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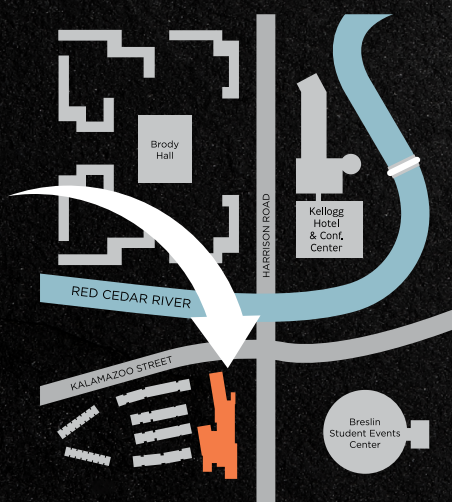
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Culinary Services

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: A squirrel eating a nut in the winter snow illuminated by golden sun rays.

Photos in this issue courtesy of: Culinary Services, Residence Education and Housing Services, SLE Strategic Communication, University Communications and Marketing

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A MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM LEADERS

As we invite you to dive into this latest edition of *Serving State*, we want to take a moment to express heartfelt gratitude for the incredible work of everyone who has contributed to Student Life & Engagement and the accomplishments detailed throughout this issue. The dedication to creating a safe, supportive and enriching environment for our Spartan community shines through every story highlighted in these pages.

We feature an array of initiatives showcasing our commitment to fostering community connections and addressing the unique needs of our students. From the support provided by Residence Education and Housing Services and the Office of Student Support and Accountability to the impactful leadership exchange with Ohio State University, each effort reflects our focus on collaboration and student engagement.

Additionally, the recent redesign of the MSU Union Food Court is a testament to our team's commitment to thoughtful, trauma-informed spaces that prioritize healing and connection. Similarly, the language-supported orientation courses for new hires exemplify the division's ongoing efforts to welcome and empower all team members, ensuring everyone feels valued and integrated into our team.

We are particularly touched by the stories of our students' involvement in the Spartan Day of Service. These students not only gave their time but also cultivated a sense of civic responsibility and community awareness, enriching their own experiences while positively impacting the Greater Lansing area.

As we continue to evolve and adapt to meet the changing needs of our campus community, the innovations that our team members are spearheading — from Amazon lockers to sustainability initiatives — underscore our proactive approach to enhancing the Spartan experience. These efforts are all about creating solutions that resonate with our values and support our students' well-being.

We are immensely proud to lead such a dedicated and passionate team and believe that, together, we are making strides toward a brighter future for every Spartan.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Allyn Shaw".

Allyn Shaw
*Interim Co-Lead for
Student Affairs*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Genyne Royal".

Genyne Royal
*Interim Co-Lead for
Student Affairs*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erin".

Erin Carter
*Interim Associate Vice President
for the Division of Residential
and Hospitality Services*



Michigan State University Hosts Annual MHDSOA CONFERENCE

Michigan State University welcomed housing and dining service professionals for the annual Michigan Housing and Dining Service Officers Association (MHDSOA) conference Sept. 30 to Oct. 2. This year's theme, "Cultivating Collective Impact," emphasized the importance of collaboration and shared experiences among professionals working in similar roles across the state.

As the fall semester kicked off and students settled into their routines, around 50 conference attendees representing universities across the state of Michigan gathered to reflect on their work, exchange ideas and celebrate their successes in a supportive environment. At the opening, Director of Residence Education and Housing Services (REHS) Helena Gardner invited attendees to, "Take a breath," adding, "We're here to engage and connect. For just a few days, we have the chance to exhale on our challenges and inhale new ideas and experiences."

KEY TOPICS AND COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSIONS

Throughout the conference, attendees explored a variety of important topics related to housing and dining services. These included understanding Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) regulations, managing early arrivals and summer operations, effective staff supervision, and handling mail and packages. Additional discussions covered student conduct issues tied to Title IX, mid-year staff onboarding, and budgeting for maintenance projects.

Panel discussions delved into specialized areas such as housing and dining accommodations and the importance of trauma-informed and identity-conscious customer service. These panels emphasized the need for inclusive and empathetic approaches in supporting diverse student populations.

In addition to new panel discussions this year, the planning committee hosted a Michigan-themed trivia night in the Izzo Hall of History in the Breslin Center. Teams were split

to represent different schools, and attendees were able to network during this friendly competition while enjoying a delicious meal from Kellogg Events.

LOOKING BEYOND THE BASICS: HOUSING AND DINING'S BROADER ROLE

A major goal of the event was to encourage reflection on the broader role housing and dining services play in shaping student experiences. Dr. Ray Gasser, assistant vice president of REHS, and Rebecca Selesky, assistant vice president of Culinary Services emphasized the importance of this message in their co-drafted introduction pamphlet, saying, "Students and their support systems are looking for us to share our value as they determine if and where they want to invest in higher education."

The discussions highlighted how housing and dining services go beyond providing spaces for students to eat and sleep — they play a critical role in supporting student well-being, retention and success. Attendees also explored strategies for better communicating the value of these services to campus partners, ensuring that their essential contributions to student life and the academic mission are fully recognized.

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF CAMPUS LIVING

As the conference concluded, participants had the opportunity to gain new insights and explore strategies to enhance their operations and better serve students. The discussions around collective impact, innovation, and the essential role of housing and dining services in higher education provided valuable takeaways. By focusing on collaboration and shared experiences, the conference encouraged attendees to reflect on their contributions and consider new ways to support student success and well-being. 🌱



Reclaiming Space Through Design: **MSU UNION FOOD COURT REDESIGN**

The Michigan State University Union Food Court has been reimagined and opened to the public following a focused, meaningful process of engagement and design by MSU alumna and interior designer, Ashley Latinen. The project exemplifies how thoughtful design can prioritize well-being and create meaningful spaces for the Spartan community.

Latinen's redesign reflects a deep connection to MSU, a commitment to trauma-informed design, and an approach centered on community healing and resilience. "We wanted to reclaim this space to serve and empower community members," Latinen said.

A DESIGN GROUNDED IN HEALING AND COLLABORATION

The space in the MSU Union, a central hub for students, faculty and visitors, was reimagined to foster a more secure, calming and functional environment following the violence of Feb. 13, 2023. Guided by trauma-informed design principles, Latinen created a space that embodies safety, trust and empowerment.

Latinen's process was highly collaborative and focused on ensuring adherence to trauma-informed design principles. She worked with MSU's Interior Design instructors and students, the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Program, various student organizations, MSU's University Health and Wellbeing, as well the Office for Resource and Support Coordination, the university's office dedicated to supporting all efforts related to the Feb. 13 violence, who engaged with those most directly impacted regarding the redesign.

TRANSFORMATIVE DESIGN ELEMENTS

Latinen's evidence-based approach transformed the MSU Union Food Court into a space that promotes healing and connection. Key features include:

- **Biophilic Design:** A living moss wall, nature-inspired color palettes, and ceiling tiles that mimic a tree canopy bring the calming influence of nature indoors.
- **Cultural Connection:** A mural titled Under the Pines celebrates Spartan traditions and community pride.
- **Functionality and Safety:** Adjustable lighting, flexible furniture, improved sightlines, and secure egress pathways enhance usability and security.

EFFORT TO EDUCATE AND SUPPORT THE DESIGN COMMUNITY

Latinen has earned national recognition for her transformative redesign of the MSU Union Food Court. Her innovative work was recognized with a top honors finish in the Association of University Interior Designers Design Competition in the Student Life & Academics 5,000–20,000 Square Foot category.

"One of the main reasons I submitted my work for the AUID competition was to share it with other designers and campus partners as a resource," Latinen explained. "Ideally, we hope they won't need it, but it's important to have it available if necessary. I wanted the focus to be on the space itself and what it has become, rather than on me."

Latinen is also contributing to Learning by Design magazine, volunteering her time to educate the design community about the importance of trauma-informed design. By sharing her research and insights, she hopes to inspire others to create spaces that foster healing and resilience.


A LASTING IMPACT ON THE SPARTAN COMMUNITY

The project exemplifies how thoughtful design can prioritize well-being and create meaningful spaces for the Spartan community. As Latinen continues to inspire the broader design community, the Spartan campus will remain a place where students, faculty, and visitors can gather, connect and heal. Through her thoughtful and collaborative efforts, Latinen has transformed the MSU Union Food Court into a restorative and empowering space for the Spartan community. Her work demonstrates the potential of design to go beyond functionality, creating environments that support well-being and resilience.

SEE THE REDESIGNED SPACE FOR YOURSELF:

Visit the MSU Union Food Court space on the first floor of the MSU Union, next to Sparty's Market. The MSU Union is open to the public from 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Sundays, from 7 a.m.-6 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and with a valid MSU ID from 6 p.m.-11 p.m., daily.

GET SUPPORT:

If you or someone you know are in need of support or resources related to the Feb. 13 violence, please contact the Office for Resource and Support Coordination at orsc@msu.edu or visit the ORSC website. 

REHS and O SSA Provide Comprehensive Support to Students



“We wanted to provide care services for our students, who may be expressing some need,” said Senior Vice President for Student Life and Engagement Vennie Gore. “It could be mental health, or just being in various different situations.”

Throughout the entire year, Student Life and Engagement’s (SLE) Residence Education and Housing Services (REHS) and the Michigan State University Office of Student Support and Accountability (OSSA) offer comprehensive support to students.

Through the dedicated efforts of the REHS Residential student care coordinator and OSSA case managers, these positions provide a range of resources and outreach services designed to meet the diverse needs of the student population.

While these positions have been created and refined to support student experience on and off campus, it is essential to acknowledge their limitations. The goal of the case managers is to guide referred individuals toward campus and community resources, empowering them to become self-advocates, and care for their overall well-being.

THE ROLE OF THE RESIDENTIAL STUDENT CARE COORDINATOR

The residential student care coordinator is part of a larger group known as the Residential Care and Community Expectations (RCCE) Team. This team reviews thousands of reports from the residence halls throughout the academic year, ranging from policy violations to information regarding student needs, well-being, and mental health.

This role is relatively new. Previously, the responsibility for one-on-one student support was held primarily by residence hall or apartment Community Directors. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the team advocated for a specialized role to better address student well-being. In response, the residential student care coordinator position was created in 2021.

“The addition of the care coordinator has expanded our ability to train and support the residential hall staff and their skills too,” said Assistant Director for Residential Care and Community Expectations Kelsey Skinner. “They do more

training and emphasis on how to respond to those in crisis related to mental health, such as how to support, navigate and talk to students.”

Although now an OSSA case manager, Gabrielle Barnett started as the residential student case coordinator in early 2022 and has seen how the role evolved to student needs. She emphasized the importance of being able to provide adequate support to the students they were servicing.

“At the end of the academic year, we sent out a survey, and the hall staff working with us said that they felt unprepared when meeting with students facing mental health concerns,” said Barnett. “We realized that if students have these needs, we want someone fully prepared to meet with them.”

Barnett advocated for graduate assistants to help with student meetings and support. Today, the care coordinator leads a team of graduate students who manage reports related to students in need and follow up to connect them with appropriate campus resources.

Collaborating with partners across the university, they ensure that residential students receive access to support and resources. With nearly 16,000 students living on campus, there are many residents that may receive support from the RCCE Care team.

OSSA CASE MANAGERS

While care coordinators handle many cases within the residence halls, OSSA case managers provide additional support while managing their own cases as well. The OSSA Care Team received over 1,300 referrals from the campus community in their inaugural year last year. These referrals support faculty, staff, and students.

“REHS is one of our many big partners. If you live in the residence halls, there are a lot more touch points for people who might be experiencing some challenges,” said Associate Director for OSSA Josh Durbin. “They’re good at intervening

and providing support, but there are some issues that don't fall within the residential bucket, and that's where we would pick up and help support them."

The university has a public referral form that anyone within or outside of the campus community can fill out if they notice someone who may be a harm to themselves or others or could benefit from additional outreach and support. Barnett now reviews many of those said reports and meets with students based on their needs.

"I do a lot of resource referral, helping students prioritize what they need and getting them connected to the right people. This can include housing, food, finances, academics, or mental health support," said Barnett.

Once submissions are received, case managers assess each case using a rubric and determine the most helpful interventions. They then reach out to the students in need, working alongside other university offices to ensure students receive proper care and resources.

"We're here to help in any way that we can," said Durbin. "We are also here to help support faculty and staff as well."

COLLABORATION ACROSS CAMPUS FOR STUDENT WELL-BEING

The case management approach for these two offices is focused on collaborations throughout the university. The OSSA case manager positions are funded through multiple partnerships outside of SLE, including Undergraduate Education and The Graduate School.

"We also collaborate closely with our police officers as they're often responding to students who are having mental health crises," said Barnett "And our police department here on campus has a social worker, so we work closely with her to ensure that we are doing the best outreach that we can."

The residential student care coordinator and OSSA case managers work together to navigate the cases that come through, ensuring students are connected to the appropriate resources on campus. Additionally, OSSA case managers work closely with an MSU police liaison, Detective Sydnee Zienta, who is assigned to their office.

Whether it's mental health support, basic needs like housing and food, or academic concerns, they collaborate with CAPS, MSU police, and countless other departments.

ADDRESSING STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH POST-PANDEMIC

Since the pandemic, MSU has seen a rise in student mental health concerns, with the most common challenges being stress, anxiety, sleep difficulties and depression, as reported by the 2024 National College Health Assessment (NCHA).

These concerns are more prominent among students of color and those from historically underrepresented communities,

who may turn to frontline staff for support. However, recognizing that staff and faculty are not trained clinicians, MSU has prioritized providing resources such as Mental Health First Aid.

"Mental Health First Aid is an evidence-based, early-intervention course that teaches participants about mental health and substance use challenges," said Director of MSU Counseling and Psychiatric Services Swapna Hingwe. "The motto is 'Identify, Understand, Respond.' All these areas within MSU have identified trainers for the course and are working to train as many staff as possible in these skills."

This training is part of a larger strategy involving SLE, CAPS and other university offices to support student well-being.



ACCESSING SUPPORT

To report a concern, there are two routes that can be taken:

- For On-Campus Students: Residents are encouraged to speak with their community director first, as they may be able to provide more immediate support and resources.
- For Off-Campus Students: Students who live off-campus along with faculty, staff and members of the community can submit a Care Referral through the Care and Intervention Team.

"Participating or responding outreach is voluntary," Skinner added. "The intention with these spaces is to build rapport, talk about the struggles or concerns that they're having, and see what ways we can connect them to the appropriate resources, offices, or parties here at MSU to help them in their journey."

While these positions provide support for students, they are not clinical. MSU Counseling and Psychiatric Services offers 24/7 crisis services. If you need immediate support, call (517) 355-8270 and press "1" to speak with a crisis counselor. For emergencies or concerns about the immediate welfare of someone, call 911.

For more information, visit REHS at liveon.msu.edu/REHS-Care-Conduct or OSSA at ossa.msu.edu/cait. 📞



REHS Five-Year Review Looks Toward a Brighter Future



In this fast-paced world, it can be challenging to step back and gain an outside perspective. Sometimes, an honest review to assess strengths, weaknesses and areas for growth is exactly what's needed. Michigan State University (MSU) Student Life & Engagement (SLE) completes a comprehensive five-year review on a rotating basis for each department. This year, Residence Education Housing Services (REHS) completed its evaluation. Each review includes internal and external analysis to highlight strengths, address weaknesses and offers recommendations for improvement.

REHS includes seven units: Business Operations, Central Maintenance & Apartments, Communications & Outreach, Culture & Strategy, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Facilities, Residence Education, and Safety and Security. These teams work together to serve more than 17,000 students across 27 residence halls and three apartment communities. Their mission is to provide exceptional and equitable community experiences, one connection at a time.



REVIEW AND RECOMMEND

Associate Director of Business Operations for REHS Christopher Stone-Sewalish and Chief of Staff for REHS Matea Čaluk led the review process with both internal and external teams. The internal team included REHS representatives from most units and the external team consisted of student housing experts from across the country. They examined financial, organizational, training and assessment documents and conducted focus groups with MSU staff, SLE team members and campus partners. Once completed, the external review generated 34 total recommendations, including 21 aligned with the REHS strategic plan, eight new additions and five modified or rejected due to resource limitations.

"It was amazing to see where we can grow and what we were doing really well," says Stone-Sewalish, "It's motivating and I appreciate the candid feedback and engagement."

GOALS FOR GROWTH

REHS had many strengths in the following areas: budget and finance management, facilities, campus partnerships, assessments, communication, diversity, equity and inclusion and organizational structure. REHS has a sound budget and a strong sense of family in facilities, they're praised for their DEI efforts across campus, and is



a “front-facing” campus department. REHS also conducts thorough assessments each year to guide decisions and provide top-tier customer service to students and their support systems.

In the next five years REHS plans to grow its foundation, culture and experiences. To strengthen its foundation, the team hopes to improve consistency across campus, improve experiences for residential students and enhance safety and satisfaction, as well as create physical structures to support the diverse needs of students. To build a stronger campus culture, REHS will build upon its relationships with campus partners, and focus on advancing anti-racist, anti-oppressive and trauma-informed practices. It also aims to grow experiences by creating and refining learning opportunities for students and staff, and developing more proactive communication plans with campus partners.

PROGRAMS WITH PURPOSE

REHS will implement new programs to achieve both internal and external goals, starting with a three-hour onboarding session for team members to build a supportive department culture that launched in September. The department will offer technical training and certifications to maintenance and facilities teams to enhance industry-specific skills and ensure top-notch service, currently underway. To foster a collaborative environment, REHS will update leadership meetings, improve Microsoft Teams communication and host focus groups and listening sessions with staff, leadership, the assistant vice president, and director.

“Our goal is to be as transparent as possible. We want our employees to know this is about improvement for everybody,” says Stone-Sewalish. “We hope our employees can see themselves as leaders and part of the REHS community.”

Externally, the MRULE/ICA program, a DEI initiative that focuses on engaging students across differences, has been incorporated into REHS to foster an inclusive environment. To address housing capacity issues, REHS will expand traditional housing options and explore sustainable and inclusive living environments. These will include gender-neutral restrooms, lithium battery disposals at service centers and enhanced recycling options to support environmental sustainability on campus.


“Our team members care deeply about students and MSU,” says Caluk. “Our goal is to ensure all students feel supported and that they have a sense of belonging within MSU.”

ONWARD AND UPWARD

The success of the five-year review would not have been possible without the support of Assistant Vice President for REHS Dr. Ray Gasser, Division Assessment Officer Paul Goldblatt and external and internal review teams.

The five-year review is crucial to keep up with the changing needs of students. It’s an opportunity for each division to be vulnerable and receive an outsider’s perspective to grow.

“The entire five-year review team’s work was truly incredible. The story they told about REHS is incredibly important,” says Stone-Sewalish. “We’re better because of everyone involved in the process.”

Learn more about REHS by visiting liveon.msu.edu. 





Behind the Scenes with MSU Tours

MSU Tour Guides are storytellers. They are passionate about the university, sharing interesting facts and unknown tidbits with guests who arrive to campus eager to learn more about what MSU has to offer. But tour guides do more than just show off campus. They share their unique Spartan stories, weaving in pieces of their individual experiences to reveal just what makes Michigan State University so special.

From prospective Spartans and families to school groups who want to explore the university, MSU tour guides bring campus to life, highlighting its beauty, history and spirit.

MSU Tours, managed by Residence Education and Housing Services (REHS), plays an important role in meeting the university's tour needs. The team works closely with the Office of Admissions to provide a complete visit to campus for guests. Tour guides are well-equipped to provide accurate and comprehensive information about the university, from academics to student life, giving prospective students and their families a full picture of the Spartan experience.

Additional partnerships with MSU Athletics and living-learning communities are vital to recruitment efforts, allowing tour guides to tailor their information to align with the specific needs of prospective students interested in these areas.

BECOMING AN MSU TOUR GUIDE

The tour guide onboarding process begins during the fall of each academic school year. Due to the large volume of guests each year, MSU Tours likes to have between 150 to 175 tour guides on staff. This past academic year, MSU Tours worked with 196 candidates and 110 students received an offer.

The interview process is extensive. Interviewees are asked a series of questions before they are allotted five minutes to present on any topic their heart desires. This method allows the hiring committee to gauge students' storytelling abilities and how well they articulate something they are passionate about.

MSU TOUR GUIDE TRAINING

Once hired, the new guides take part in training unique to the tour guide program prior to beginning official work in the spring. New guides are required to take TG 101, or Tour Guide 101.

"TG 101 is a six-week course where our new guides are divided out into different cohorts based on their schedule and are taught by a pro staff or graduate assistant along with student supervisors," says Assistant Director of Residence Education and Housing Services Outreach Linda Karbo. "We meet with our cohorts of two once a week, two hours in person. In addition, they experience asynchronous learning that we've developed to be accessible for different types of learners."

The guides in the TG 101 course enjoy hearing from the student supervisors, as they have lived the tour guide life. They get to ask the supervisors about their experiences and how they prepare for and overcome certain situations, offering new guides some real-world insight.

"I've learned so many things through the tours program that I didn't know existed coming in," says Student Supervisor Hannah Greenspan. "I didn't know how Olin [Health Center] worked or that we had a program called Spartan Compass, and I didn't fully understand the nuances of the dining plan. A lot of what I've learned about how to navigate as a student at MSU, I learned through the TG 101 program."

After they have finished the course, the new guides can start taking on tours. However, the learning does not stop there. The guides have training each semester along with a monthly meeting, each featuring a presentation on a program, office or something relating to the university.

Each guide leaves educated on how to inform guests about these topics and their importance to MSU. In these meetings guides are also updated on any new tour routes or student supervisors.

Additionally, during these meetings, a Tour Guide of the Month gets selected. At the last meeting of the school year, student superlatives are also awarded to the tour guides. When Greenspan was a first-year student, she was given the superlative Most Likely to Meet Tom Izzo at a Basketball Game and awarded Tour Guide of the Month.

“It was her peers – the other tour guides – who nominated her and voted for her as someone they looked up to, someone that is a fantastic tour guide,” says Tour Manager Amanda Ross. “And that is one of my favorite things about the awards – the tour guides getting the chance to recognize each other for the great work they do.”

SHOWCASING THE SPARTAN EXPERIENCE

Regarding the tours themselves, they happen year-round with only a few days off, including winter and spring break and two to three weeks in August and May. MSU Tours offers a variety of programs accommodating a wide array of needs.

“Our primary focus is really welcoming those prospective and admitted student groups to campus so that they can get acclimated with what we’re about and what it means to be a Spartan,” says Karbo.

One type of tour offered is a first-year prospective program, which occurs most days, in which guests can expect a presentation from the Office of Admissions along with a tour of campus. For those who would prefer, there are also tour-only days.

In the spring, the admitted student program dives a bit deeper. Tour guides talk about more details for students who have received admission to MSU and are still trying to make that final decision as to where they want to go to college.

On addition, MSU Tours offers visits with different colleges across campus to highlight areas of campus common to those students’ experiences.

In addition to tours, tour guides also partner on major campus community events. For example, MSU Tours hosts tours for Admitted Student Day with the Office of Admissions in the spring, which brings in around 11,000 people to campus. This huge event highlights academic resources and information regarding student resources, involvement and engagement.

For Green & White Days, individual residence hall and campus history tours are offered.

For almost every need, there is a campus tour designed to pair with it.

SHARING THE RIGHT INFORMATION

Ross emphasizes the goal of each tour is to share what it is like to be part of the MSU community and what it is like to be a student at MSU. Most importantly, tours are designed to help potential incoming students figure out if this university is a good fit for them.

“One of the things we always say is that misinformation is our nemesis. We want to make sure that we’re providing clear information,” says Karbo. “We want to be welcoming, and we want to be honest about what it means to be at Michigan State University.”

At the end of the day, the tours are there to provide students with all the information they need to make an educated decision about whether becoming a Spartan is for them.

“We tell everyone that a tour is successful even if at the end someone goes, ‘That’s really cool, but I don’t think this school is for me,’” says Ross. “It’s just as successful as all the tours where someone is like, ‘Oh my gosh, thank you so much. I’m coming to MSU now.’ We know that not everyone is going to be a Spartan, and that’s OK.” 📍





MSU WELCOMES OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY FOR A LEADERSHIP EXCHANGE

On Friday, Sept. 27, Michigan State University welcomed a group of Ohio State University students to campus. These students serve as leaders in organizations similar to MSU's Council of Racial and Ethnic Studies (CORES), Residence Halls Association (RHA) and Associated Students of Michigan State University (ASMSU) for a leadership exchange.

During their visit, they connected with various student groups, toured the campus and attended the MSU vs. Ohio State football game. This collaboration between two Big Ten schools provided an opportunity to exchange ideas and showcase what it means to be a Spartan.

"Student leadership exchanges are important for MSU students to learn techniques that are different than what we teach and facilitate," said Assistant Vice President for Student Development and Leadership and Dean of Students Allyn Shaw, Ph.D. "MSU students will learn from OSU students, and they will learn from us."

A DAY OF CONNECTION AND COLLABORATION

Upon traveling to East Lansing, the group gathered for a welcome breakfast at the MSU Union, hosted by Dr. Shaw and the Assistant Vice President for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Genyne Royal, Ph.D. Afterward, they visited the Beaumont Tower for a tour led by the honorary Tower Guard.

The group then headed over to Brody Hall for lunch and several breakout sessions. These discussions brought together MSU and OSU student leaders from various organizations, including student governments, Fraternity and Sorority Life councils, the Black Student Association (BSA) and sustainability groups. These sessions allowed the students to exchange ideas on leadership, campus engagement and student affairs.

TOURING CAMPUS AND ENGAGING WITH MSU LEADERS


In the afternoon, the group toured the under-construction Multicultural Center and enjoyed ice cream from the MSU Dairy Store. They later met with Senior Vice President for

Student Life and Engagement Vennie Gore at the Student Services Building, where they participated in roundtable discussions with representatives from ASMSU, the Center for Community Engaged Learning, MSU Vote and WDBM Impact, MSU's campus radio station.

The day wrapped up with a guided campus tour by Tammie Coles and Lance Sharp from the Office of Spartan Experiences, followed by dinner at Beggar's Banquet. The evening included optional activities, such as attending a movie or a symphony at the Wharton Center.

WRAPPING UP WITH SPARTAN TRADITION

On Saturday, some OSU students explored Lansing, either attending a local Powwow or visiting the state capitol. The afternoon continued with a Council of Graduate Students (COGS) tailgate before the group joined the traditional march to Spartan Stadium with the MSU Band. The leadership exchange concluded with the highly anticipated MSU vs. OSU football game, marking the end of a memorable weekend of collaboration between the two Big Ten universities.

"Networking is critically important as the world is ever smaller, and this lets our students meet other Big Ten students as they may end up working together in the future," said Dr. Shaw. "This leadership exchange was a great opportunity to make an impact." 



Student Life & Engagement Launches Language-Supported Orientation Courses for New Hires

As of September 2024, Michigan State University Student Life & Engagement (SLE) is offering language-supported orientation courses for new hires. The initiative aims to accommodate the growing number of employees whose first language is not English or who require additional literacy support. This effort aligns with SLE's mission to foster innovation, flexibility and access to learning and development, while providing team members with opportunities for career growth. The division strives to ensure all team members feel valued and proud to work within SLE, serving as leaders.

DEVELOPING MULTILINGUAL SUPPORT FOR NEW EMPLOYEES

Over the past nine months to develop the course, SLE revised its original content, simplifying it for both English and non-English speakers. The team incorporated best practices for teaching in a multilingual environment, emphasizing the use of visuals and introducing key vocabulary and acronyms commonly used within the division early in the process. Cathy Lugibihl, training developer for MSU SLE, serves as the primary instructor, while Yu-Chein Chang from Culinary Services, has been a key contributor. Chang has played an essential role in delivering the course and sharing resources throughout its development.

COURSE OVERVIEW: LANGUAGE-SUPPORTED WELCOME TO THE TEAM


The course, titled Language-Supported: Welcome to the Team, is designed for approximately 10 participants per session and lasts 2.5 hours. It begins with introductions, where each participant states their name and places a magnet on a world map indicating their country of birth.

This activity personalizes the experience and fosters connections among participants. Each new hire is provided with an iPad that supports their preferred language, utilizing translation services offered by Microsoft and Google. Spoken instructions from the instructor are translated into the participant's chosen language, along with all written materials.

The course familiarizes new employees with SLE's divisional culture, expectations, and mission. Additional support is offered to help new hires activate their NetIDs, check email for the first time, obtain parking permits, and log in to the Enterprise Business Systems (EBS).

POSITIVE RECEPTION AND FUTURE PLANS

Feedback from new hires has been overwhelmingly positive. Alison Peterson, training and development manager at SLE, noted: "You can tell that people in the course are eager to connect, and they engage with each other quite a bit, even if they can't fully communicate. Everyone seems more at ease because they share the experience of English not being their first language, and we're seeing much more participation compared to the class without language support."

The introduction of language-supported orientation courses at MSU SLE underscores the division's dedication to inclusivity and staff development. By offering tailored resources for multilingual employees, SLE has improved the onboarding process and ensured that all staff members, regardless of language proficiency, feel empowered to succeed. This initiative reflects SLE's ongoing efforts to create an inclusive work environment where every team member can thrive and contribute meaningfully. 



MSU ENHANCES CAMPUS SERVICES WITH INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

Michigan State University's Residence Education and Housing Services is advancing its commitment to student-centered service and sustainability through three major projects: the introduction of Amazon lockers, the centralization of service desks and a battery collection initiative. These efforts aim to improve efficiency, convenience, and environmental stewardship across campus.



AMAZON LOCKERS: STREAMLINING PACKAGE PICKUP

With nearly 50% of campus package deliveries coming from Amazon, MSU is piloting lockers in Holden, Owen and Brody halls to provide faster and more convenient access for students.

"Amazon lockers are a really convenient and efficient way to get students their packages faster," says Associate Director for Business Operations Christopher Stone-Sewalish.

The lockers allow students to schedule deliveries directly to the units. As of early January, all four lockers are operational and available for residents to select when ordering products from Amazon. This initiative is part of MSU's broader strategy to centralize services while keeping costs minimal.

"The lockers are at very little cost to us — technically no cost except for some installation items," says Stone-Sewalish.

DESK CENTRALIZATION: ENHANCING EFFICIENCY

In parallel with the locker initiative, REHS is piloting a desk centralization project aimed at consolidating Service Centers within residence hall neighborhoods. The project, currently being tested at Brody Hall, simplifies operations by combining essential services like loaner keys and access cards in one location, while package pickup is handled separately.

"This model ensures students can access what they need without confusion," says Assistant Director for Residence Hall Operations Jay Makowski.

The centralization project also addresses staffing challenges, as fewer students are taking on-campus jobs. By streamlining services, MSU can maintain high standards of support without overextending resources.

"Every neighborhood has unique needs," says Stone-Sewalish. "We want to ensure that whatever we implement is authentic to the space and works best for the students."





BATTERY COLLECTION: ADVANCING SUSTAINABILITY

As part of its commitment to environmental stewardship, MSU has launched a battery collection program to safely recycle hazardous materials like lithium-ion batteries. Initially piloted at Case Hall, the program will expand to other neighborhoods with improved communication and outreach strategies to encourage student participation.

“Lithium-ion batteries are not safe in compactors and can cause fires,” explains Stone-Sewalish. “This initiative ensures we’re being sustainable and thoughtful about our waste stream.”

To address challenges in student engagement, the university plans to leverage social media and collaborate with student organizations to raise awareness about proper battery disposal.

“We’ve seen more bags used than batteries returned,” says Makowski. “We need to push harder on education and awareness.”

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO CAMPUS IMPROVEMENTS

Together, these initiatives reflect REHS’ dedication to enhancing the student experience while embracing sustainability and innovation. From improving access to packages through Amazon lockers to optimizing resources with desk centralization to fostering environmental responsibility through battery recycling, MSU is building a campus environment that aligns with students’ evolving needs and values.

“These projects are all about creating a better experience for our students,” says Makowski. “Each step we take is intentional and focused on providing efficient, sustainable solutions that support our campus community.”



BUILDING A SMARTER, GREENER CAMPUS

MSU invites students to take an active role in shaping these initiatives by sharing feedback, participating in surveys, and engaging with new services like the Amazon lockers and battery collection program.

“This is about being thoughtful stewards of student resources and creating a campus where everything just works,” says Stone-Sewalish. “If we’re doing our jobs right, these improvements will fade into the background and simply become part of a seamless, supportive student experience.” 📍

Spartans Give Back at CCEL Fall Day Of Service

Studies show volunteering improves physical and mental health. Some students choose to donate their time for the satisfaction of a “helper’s high,” to socialize or simply for fun. No matter the reason, hundreds of students at Michigan State University (MSU) dedicate a Saturday each fall to the Spartan Day of Service (DOS). They partner with local organizations to make a positive impact in the Greater Lansing area.

The Center for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL) worked with the MSU Alumni Office to organize the fall DOS Oct. 5. A total of 325 students volunteered at 12 sites in the Greater Lansing area and two sites in Detroit, working 1,950 hours total. They collaborated with the Potter Park Zoo, South Lansing Urban Gardens, Allen Neighborhood Center and Pattengill Biotechnical Magnet School, estimating a combined financial impact of \$61,600. Volunteers worked on sustainable gardening and classroom clean-ups to community flyering and preparing for events.

DOS IN ACTION

The day begins at the MSU Business College at 8 a.m., when students register and gather for breakfast. MSU faculty, community partners and alumni then deliver speeches filled with encouragement and support. After which, students receive their lunches and board buses to various sites. Each location has site leaders with emergency information and resources to ensure a safe experience. Volunteers arrive around 10 a.m. and work until 2 p.m., before returning to campus.

Assistant Director of CCEL K.C. (Kristopher) Keyton, has overseen student volunteering and led the charge on DOS for nearly a decade. Keyton highlighted the essential relationships with alumni and community partners for the event’s success. Collaborators share their needs and volunteering opportunities, with suggestions to improve future community service events.

“Without our community partners, we couldn’t offer these programs, and without our students, many nonprofits would struggle to find the volunteer support they need,” said Keyton.



THE POWER OF SERVICE

Raised in the Lansing area, Keyton's passion and commitment for giving back to the community has come full circle. He worked as a high school teacher then transitioned to higher education. Keyton felt it was his responsibility to return to Lansing and help MSU students give back to the community he loves. DOS allows students to experience civic responsibility while making an impact on larger social issues.

Keyton encourages students to engage in community service beyond building a resume, for personal growth. The more students volunteer and see the community's needs, the more they'll expand their toolbox and perspectives. Community service has ability to introduce students to fields they might work in one day, allow them to discover new passions or inspire a career change.

"We want students to get into the community and step out of their comfort zones, learn professional development skills and understand community issues," said Keyton. "We've had students change their majors after volunteering because of the impact it has made on them."



"I always love giving back to the community, it makes me feel good and I love seeing the impact of making people smile," said Pohlman. "I feel like I've become a better student, and understand more people different from me."

VOLUNTEER VETERAN

Haylie Pohlman, an MSU junior nursing student, has been volunteering since her junior year of high school. Pohlman volunteers on a weekly basis with the greater Lansing food bank and has participated in Tower Guard, serving the MSU Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities. In her hometown, Northville, Michigan, Pohlman makes fleece blankets for pediatric hospital patients at Fleece and Thank You. This fall was her first time participating in DOS.

Pohlman spent her day at Pattengill Biotechnical Magnet School, organizing classrooms and prepping materials. They sorted workbook pages, cleaned off desks and wrote on walls. Volunteering at Pattengill gave Pohlman a behind-the-scenes look into creating a supportive learning environment and the demanding work of teaching.

Volunteering has had an impact on Pohlman, both personally and academically. She says she has developed a greater empathy for others, and has been a great opportunity to meet more students and faculty.

PARTNERS FOR SUCCESS

After DOS, CCEL gathers feedback from students and community partners to enhance future events. Many participants share positive feedback, equating five hours of volunteer work from each student to months of staff labor.

Looking forward, CCEL plans to continue to improve, and provide services such as transportation and meals to show gratitude toward volunteers. Much of DOS success is attributed to the support of community partners including; Pattengill Biotechnical Magnet School, South Lansing Urban Gardens, Webster Farms Community Garden, Eastside Community Action Center, Allen Neighborhood Center, Potter Park Zoo, Fenner Nature Center, the Equine Center for Learning, MSU Pollinator Gardens, Rescue Nature Now, and the MSU-Detroit Partnership for Food, Learning and Innovation.

"The positive feedback from community partners and the awesome students makes it all worthwhile," said Keyton. "That's why I love working at MSU and what makes this place so special."

To anyone considering volunteering, a couple hours a week can make a huge impact and a world of a difference. For more information, visit communityengagedlearning.msu.edu or spartansvolunteer.msu.edu. ☺

