academic year one of the best yet. From enhanced dining experiences and state-of-the-art recreation facilities to a more inclusive living environment and a revamped MSU Union, there is a lot to look forward to for fall 2024!

AUXILIARY SPORTS GROUP: RECREATIONAL SPORTS AND FITNESS SERVICES

The Auxiliary Sports Group got fired up with the summer activities available to students and the latest changes that came to campus.

Construction on the Student Recreation and Wellness Center is in full swing, with the steel frame of the building completed in early July. As the new facility's frame takes shape, Rec Sports team members and their partners in construction and design continue to incorporate student feedback into plans for the building's interior.

The new facility is being constructed with the purpose of better fulfilling the mental and physical health needs of the Spartan community. The Student Recreation and Wellness Center addresses the need for improved fitness facilities and brings additional opportunities for students to campus via amenities, including sports simulators, a dedicated personal training suite and an Outdoor Adventure Center with a climbing wall.

Staying Active this Summer!

While the new center is under construction, summer intramural sports were a great way for students still around East Lansing to stay connected and active while having some fun in the summer sun (or, in some cases, indoors away from the heat). Summer

IM sports included tennis, Pickleball, sand volleyball, basketball, soccer and cornhole.

Looking for Something Different?

The MSU Sailing Center had been open for the season, among other things, hosting Learn to Sail classes. These classes were open to the public with discounted rates for MSU staff, students and alumni. The Sailing Center also had boats and boards for paddle sports available for rental.

This unique facility was open to the public during the summer, and provided educational and recreational opportunities to the community.

CULINARY SERVICES

Culinary Services was cooking up several initiatives designed to elevate students' on-campus dining experience, fostering a sense of community and well-being through a commitment to exceptional service, diverse culinary offerings and innovative approaches to food service.

Team Training

Team members participated in comprehensive training to ensure the team is well-versed in all facets of equipment, safety standards and customer service.

Global Grub

Additionally, culturally diverse chefs developed various cultural cuisines, adding more authenticity to the preexisting menus.

Experiential Combos and Meals Made Easy

Diners saw the launch of experiential dining, a new program that offers new, exciting ways for students to use Combo-X-Change. For added convenience, a new mobile order pickup venue at Brody allows students to order on-the-go customized meals easier than ever.

Farm to Fork

Lastly, a video featuring the Student Organic Farm will soon be available that highlights the agricultural experience, from planting to harvest to the dining table.

PLANNING AND PROJECTS OFFICE (PPO)

As the new academic year approaches, PPO had been diligently working behind the scenes to ensure a smooth and successful year for all Spartans.

Keeping SLE Safe and Secure

The SLE Safety and Security team was fast at work this summer ensuring all buildings were prepared for the upcoming fall semester. The team inspected equipment, provided training for staff and planned for potential emergencies. Additionally, Safety and Security oversaw a life safety project at the MSU Union and conducted safety audits throughout SLE, while also staying on top of water infiltration issues and other safety concerns.

A Busy Summer for SLE Project Management

SLE Project Management took on hundreds of smaller projects this summer, handling tasks like painting, flooring and signage changes. The unit also worked closely with Infrastructure Planning and Facilities (IPF) on several larger projects, including nearing completion of the Multicultural Center, the ongoing construction of the Student Recreation and Wellness Center, and the renovation of Campbell Hall, which is scheduled to reopen in August 2025 and will become the new home of the MSU Honors College.

Sustainability Efforts Continue in SLE

The SLE Sustainability team worked on several initiatives this summer, including conducting an audit of SLE buildings to identify potential lighting upgrades, providing sustainability re-training for Culinary Services staff,

and establishing an eco-ambassador program. The team also worked to reestablish sustainable practices in dining areas and collaborating with MSU Sustainability on various programs. Additionally, Sustainability was involved in planning for fall Pack Up, Pitch In, Move In, and student events focused on sustainability.

Planning for the Future

Planning is in every aspect of PPO's role. Paul Manson leads this area and coordinates an annual long-range funding process and midyear process for SLE. With assistance from SLE departments, PPO and SLE, he updates a database of thousands of deferred maintenance entries called the SLE Long-Range Asset Plan and produces long-range building repair and renovation plans for SLE improvements.

Manson represents SLE and works with SLE departments and IPF on an annual update of 75 Facility Service Level Agreements (SLA), coordinates preventative maintenance agreements for SLE buildings and keeps SLE historical building data and is a liaison to IPF for Planning and Preventative Maintenance and general questions.

RESIDENCE EDUCATION AND HOUSING SERVICES (REHS)

The REHS team is dedicated to continuously improving students' on-campus living experience. This summer, the teams focused on initiatives that promoted inclusivity, streamlined processes and enhanced overall convenience.

Racial Equity Impact Analysis Team (REIAT)

In alignment with the REHS Strategic Plan, REIAT reconvened for the summer with the purpose of reviewing REHS Standard Operating Procedures through a diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging lens by applying a racial equity impact tool. This work helped create a more equitable and inclusive Spartan experience for everyone.

Package Centers Project

REHS reviewed package centers, seeing if more can be consolidated or relocated

to better serve the volume. The team also considered adding Amazon lockers to Brody, Holden and Owen halls this academic year.

Move-In and Fall Welcome

The move-in team is a divisional group that coordinates all aspects of preparation for, and execution of, move-in and Fall Welcome functions. This year, the team is focused on:

- Stronger partnerships: Working more closely with departments like the ID Office and IPF.
- Enhanced communication: Improving internal communication to ensure everyone is on the same page.
- Smoother event overlap: Coordinating large and small events that occur around move-in.
- Warmer welcome: Creating a more welcoming experience for incoming students.

Summer Conferences

Summer conferences always bring a sense of excitement to campus! The University Conferences team manages summer conference operations for the division. The team held event meetings each week, coordinated summer conference information sharing, partnered with many operational units across the division and campus, and provided critical event information. For each conference, Facilities oversaw setting up and cleaning up both resident rooms and public/meeting spaces. Summer conference operations involve all REHS units in various roles.

Facilities Projects for the Summer

Campbell Hall underwent a major renovation, funded in part by the Honors College, to improve accessibility (ADA and gender-inclusive features), windows, roofs and the overall space. The remodel provided housing options for the Facility for Rare Isotope Beams employees, while Akers Hall saw a first phase of renovations tackling bathroom and ceiling updates, doubling occupancy and modernizing the look.

REHS is committed to inclusivity by adding single-user, gender-inclusive restrooms in key residence halls.

They also piloted bidets in Case and Holmes halls, with plans to expand this option to other buildings, including the new Multicultural Center. Finally, a collaborative recycling and signage project is underway with SLE and IPF Sustainability.

MSU UNION

The MSU Union is a central hub for campus activities. Throughout the summer, it underwent renovations that enhanced the Spartan experience. From dedicated reflection rooms to a refreshed history space, the MSU Union team is committed to providing a welcoming and versatile environment for all Spartans.

Enhanced Spaces

In collaboration with the Muslim Students Association, the MSU Union team has created multifunctional reflection rooms for students and the campus community on the third and fourth floors. Additionally, the MSU Union is looking into developing a reflection room on the first floor and installing ablution stations in the future, offering even greater convenience.

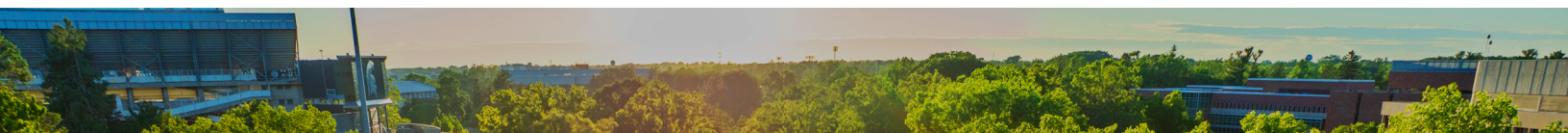
Next, the historic Tower Room on the fourth floor got a refresh, including a new hard-surface floor, perfect for dance Registered Student Organizations.

Outside the union, the Alumni Memorial Chapel saw some changes too. The chapel's "Bride" and "Groom" rooms have been transformed into more functional "Dressing" rooms, complete with new furniture. The dressing rooms will be further enhanced with artwork, which is still under selection.

More to Come

With the currently vacant space in what was the foodcourt, the MSU Union team is committed to further improvements that respond to students' needs and maximize the building's potential.

Stay up to date on all the goings on in the division by visiting sle.msu.edu. 📍





WDBM-FM Student Radio Celebrates 35 Years of Impact on Air

Creativity and innovation are pillars of WDBM-FM's past success, but also serve as the recipe for a bright future.

Impact 89FM Radio hosted a celebratory event the evening of Saturday, June 22, at the Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center to mark its 35th year on air.

About 50 Impact 89FM alumni were joined by friends who have supported the station through the years to enjoy an evening of reminiscing, food and live entertainment that included Detroit-based alternative rock band, The Hard Lessons. The band consists of married couple, Augie Visocchi and Korin "Ko Ko" Louise Visocchi, both of whom were also Impact 89FM student staff members. Will Henry, the current host of The Progressive Torch & Twang!, also performed some original music.

Most importantly, staff from across the decades were able to reconnect and celebrate all eras of MSU campus radio. Alums were even able to come in early and guest DJ at the station, streaming throughout the day.

Jeremy Whiting, director and general manager of the station, believes the station has lasted this long for many reasons, most rooted in the staff's passion for keeping the station fresh and innovative. Impact continues to be one of the nation's longest-running college radio stations.

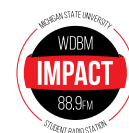
"I think we've stuck around because we've remained relevant. Our station wouldn't be possible without the commitment of generations of students. Thirty-five years is a long time to be broadcasting, and many things have changed," noted Whiting, who was also a student staff member in his time as an MSU undergraduate and graduate student.

Allyn Shaw, assistant vice president for Student Development and Leadership, sees the station's success similarly: "It's a great accomplishment reaching 35, but I think what is also exciting is there are no signs of slowing down. The radio station has a bright future, and that's a testament to their ability to connect with the student body and, further, the mid-Michigan community as a whole. Impact is a special part of the university experience."

CREATING AN IMPACT FROM THE START

That experience started for students in the 1950s as a series of campus radio stations that broadcast from locations across campus through carrier current, connected by wires that were strung through steam tunnels. WDBM-FM is the successor to the Michigan State Network, which by the 1970s, was the nation's largest college carrier current radio network.

The Network was eventually consolidated to one carrier current station, WLFT, which broadcast music, news and sports through the existing wiring in buildings. Students could simply plug in their radios and listen.



35 Years

WDBM officially began its journey broadcasting at the MSU Auditorium from 1989-95, then moved to Holden Hall where it has remained since. With the boom of easier access and the 24-hour news cycle, the station grew into one of the few student-run college radio stations to broadcast 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. In 2004, the Impact was the nation's first college station to broadcast in HD radio. Since the early 2000s, the station has gone on to win over 18 College Radio Station of the Year distinctions from the Michigan Association of Broadcasters and Broadcast Music, Inc. Most recently, the station received **numerous state and national awards** this past March.

Jim Tarladgis was part of the team from 1986 through his graduation in the spring of 1989, eventually becoming station manager. He says the vision was to create something that would last.

"It's hard to believe it's been 35 years. When we received notice that MSU was granted an FM license, we made it our mission to construct something special. We were lucky to have passionate people in every department – music, production, news, sports, promotion and management – that all worked very hard in a relatively short period of time to put it all together," Tarladgis recalls.

For the **inaugural episode of "Behind the Mics,"** Impact 89FM's newest podcast, Tarladgis and some members of the initial team discuss what it was like to kick off the station at MSU. The episode includes audio highlights from the actual first hour of programming.

CONNECTING AND ADAPTING KEY TO IMPACT 89FM'S SUCCESS

Delaney Rogers has been Impact's station manager since 2022 and will be the station's first graduate assistant in August. It'll be her fourth year on staff after joining in September 2020, when staff meetings were held over Zoom.

"Coming to MSU during a pandemic inevitably brought its challenges, but Impact genuinely made everything feel less anxiety-inducing. If it weren't for Impact, I think my experience at this university would have been drastically different," says Rogers.

Whether it was a pandemic or changing industry landscapes, the staff has always been committed to ensuring the station adapts to meet the needs of its listeners. The technology is better and more reliable, the music played on air is more diverse, and the staff has expanded the content to delivery over the web in various ways over the years. Whiting says they now time shift content to when people want to hear it on their schedules. That's why podcasts are so important, along with playlists the team create and share each week.

The key to the station's ability to adapt is intention. Though they are also part of the station's audience, the student employees put in the effort to engage with the larger student body, even with events and programs that are not for the air.

"If you're not engaging with your audience, they will not engage with you. Our staff is out every week across campus talking with students, DJing events, hosting open mic nights, tabling at career fairs – the list goes on," says Whiting. "We're amplifying student voices and telling their stories – whether it's news, music, entertainment, culture, sports or simply relaying information on upcoming events."

Rogers agrees: "Impact is entirely student run, and while we have our fun, we also still display so much professionalism and get to be a part of bigger real-world experiences. My time at Michigan State has been better than I could have ever imagined because of Impact 89FM and, for that, I am forever thankful." 🎧



Impact Radio Celebrates 35 Years: Past and Present Student Team Members Reminisce on the, well, Impact of the Station

Impact 89FM is celebrating 35 magical years on air this year, giving past and present student staff members an opportunity to reminisce about the unique and special experience of working for the station. While current student team members are thinking about steps to take the station into the future, alums are thinking about how the experiences at the station prepared them for life and career.

JIM TARLAGDIS, CLASS OF 1989

Jim Tarladgis was part of the team that would ultimately broadcast for the first time as WDBM in 1989. He says the vision was to create something that would last, flourishing in the 1990s and growing into one of the earliest student-run radio stations to broadcast 24/7. In the 2000s, the station became the first to broadcast in HD Radio and has since garnered over 15 College Radio Station of the Year awards, continuing to adapt to modern ways of broadcasting and content production.

By 1989, Tarladgis had moved up to station manager. But a year prior, he was working weekends at a mid-Michigan classic rock station while at the same time preparing for Impact Radio and taking classes as a full-time student.

“In my recollection, the first song played was ‘Capital Radio One’ by The Clash. It was the culmination of a lot of work by a talented team of dedicated students, along with guidance from Gary Reid, who was the professional (MSU staff) general manager. Impact was a fantastic experience and, without question, the highlight of my time at MSU.”

Tarladgis says it all came together quickly.

“It’s hard to believe it’s been 35 years ... We were lucky to have passionate people in every department – from music, production, news, sports, promotion and management – who all worked very hard in a relatively short period of time to put it all together.”

He adds, “It became our fraternity, sorority, intramural sport, club and every extracurricular activity rolled into one! We seemingly majored in radio and spent all our spare time (and most of our study time) focusing on every detail of every aspect of each department. We wanted to create something special, something that we hoped would have an impact for years to come.”

Using this time to reminisce about his own experience, Tarladgis is also proud of those who’ve carried the baton.

“As proud as I am of what we accomplished, I’m even more proud of those who followed, as they collectively have lifted this station to heights that we never imagined. As someone

that takes great pride in being part of the team that helped give birth to this radio station, I’d like to thank all those who have continued to keep the torch burning brightly. Impact Radio, Happy 35th! It looks good on you!”



WILLIAM SPURRIER, CLASS OF 2019

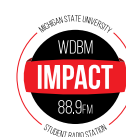
One of those people who have carried the torch is William Spurrier, who joined Impact’s video team in the fall of 2015 as a volunteer. He would eventually make the air before graduating in 2019.

“In fact, I connected with the station at [orientation], so I was with them practically my entire time at MSU. In January 2018, I was promoted to video director and oversaw the team until I graduated in May 2019. I started on-air doing noon shifts on Sundays before moving into late afternoons to do the Top Five at Five giveaway.”

While it’s been only five years since he left campus, Spurrier already knows one of the things he relishes most about his college career was his activity with the radio station.

“[I miss] so much! I cherish all of my Impact homies who I’m still in touch with and miss so many more. I miss staying up late in the studio with [weekly specialty shows] Pity Party and Torch & Twang. Every in-studio session was a blast, especially Tigers Jaw – we were starstruck!”

Being a part of Impact can mean a number of things. From representing the station and deejaying at campus events to building content and managing in-house marketing, students can get exposure to promotions, community relations and engineering, and so much more.



35 Years

“Of course, I miss getting to the gig every weekend: Mac’s Bar, The Loft, Bingle Mansion, Bled Fest. There was always something to look forward to every week, and I’m still blown away that we got to fly out to Austin to cover SXSW,” he says, appreciative of the experiences he received. “I’m so grateful for the opportunity to try new things and, importantly, to make plenty of mistakes. We all took our jobs pretty seriously because it was the real deal. Having been through it all, I learned to think on my feet, prioritize and, most noticeably to me, move with confidence.”

As he continues his career, Spurrier still keeps an eye and, well, ears on the station. He’s happy the current students continue to adapt – making not only the station better, but also the team members as professionals.

“I was really happy to see recently that the Impact has started to dabble in live-streaming in-studio performances from The Basement, which is something we began to brainstorm in my last semester. Those in-studio sessions are such valuable documents of the Lansing music scene. The station itself is also looking cooler than ever, from what I’ve seen on Instagram. They seem very in touch with the modern media landscape, and I have no doubt they’ll continue to invest in the right stuff.

“With artificial intelligence beginning to upend the entire industry, outlets like the Impact have never been more important – it has such a distinct human touch that will always be in demand. I hope they continue to be a platform for talented people to connect and entertain.”

DELANEY ROGERS, CLASS OF 2024 AND IMPACT’S FIRST GRADUATE ASSISTANT

Delaney Rogers was the Impact’s latest station manager. Like many before her, Delaney’s connection to the station was quick and has now lasted years, even despite a pandemic.

“I was Impact’s station manager since 2022! Beginning in August, I will be their first graduate assistant. I have been with Impact for four years, joining in September of 2020, when meetings were held over Zoom!”

Yet Delaney understands everyone’s experience with the station is different. What is consistent is that those experiences have been something each past and present student team member has appreciated for exactly what Spurrier mentioned above – the fun times, but also the exposure and opportunities to grow.

“Coming to MSU amid a pandemic inevitably brought its challenges, but Impact genuinely made everything feel less anxiety-inducing. If it weren’t for Impact, I think my experience at this university would have been drastically different. From attending virtual volunteer meetings my first month of college to finishing undergrad, Impact has been a part of my life every step of the way. This radio station has not only enhanced my leadership experiences but my friendships. I have had the absolute privilege to meet my best friends because of this radio station.

“Impact has also allowed me to grow into myself as a leader, a journalist and a person – I have found myself feeling the happiest I ever have since I joined. Impact is entirely student run, and while we have our fun, we also still display so much professionalism and get to be a part of bigger real-world experiences. My time at Michigan State has been better than I could have ever imagined because of Impact, and for that I am forever thankful.”

Having the ability to be a part of the team for the 35th celebration has allowed Delaney the perspective to see what the station means to people who came well before her.

“It’s evident how much this place means to people. It feels very special to be a part of something bigger, like Impact. I have been making poster boards of archival material for the 35th year celebration, and it’s been very cool to see the evolution through things like logos and the music that was in rotation.”

Rogers sees the connection in creativity through today.

“For years, there has been so much character and creativity within the content that comes out of Impact, and that creativity continues today. I’m honored to be able to work at such an amazing place. It truly is the most rewarding atmosphere of which I could have been a part.”

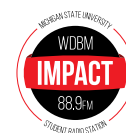
Continuing to be part of the team, Rogers intends to use her understanding of the station’s evolution to guide where the station goes from here.

“While everyone who is a part of the radio station has a shared love for music, every year there are new groups of people who bring something new to the station. Although it’s been just four years [since I joined], I’ve had the privilege of getting to see the station grow in numerous ways, from the music we play to how the station is structured.

“I have full confidence that the station will continue to expand and grow. It already has! There has always been a very unique atmosphere at Impact 89FM that is full of people who truly LOVE what they do – people who love the station. I have no doubt that people will continue to find creative outlets and community within Impact for years and years to come. There are 35-plus years of history to prove that.”

Check out everything Impact Radio has to offer at impact89fm.org, or tune in at WDBM 88.9FM.

HAPPY 35TH, IMPACT RADIO! 🎉



35 Years



Rebirth of 1855 Community Garden Blooms Friendship and Cultural Identity

Planting roots in a new community can be difficult yet achievable through growing connections and blooming friendships. The Michigan State University (MSU) 1855 Community Garden, established in 2017 for residents of the 1855 Place Apartments, was revitalized in spring of 2023 with the help of students and the Spartan community.

The garden promotes well-being and a sense of belonging through hands-on cultivation of organic produce. It fosters neighborhood unity, increases accessibility to healthy foods and connects to nature. The space also offers an opportunity to educate youth on environmental impacts of crops and promote sustainable living.

ALL HANDS ON DECK

Paige Emerson, community director for University Apartments (1855 Place, University Village and Spartan Village), led the community garden renovation after the Coronavirus lockdown in 2020. Emerson focused on enhancing the garden's health and structures, establishing a strong foundation for plant growth.

Emmerson partnered with MSU Residential Initiative on the Study of the Environment (RISE) and Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) 410 students to prepare the land by tilling, weeding and constructing raised beds from scrap wood. Demonstrating passion that drove the project, one student worked all weekend with their father to till an entire area. Additionally, Emmerson personally funded keys for padlocks to ensure safe access to the garden for residents.

By May 2023, the garden officially reopened, allowing residents to sign up for plots. A total of 46 beds were rebuilt, including 20 raised beds measuring 4 feet by 4 feet, and 26 beds measuring 4 feet by 8 feet. Landscaping fabric and mulch were laid, and a canopy was installed to create an inviting gardening environment for residents.

TIME TO HARVEST

The growing season begins in late April or early May and extends until late September or early November depending

on the first freeze. RISE and MSU Student Organic Farms provided and transplanted starter plants for residents at the start of the season. Seeds were also donated by the Greater Lansing Food Bank, RISE and community members.

Throughout the summer, a variety of produce is grown, including, but not limited to, lettuces, cucumbers, tomatoes, beans, hot peppers, sweet peppers, potatoes, zucchini, squash, tomatoes, basil, okra and onions. Additionally, non-native plants imported by international students, such as tarragon and summer savory, contribute to the garden's diversity.

PROUD PLANT PARENT

For many residents, the community garden is a source of pride, growing life from a single seed. Emmerson fondly recalled earlier this summer when resident Md Ahsanul Hoquel showed off his produce to her and her partner. He began gardening this year and put a lot of effort into his plot. Hoquel proudly waved them over, presenting them with his first zucchini. He expressed gratitude and appreciation toward the staff for all their help and hard work, offering the zucchini to Emmerson. She insisted Hoquel must keep the trophy; his enthusiasm was more than enough thanks.



GARDENING WITH INTENTION

Jessica Stokes, an 1855 Place Apartments resident and disabled poet/performer/educator/scholar pursuing their Ph.D. at MSU began gardening in 2021 with their young daughter. Stokes wanted to teach their daughter ways to discuss food and its significance without discussing fat phobia and ableism. Working together in the garden, they shifted the focus to the role of nutrients in plants, understanding grocery store supply chains, farming methods and food waste.

Stokes also created anti-pesticide solutions to deter damage from insects like cucumber beetles in their garden. This provided an opportunity for their daughter to visually and tactilely learn the cost benefits of avoiding harsh chemicals and forming relationships with creatures, while experiencing the space to grow her own foods.

Stokes' plot holds a variety of plants such as tomatoes, summer squash, zucchini, dill, kale, lettuce, collard greens, peppers and sugar snap peas, which her daughter often picks off the vine to share with the neighborhood kids. They divided their plot into five sections, with their daughter and other neighborhood children helping to water and care for the garden. During their time in the garden, Stokes' daughter created friendships with children from all around the world, including Australia, Kazakhstan and the U.S.

Stokes expressed appreciation for the garden, emphasizing the importance of having a connected outdoor space to strengthen community bonds.

"I love having a shared space that I'm proud of," said Stokes. "After the [Feb. 13, 2023 on-campus] shooting, I felt a big moment of disconnection, where we were finding each other here at Michigan State. The garden has been a way to regain relationships with MSU and build deeper and tighter connections for the future."

THE PLANT WHISPERER

Fahim Mohammadi, an 1855 Place Apartments resident, moved from Iran to Michigan in November 2022 to apply for a Ph.D. in microbiology. Until she receives an upgraded visa to submit her Ph.D. application, she attends MSU's Friendship House where she takes classes for international students such as English, sewing and crocheting.

Mohammadi became involved in the 1855 community garden in May 2023, but her love for plants runs deep since childhood. Her friends often turn to her to save their plants, earning her the title of "plant whisperer." Finding Iranian products in Michigan has been difficult, so she decided to grow many of her culture's plants in the community garden, drying them to cook with in the winter.

"I know, based on my culture, this country doesn't have Iranian products, so I need to grow our products here as much as I can, like tarragon and summer savory," said Mohammadi. "Most of the meals we cook use lots of dried

vegetables like herbs and dried dill, so in the winter when the weather is cold, when we don't have parsley, we prefer to use our own dried herbs, like chives."

In Mohammadi's plot she proudly grows cilantro, parsley, dill, chives, basil, beets, spinach, mint, peppers, strawberries, tomatoes, tarragon and summer savory.

Mohammadi spends most of her time at home studying English, taking breaks for fresh air by working on her garden. She finds relaxation in watering and seeing her plants prosper and grow, which brings her joy. She enjoys reaping the rewards of her dedication and commitment to her garden, equating her love for plants to a mother caring for her children.

The community garden not only provides Mohammadi an escape from her studies but also an environment to cultivate friendships and strengthen community relationships.

"Before having a raised bed, I didn't know or see people living at 1855," said Mohammadi. "But now in the evening when I water the plants, I see other people and children taking care of their plants, and I make friends by saying hello and asking about their garden. I think it has helped us make new friends and good relationships with each other."

WHAT'S NEXT?

Looking forward, Emmerson plans to hold weekly programs and workshops to educate residents on gardening including planting, composting, harvesting, etc. She also hopes to lead a composting program in collaboration with RISE and build a permanent shade structure to create a space for the community to gather.

1855 Place Apartment residents must fill out the Google interest form in the spring to request a raised bed. Plots are assigned on a first-come, first-serve basis and can be renewed the following year.

To learn more about community gardening on campus visit sustainability.msu.edu/campus-information/sustainable-facilities/MSUGardens.html or canr.msu.edu/community_gardening. 🌱





MSU Hosts Tenth Annual Restorative Justice Symposium and Training

Communication is key. It connects people and creates successful relationships in every aspect of life. Restorative justice is built on the foundation of communication. Due to colonialism, capitalism and power, restorative justice is relatively new to the West but its practices are as ancient as humanity, rooted in indigenous knowledge and communities. Gaining recent popularity, Michigan State University (MSU) has been successfully resolving conflicts among students and staff with restorative justice since 2011.

From July 8-10, MSU's department of Student Life & Engagement (SLE) and Office of Student Support and Accountability (OSSA) hosted the 10th annual Restorative Justice symposium and two-day training at Brody Hall. Attendees from across Michigan and various backgrounds, including those from the University of Michigan, MSU, K-12 educators and others outside education participated in the event.

WHAT IS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE?

Rick Shafer, associate director of OSSA coordinated the Restorative Justice Symposium and training. Each year, the event highlights different societal issues where restorative justice could help such as bullying, discrimination and harassment. It addresses a range of wrongdoings, including delinquent or criminal behavior. Restorative justice originates from ancient indigenous practices from around the world, including but not limited to New Zealand, Hawaii, Canada and the U.S. It focuses on the needs of harmed parties, rather than the rights of those responsible for wrongdoing.

Restorative justice views wrongdoing as violation of people and interpersonal relationships, creating an obligation for the offender to make amends and repair any harm done. Instead of following bureaucratic rules that hinder discussions, restorative justice emphasizes accountability through talking circles and conferences. These methods involve sitting in an open circle, with no barriers between participants, to ensure a consistent flow of communication and attention.

Talking circles are used when multiple participants feel wronged or harmed. A facilitator guides the discussion with talking pieces, allowing participants to speak in turn. Conferences on the other hand, follow a more formal script, involving a clear victim and offender, and are used when participants are highly emotional or potentially volatile and need structure. Ultimately, restorative justice seeks to answer three questions: What happened? Who was affected? How do we make it right?

SYMPOSIUM AND TRAINING OVERVIEW

The symposium was an all-day event held in a large open circle, starting with a brief introduction to restorative justice, including what it is and what it is not. Guest speakers then discussed the intersection of restorative justice and its application in areas such as bullying and sexual assault. Participants engaged in conversations, shared stories and posed questions in small groups. They also practiced intake sessions through role-playing exercises to better understand the experiences of those involved in restorative justice events, discussing what happened and how they felt.

The following two-day training involved sharing, connecting, emoting and discussing the use of restorative justice in cases of sexual misconduct. It was conducted in an open circle, where a talking piece was passed around to ensure everyone could contribute to the discussion. Speakers then presented slides, statistics, book excerpts and video testimonials, then opened the floor to a question and answer session. Participants engaged in the role-playing exercises again, including another intake interview and talking circle, where they played the party that was harmed and the party responsible for the harm. This exercise allowed participants to experience the discomfort of such situations. They concluded by discussing their feelings and lessons learned from the experience.

EVOKING INDIGNATION AND HOPE

Charlie Root, operations manager for Strategic Communication, was familiar with restorative justice as a buzzword before attending the symposium and training. Now, Root applies it as a philosophy in various aspects of his life, including at home with his family.

During the training, Root played the role of a woman whose ex-boyfriend exploited pictures of her feet on Instagram. As a cisgender white man, Root felt hesitant and uncomfortable, worried he wouldn't be able to convey the magnitude of her anger. This exercise provided Root with a new perspective in a space to workshop his feelings and openly communicate about the microaggressions and hardships women face. The group addressed the harm done to the woman and the lack of closure the man felt, working to find a solution to repair damage and move forward.

Restorative justice requires extensive follow-ups to effectively address actions and harm to help individuals heal and move forward. Due to the amount of time and costly manner to facilitate discussions, restorative justice is often overlooked.

However, Root strongly believes in practicing a system that holds people accountable while treating them with respect, which restorative justice provides.

Studies show that even when someone wins a legal case, they often still feel hurt and damaged. Compensation for emotional damage doesn't necessarily help the person harmed to heal or guarantee the person responsible fully understands the repercussions of their actions. The event showed Root there is more than one way to address a problem, often leading to better outcomes for everyone involved.

"Punishment and retribution in doing something wrong as the only tool seems like a disservice to all of us," said Root. "Learn from it, grow from it and get back into society."

Looking forward, Root also feels hopeful restorative justice will be further implemented into society due to the growing advocacy for its principles, and he believes it will greatly benefit any community that practices it.

I AM BECAUSE YOU ARE

Shafer began studying and practicing restorative justice in 2006. He lives by the ancient African word "ubuntu," which translates to "I am because you are." It means one doesn't exist without the other; everything one person does affects another — the good and the bad. It stems from the practice of viewing oneself as part of a community to behave differently, responsible for each other's learning and recognizing they're part of a whole. To Shafer, accepting the idea of restorative justice means people are connected, accountable and responsible to one another.

Restorative justice makes Shafer feel human, unlike traditional consequences that are built on stoicism, lack of information and strict facts, restorative justice welcomes and encourages expression of emotion. It's a form of justice that prioritizes the needs of those affected rather than who did the harm. Shafer implements restorative justice at work and at home with his family. By doing so he has created a welcoming positive work environment where everyone on his team chooses to commute to the office each Thursday for their weekly lunch outing. Some drive over an hour from Detroit.

"Restorative justice affects who I am and how I am everywhere all the time," said Shafer. "My wife and two sons would say I'm a better person from it. It's not a new thing and the world would be a better place practicing it."

For Shafer, practicing and implementing restorative justice has been a lifelong journey, full of learning and unlearning.

Due to the success of the event, another symposium and training is scheduled for Dec. 18-19 from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. To discover more about restorative justice, visit ossa.msu.edu/restorative-justice or contact rj@msu.edu. ©



Inspiring DEI Collaboration Through MSU's Inclusive Impact Conference

Advancing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) goes beyond fulfilling a moral obligation. It supports people of varying identities from underrepresented and marginalized communities. Celebrating DEI through education is one way to honor and support these populations. July 10-11, Michigan State University (MSU) hosted the Inclusive Impact Conference, presented by the Inclusive Campus Initiative (ICI), part of the Office of the Senior Vice President for Student Life & Engagement (SLE).

The conference, themed Reframing DEI: Solidarity, Advocacy, and Partnership, emphasized allyship, decentering fear and empowering communities during anti-DEI legislation and backlash. The event united DEI practitioners, educators and community members across Michigan and beyond to learn, collaborate and co-develop solutions to DEI challenges.

HEARING FROM PROFESSIONALS

The conference featured keynote speakers and panelists who urged a need for change. July 10, Senior Vice President for SLE Vennie Gore opened the event, followed by anti-racism

writer and educator, Tim Wise. The next day, educator and advocate for Indigenous education, Melissa Isaac opened. Later, MSU's Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Thomas D. Jeitschko spoke, followed by Michigan state representative for the 13th House District Mai Xiong. The conference ended with a closing statement from, the Ford Foundation Professor of History, Race and Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School and Director of the Institutional Antiracism and Accountability Project Dr. Khalil Gibran Muhammad.

July 11 featured six breakout sessions and a plenary panel. The breakout sessions covered key DEI topics including rebranding DEI in collegiate athletics, the power of global advocacy and LGBTQIA2S+ communities. It also highlighted healing-centered and trauma-informed practices, as well as digital accessibility and DEI advocacy and partnerships. The Office of Global Michigan (OGM) led the plenary panel, Advancing Equity and Extending Inclusion. It explored empowering immigrant, refugee, underrepresented and marginalized communities across Michigan.

A TEAM EFFORT

While the Inclusive Impact Conference is housed and substantially funded by the Office of the Senior Vice President for Student Life & Engagement and led by the Inclusive Campus Initiative (Meaghan Kozar), the planning for this conference was a collective effort by an incredibly innovative team comprised of Anjam Chaudhary (ISP), Cece Sumpter (Athletics), Floren시오 Hernandez (OA), Donnie Sams (DPPS), Dwayne Jones (DPPS), Jun Fu (LEAU), Katusha Galitzine (ISR), Matea Caluk (REHS), Stephanie Chau (CANR), Scot Wright (Broad) and Swapna Hingwe (UHW). The team's contributions include identifying speakers, panelists, moderating panels, emceeing and fundraising.

Dr. Kozar praised the planning committee for identifying and recruiting outstanding speakers and panelists who engaged with current DEI issues.

"The Inclusive Impact Conference exceeded our expectations and then some," said Kozar. "I learned so much. It was the recharge and source of inspiration many of us needed. I am



very proud of this collective effort to host a life-changing experience. I am grateful for all the people involved and the many campus partner sponsors."

OGM FOR DEI

Floren시오 Hernandez is the assistant director for DEI at MSU Admissions and member of the conference planning committee. Hernandez also serves as commissioner on the Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan (HLCOM) for the Office of Global Michigan (OGM). At the conference, he spoke on the featured plenary panel, as well as recruited and moderated the panel titled, Protecting Our Pride: Advocacy for LGBTQIA2S+ Communities.

Hernandez focused on building community and raising awareness of the state's positioning during the plenary panel. He highlighted OGM's initiatives and its role in securing federal funding to connect various ethnic commissions (Black, Middle Eastern, Hispanic/Latino, LGBTQ+, Asian Pacific, immigrant and refugee). Following him, Poppy Hernandez, the chief equity and inclusion officer for the

Governor and the Executive Director of OGM, addressed the office's work with integrating immigrant and refugee communities across Michigan.

Hernandez secured a notable lineup for the LGBTQIA2S+ advocacy panel, including Ben Dowd, co-founder and chair of Lansing Pride; Emme Zanotti, director of advocacy and civic engagement at Equality Michigan (statewide LGBTQ advocacy organization); Raul Hernandez-Guzman, chair and administrator for the LGBTQ+ Commission of Michigan; and Zinuru "Zi" Sykes, an award-winning Youth Advisory Council member on Michigan's Youth Racial Equity Council (MOASH).

STRENGTH IN UNITY

DEI is a sensitive topic due to the current political climate. Hernandez leveraged the conference's positioning during an election year to raise awareness of the impact legislation can have on people's lives, such as the recent expansion of the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, which includes protections for LGBTQ+ Michiganders. He hoped the conference would act as a call to action for the public.

Hernandez expressed gratitude toward MSU for building community through the conference. It helped bridge the gap between the university and broader Michigan population. He noted the diverse attendees of various backgrounds and experiences. There was a range of education, occupations, ages, ethnicities and connections to MSU. Many attendees did not work in DEI but went to network and build DEI relationships. Hernandez said as a DEI practitioner he does not know everything and there's always more to learn.

"I was in awe listening to all three of our keynote speakers on unity, inclusivity and togetherness," said Hernandez. "There was a lot of emotion and energy. People were empowered, inspired and connected."

One speaker who stood out to Hernandez was Tim Wise, a prominent anti-racist writer and educator. Wise discussed how, as a white man, he used his privilege to challenge systemic issues. He stressed the importance of including everyone in DEI efforts to leverage collective privilege and build a supportive community, advocating for everyone involved.





around Michigan to address current challenges and inspire action. Powerful keynote speakers and panelists renewed attendees' commitment and passion for a more inclusive society.

The Inclusive Impact Conference was made possible by the extensive planning of MSU's OCAT department and the support of generous sponsors, including:

- MSU Office of the Senior Vice President for Student Life & Engagement
- Broad College of Business
- Chicano/Latino Studies
- College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
- College of Human Medicine
- College of Natural Science
- College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Department of History
- Department of Police & Public Safety
- Graduate School International Studies & programs
- Native American Institute
- Office for Civil Rights and Title IX Education and Compliance
- Office of the Provost
- Office of Undergraduate Education
- University Health & Wellbeing

ICI will continue addressing DEI issues and needs impacting historically marginalized and vulnerable populations.

You can read a full overview of the conference at go.msu.edu/CTJ5. 🌐



"I believe DEI is not one person's job, but a whole community's job. DEI does not work unless we're all involved together," said Hernandez.

SPARKING INSPIRATION

Shannon Nobles, the Operational Support Team Supervisor for MSU Center for Survivors (CFS), attended the conference due to her passion for social justice. Nobles oversees CFS programs, including advocacy services, therapy, and resources for healing from sexual assault and relationship violence.

Nobles attended the panel titled Community Healing Centered and Trauma Informed Practices: Sustaining our DEIB Work through Solidarity, Reflection and Intention led by Dr. Swapna Hingew, interim director of Counseling and Psychiatric Services at MSU. The discussion provided insights into trauma services for the BIPOC community, leading Nobles to gain a deeper understanding for those who identify differently than herself. As a DEIB programmer for CFS, she saw the conference as an opportunity to bring fresh ideas and conversations to her team.

Reflecting on the experience, Nobles said, "I was humbled by my position of privilege; hearing about her [Dr. Hingew] personal struggles. Now I think about how I can use my privilege to support others in those same situations."

Nobles entered the event intending to build her skills for CFS. She left inspired and optimistic about the acceptance of identities from the MSU community and beyond.

Dr. Khalil Gibran Muhammad's closing speech brought Nobles to tears with his message of hope and potential to make a positive difference in the world. She said she felt as though pieces of herself, which had been missing for the past eight years, were restored.

"I have been very disheartened, but for the first time in years, something lit up within me at this conference, and I got my spark back," said Nobles. "I left wanting to take action and become involved again in a way I wasn't sure I would want to be. It helped me feel like myself again."

FOSTERING AND SPONSORING INCLUSION

The conference showcased the power of community and teamwork in advancing DEI. The event united DEI practitioners, educators and community members from

Transgender Residential Experience Coming to South Neighborhood

The Transgender Residential Experience, T-REx, launched in Michigan State University's South Neighborhood this fall. T-REx is a dedicated living space designed specifically for transgender, nonbinary, Two-Spirit, gender-nonconforming and all gender-expansive students.

BUILDING ON A LEGACY OF INCLUSION

Before T-REx, MSU offered flex housing, which was introduced in 2016 as the first gender-inclusive housing program on campus. Flex housing allowed students to request housing based on their gender identity and/or expression. However, it was not always guaranteed those who requested flex housing would receive it based on limitations of available campus housing options.

With this in mind, the T-REx community was designed as a space centered around the trans and nonbinary student experience to best support their success on campus. As part of this effort, a new full-time position was created, with much of its focus being the T-REx community. Enter Em Wolfe. Hired as the new coordinator of Transgender Student Support for the Gender and Sexuality Campus Center (GSCC), Wolfe will support, advocate for and advise transgender students at MSU.

A SAFE SPACE FOR GROWTH, HEALING AND EXPLORATION

One of the main goals of T-REx is to give students a space to feel safe by providing opportunities to experience community healing through outlets such as artistic expression, personal development and community exploration.

“We want to support students going through their own personal development and seeing how they can identify their identities and build their academic, emotional and social wellness as they grow alongside each other in a space where their experiences are not only centered, but listened, heard and responded to,” says Wolfe.

EMPOWERING STUDENTS THROUGH COMMUNITY AND SUPPORT

Alongside their team, Wolfe will be working with residents in the T-REx community to create an inclusive space where students will live and learn together. As a nonbinary, transmasculine person themselves, Wolfe understands the importance of gender-inclusive housing.



“Gender-inclusive housing wasn’t even remotely possible for me when I was going through college, as housing was based off of the two perceived genders,” says Wolfe. “Being at multiple institutions since then and seeing how gender-inclusive housing can work as well as creating intentional spaces where trans, nonbinary and queer students have that sense of community is a passion of mine.”

ENGAGING PROGRAMMING AND ADAPTABILITY

Additionally, Wolfe wants to provide programming that has an educational component but is also fun and engaging.

This includes, once a semester, a representative from the Center for Gender in Global Context (GenCen) visiting the residence hall to discuss various topics with the residents. There will also be weekly and monthly standing events that the resident assistant, community director or Wolfe themselves will host.

As T-REx is still developing, Wolfe is working to make sure the community fulfills the needs of its residents through an assessment through which students will be able to give feedback.

“If students aren’t liking the way that we’re supporting them, the content of the program sessions or things along that line, we can change those and be flexible. It’s a highly adaptable community,” Wolfe says.

A WELCOMING CAMPUS

T-REx is a testament to MSU’s commitment to fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students. Wolfe is pleased to experience so much campus-wide support for this new community.

“It is important to know that there are a lot of people, especially across campus, who are wanting this to succeed and want us to be here and be out and proud.”

To learn about the community, visit liveon.msu.edu/TREx or reach out to Em Wolfe. 📍

MAGIC Sparks Spartan Success for Incoming BIPOC Students

Starting a new chapter in life can be magical. Each summer, the Office of Cultural & Academic Transitions (OCAT) coordinates Maximizing Academic Growth in College (MAGIC), a weeklong program that welcomes incoming admitted students to Michigan State University (MSU).

MAGIC serves to facilitate a smooth transition from high school to college, providing students the tools for success as they begin their Spartan journey. This opportunity is available to students who have completed their New Student Orientation (NSO) and are ready to start their Spartan experience in July before classes start.



CREATING MAGIC

Murray Edwards, founder of MAGIC, created the program to provide incoming BIPOC and first-generation students from underserved communities with a strong foundation for college. The program offers a week of college experiences on campus, including seminars, learning strategies and resources while living with a roommate before the semester begins.

OCAT Coordinator Jason Worley shares the importance of having a head start when arriving on campus, saying, “How you start is very very important, especially as a student of color, first gen or new to campus in general.”

MAGIC has three main goals. First, it familiarizes students with MSU’s campus, through a campus-wide scavenger hunt. Second, it exposes students to tools and resources for college success, with daily sessions covering time management, emotional intelligence, diversity, equity, and inclusion on campus and meeting MSU Police and Public Safety. Third, it relieves college anxiety by helping students build friendships and hear a motivational speech from Dr. Eric Thomas.

MAGIC has guided hundreds of Spartans for 27 years. Data shows 86% of the MAGIC 2023 Cohort maintained good academic standing. Two out of three MAGIC students earned a GPA of a 3.0 or higher, 16% earned a 4.0 GPA during their

first semester and 43% received Dean’s List Honors (GPA of 3.5 or higher). Many MAGIC alums have held leadership positions, including roles in Council of Racial and Ethnic Students (CORES), Council of Progressive Students (COPS), Associated Students of Michigan State University (ASMSU), Fraternity & Sorority Life (FSL) and others. The 2024 MAGIC program hosted 217 students, with plans to double participation in future years.

FIRST IN FAMILY

Domenic Cedillo, an MSU junior and MAGIC alum from Greenville, Michigan, works for the MSU Honors College and serves as president of the MSU Honors Students of Color Coalition. Cedillo is the first in his family to enroll in a university. To familiarize himself with campus, Cedillo and his family attended the family day event for Hispanic students before his first year. There he met OCAT Coordinator Juan Florez who introduced them to the MAGIC program, ultimately convincing him to sign up that night.

Cedillo said he entered MAGIC feeling incredibly nervous and afraid but left confident, ambitious and sociable. He fondly recalls motivational speaker Eric Thomas’ heartfelt message about devotion. Thomas encouraged them to question the kind of person they wanted to be, their drives and their wants versus their needs and how to achieve those needs. The key takeaway was that devotion drives your work. “Work really hard to put what you want into the world,” became Cedillo’s mindset as he began college.

“As the first of my family to have this opportunity, now that I have it I don’t want to let others down. You gotta take the chance and work hard for it everyday,” Cedillo says.

MAGIC helped make MSU feel less intimidating, leaving Cedillo with a community and tools to support him. Cedillo said he didn’t expect to see MAGIC attendees again but kept running into them at club meetings, classes and sports events around campus. One of his MAGIC friends even became an IM soccer teammate he played with every week.

“Regardless of how different we live our lives, we had our own community, and I felt really welcome. Not once did I feel unwelcome,” says Cedillo. “MSU, whether it be faculty, friends or anyone else, will go out of their way to help you out. There are support systems here; MSU has been a safe space for me.”

After undergrad, Cedillo plans to enroll in MSU’s law program to become an immigration attorney. He hopes to advocate for undocumented immigrants like his father who worked primarily in construction and kitchens to support

his family. Cedillo believes they are among the most decent, hardworking and honest people he's met and deserve fair representation. When he thinks about his dad's story, he reflects on all the other undocumented immigrants whose main priority is also their family.

CONJURING CONFIDENCE

Jai Kozar-Lewis, a MAGIC alum and junior majoring in supply chain management with minors in Environmental & Sustainability Studies and Leadership of Organizations. Kozar-Lewis is currently completing his third internship, this time as a consultant at Crowe LLP Chicago. He also serves on the Executive Board of Spectrum Counseling Group and is a member of the Multicultural Business Students club and the Spartan Consulting Academy.

Growing up in East Lansing, Michigan, with a mother working for the OCAT office, Kozar-Lewis was familiar with the MAGIC program's positive impact and eagerly applied as an incoming first-year student.

During his time at MAGIC, Kozar-Lewis attended workshops and sessions where he learned about campus resources, academic skills and how to ask for help with classwork. The welcoming and supportive environment at MAGIC motivated him to engage with opportunities on campus. He also learned how to network and build connections with other students, many of whom became his closest friends.

"MAGIC was transformative; I feel confident handling the challenges of college," Kozar-Lewis says. "I know where to go for help and have a supportive community to turn to."

In the future, Kozar-Lewis aspires to advance his career in strategy consulting. His MAGIC experience laid a foundation for his personal and professional growth, demonstrating the program's impact on students' lives.

COMMUNITY WITHIN DIVERSITY

Maria Quintero, a MAGIC alum and junior at MSU, is majoring in psychology with a minor in youth and society. From Lansing, Michigan, Quintero works as a prenatal research lab assistant and is a member of sorority Kappa Delta Kai and Michigan State University's Council of Racial & Ethnic Studies (CORES) Latinx Student Organization (CRU).

Quintero discovered MAGIC through OCAT's social media. The program's mission to foster a sense of community and belonging among minority students attracted her as an incoming commuter student. She attended MAGIC to immerse herself in campus life, an experience she felt she missed by not living in the residence halls. She said she wanted a taste of the independence and reality of college life.

By attending workshops and classes around campus, MAGIC helped Quintero sharpen her leadership and time management skills. The program's resources also allowed her to build connections with the MSU Department of Police and

Public Safety, which she used for her sorority. She said the program helped her become more outgoing and confident, showing her how she could improve every day.

MAGIC brought together minority students from all different backgrounds, who Quintero bonded with by sharing similar experiences. The diverse community she built at MAGIC helped her find more people like herself. She said that attending MAGIC made diversity feel more prominent at events where she was able to find and build connections.

"I really loved MAGIC. Knowing you have a community at MSU makes a big difference," Quintero says. "It can feel lonely at a big university if you don't know anyone. You can find a lot of wonderful things outside of your comfort zone, helping you grow into the person you want to be."



WHAT'S NEXT?

As the program continues to prosper, Edwards plans to gradually double the number of attendees from around 200 to 400 and extend the program from two weeks to four. He also aims to grow the MAGIC community beyond the first semester, including students who couldn't participate in the program. This expansion will feature a success initiative with monthly skills and training mentoring sessions. Edwards intends to increase awareness of OCAT and MAGIC resources among students through this initiative.

As a long-term goal, Edwards hopes to establish MAGIC as a Living-Learning Community on campus, an opportunity for those who wish to live together to continue fostering that community and make building connections more accessible throughout their time on campus – a way for students to find and build their campus family among each other.

"Ushering in new leaders on campus and into the world fills my cup," said Edwards. "And to go on to see [MAGIC alums] as presidents of organizations and working six-figure jobs inspires me to know I'm in the right line of work."

To learn more about the MAGIC program, visit ocat.msu.edu/home/magic-maximizing-academic-growth-in-college. 🌐

International Student Association Dedicated Space in the International Center



In addition to celebrating 150 years of international students at Michigan State University, the International Student Association (ISA) is finally getting their own dedicated space! Construction for the long-awaited space began this fall in the International Center basement, across from the Spartan Bookstore, with an expected opening of spring or fall 2026.

The catalyst for this dedicated space came from the very first International Student Leaders Summit held in 2022. The summit provided a platform for students and international organizations to voice their concerns directly to university leaders.

“The first international student leader summit was very influential in making this happen,” says ISA Vice President Ishwari Kapale. “It became clear to everyone how important it was for us to have a space like this and how it would benefit us in so many ways because of the people who participated in that summit and all the conversations that happened.”

A VISION TAKES SHAPE

The idea of a dedicated space for ISA wasn't born overnight. It stemmed from a crucial question that students were asking themselves about the International Center.

“The main question was, ‘What is international at the International Center?’” says former ISA President Nikunj Agarwal. “ISA took up these conversations with [Student Life & Engagement (SLE) Senior Vice President (SVP)] Vennie [Gore] and [Assistant Vice President of SLE for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging and Assistant Dean for Student Success Initiatives, Undergraduate Education] Dr. [Genyne] Royal to see if we could have a dedicated space in the International Center, wherein ISA and its affiliates, including global Spartans, could hang around, bond, study and build new relationships and friendships.”

Fortunately, SVP Gore identified an underutilized space previously used by the bookstore. He reached out to

CFO for SLE Bob Patterson to see if they could work out a deal with the bookstore to convert it into a dedicated area for international students.

A SPACE FOR GROWTH AND COLLABORATION

The dedicated space will be designed to adapt to the evolving needs of ISA and its affiliates. It will include offices, flexible furniture and a designated storage area. This adaptability is crucial, as ISA has grown significantly since its revival in 2021.

“We were revived back in 2021, but we did not have many affiliates,” says ISA President Rochishshil Varma. “We started the affiliate program with the goal to host more collaborative events, and in return, we give the affiliate organizations \$1,000 per year, and now we have 15-20 affiliates.”

This growth highlights the need for a dedicated space. One of ISA's main goals for the space is to launch office hours. Here, affiliates can connect with ISA, share their experiences and gain valuable mentorship. This will deepen understanding of the international student experience and allow ISA to provide even better support. Gore emphasized the importance of this space, as well as his hopes for it.

“Student groups are really important because they allow for international students to maintain their culture but also learn from other cultures,” says Gore. “And so, what I'm hoping this space in support of organization will allow for that to thrive and grow.”

BRIDGING THE GAP AND BUILDING COMMUNITY

This vision for a more inclusive MSU community is a legacy left by Agarwal, who graduated in December 2022. Despite not benefiting personally, Agarwal worked tirelessly to ensure future international students would have a dedicated space to feel they belonged. Other executive board members, such as Varma and Kapale, are leaving behind a similar legacy.

“I think it is a great example of student leadership, student advocacy and really paying it forward,” says Director of OISS Krista McCallum Beaty. “Some other folks, but especially Nikunj, put a lot of time and energy into this for something that he's not going to benefit from.”

More than just a dedicated space for international students, this area is envisioned as a bridge between domestic and international communities. Beyond being just a physical space, it's envisioned as a platform for cultural exchange, for fostering friendships and for enriching the entire MSU experience.

“We see this disconnect between our domestic and our international students,” says Dr. Royal. “I'm hoping that it serves as yet another space where students know where they can find each other, so they can collaborate in more meaningful ways across the different ways we identify.”

The many benefits of the new dedicated space are expected to reverberate throughout the Spartan community, amplifying international students' voices.

“International students are bringing unique perspectives and unique intellect and showing us windows into their cultures,” says Vice Provost and Dean for International Studies and Programs Steven Hanson. “They enrich the experience of all students at MSU. I really look forward to continuing and growing their role as key contributors and community members of the university.”

