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STANDING TALL

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



“THERE ARE NO SIMPLE OR EASY ANSWERS TO SOCIETAL ISSUES. THERE ARE MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES THAT NEED TO BE HEARD, UNDERSTOOD AND APPRECIATED. IT REQUIRES US TO HONOR HUMAN DIGNITY AND FEELINGS — TO SEEK TO UNDERSTAND AND TO BE UNDERSTOOD.”

In my most recent blog post for Student Life & Engagement team members, I talked about the concept of standing tall. I'd like to share that sentiment with the readers here.

Most of our team members know that my father, a sergeant major, served our country for 32 years. Growing up as an army brat, I have always appreciated the sacrifices military families make for our country. Many families endure long stretches of time away from their loved ones as they are stationed in faraway places around the globe. Sometimes, their loved ones don't make it home or do not return as they left either physically or emotionally. Yet, they proudly devote themselves to a noble cause.

They call this “standing tall.” Standing tall is a concept of not running away from struggles but embracing the struggles. I have come to embrace that this world is a complex and complicated place. There are no simple or easy answers to societal issues. There are multiple perspectives that need to be heard, understood and

appreciated. It requires us to honor human dignity and feelings — to seek to understand and to be understood. It requires us to inquire and talk about issues without attacking the person with whom we're speaking. That is standing tall. In our world today, that is not easy.

Universities are places of learning and growth. Each year, we help young people grow intellectually, emotionally and socially. This growth helps our students gain insights and learning that will benefit them when they become leaders in education, industry and government. We are learning partners in this journey to advance knowledge and transform lives.

This issue of Serving State focuses on how our team members continue to stand tall and support our students, guests and each other. Michigan State University's Community Relations team receiving the International Town and Gown Association (ITGA) Presidential Excellence Award for their partnership with the East Lansing community in the aftermath of

Feb. 13. Spartan Family Connections celebrated its first year, the Student Parent Resource Center received a grant, and we broke ground on the Multicultural Center. Even when we can't fix the world, we can make our corner of it a bit brighter.

As I encourage our team to stand tall as we embrace the joys and struggles of our work, I hope you do the same in yours. It is not easy, and sometimes we don't get it right, but we must get up each morning and try again.

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



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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 Creative Services, 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.

Photos courtesy of: SLE Creative Services, SmithGroup, University Communications

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GIVE GREEN DAY:

REMOVING FINANCIAL BARRIERS FOR MSU STUDENTS

Michigan State University endeavors to find new ways to support its student community. Considering this mission, the Give Green Day initiative was started in 2016 as a university-wide effort to raise support for current and future MSU students. The initiative aims to provide a 24-hour concerted opportunity to raise financial support for MSU colleges and programs that directly support students of MSU. It provides opportunities to programs of all sizes oriented toward student support to raise awareness for the work they do while also raising funding to support that work. The initiative has been widely successful, with \$1,287,700 being raised so far in 2023 from 5,663 gifts, including \$146,009 from 1,382 gifts from MSU faculty, staff and retirees. Give Green Day 2023 saw donations come in from 47 different states and 15 countries.

The mission of Give Green Day is two pronged: to raise financial support for current and future MSU students and elevate awareness of the need for the same. Senior Director of Annual Giving, University Advancement for MSU, Kathleen Deneau, hopes to continue to bring more awareness to the annual campaign and thanks the community for its support. “We have been fortunate to receive incredible support for this campaign from across the country and globe,” says Deneau, “It’s great to see that the Spartan community is very helpful and contributes to a great Spartan experience.”

All the revenue generated from the featured projects directly benefits the Spartan student community. These projects include the Spartan Strong Fund, the Support Our Spartans (SOS) Fund, Emergency Funds for various colleges, the International Student Emergency Fund and more. A complete list of the projects can be found at givingday.msu.edu/projects.

The history behind the establishment and success of Give Green Day at MSU is an interesting one. Several other Big Ten universities started a 24-hour concerted day of fundraising a while before Michigan State did. Senior Director of Alumni Relations, Lisa Parker, oversees alumni engagement issues and led a team that worked with alumni clubs throughout the United States. She had approached the MSU Alumni Office and highlighted the need for a student emergency fund. She personally donated \$10,000 for the office to leverage as a match. The Alumni Office did a one-to-one match for every dollar it received, up to \$10,000. This small-scale initiative kickstarted efforts into this space of fundraising for students’ financial support. The focus since the very beginning was oriented toward students by ensuring the impact of the revenue and support generated was designated to be given back to students in a variety of ways. Today, the initiative has grown into a much broader, university-wide partnership that is not only national, but also global in nature. Alumni clubs, both within the country and internationally, participate in making the day and campaign a success every year.

At first, Annual Giving was driving the funds to be donated, which helped establish a university-wide approach. However, alumni, friends, faculty and staff often wanted to support programs they had been involved in as students or projects they felt a direct connection to and recognized a need for funds in. Once Annual Giving opened Give Green Day up for project submission, the campus community found an opportunity to provide specific options for which donors could contribute. Donors hence found an opportunity to make the specific kind of impact they wanted to make that day. The initiative has grown tremendously over the years and has also helped identify precise student

needs. Colleges, units and programs are able to discern student needs and then tailor fundraising efforts to raise money for those particular initiatives. Students themselves are also given the opportunity to support, especially seniors, on that day. Several students are actively involved in donating and matching dollars allocated for student gifts as well.

The initiative started as a small one-fund project before Annual Giving invited project submissions facilitating college participation and leading to further growth through the crowd power platform. As a college unit, you get to submit one project, but there also exist several other programs unlinked to specific colleges that benefit from fundraising. These different programs can submit “microprojects,” as Associate Director of Development, Office of Philanthropy for Undergraduate Education, Danielle Matlick puts it, that live on the crowd power platform. These include the Gender and Sexuality Campus Center, the Veterans Resource Center, and most prominently, the SOS Fund, for which around \$19,390 was raised in 2023.

The Support Our Spartans (SOS) Fund, a student emergency fund housed in the Division of Student Life & Engagement, is one of the most prominent active projects at MSU for students in need of financial support. Matlick explains that many students apply to the SOS Fund for support annually, becoming an important part of the Give Green Day initiative. “Student success is getting the most out of your experience while you’re a Spartan,” she says. “Our goal with the SOS Fund is really to remove any financial barriers on the path to graduation and support and facilitate that student success.”

Students often face a wide variety of unforeseen circumstances that can hinder their ability to work toward success and graduation. The S.O.S

Fund provides them assistance to meet academic financial needs but can also be used to combat other circumstances outside the classroom that could inhibit a student's ability to continue their education at MSU. These needs can range from rent and medical bills to the flooding of their apartment or breaking down of their car. "Our goal as an educational institution is to have students come to Michigan State and graduate from Michigan State," says Matlick. "We want to do whatever we can to support them on their path because the last thing we want is for students to have to drop out due to financial hurdles."

Today, Give Green Day is organized by several teams within University Advancement with logistic oversight managed by the Annual Giving team at MSU. Anyone can donate on Give Green Day, including alumni and current students, family and friends, staff and retirees, parents of current or past students, and members of the general community.

There is a monumental amount of excitement and anticipation around Give Green Day from clubs around the country, according to Deneau. "These clubs advocate, throw parties to encourage giving and actively watch their totals to see how their scholarships are doing," she says. The Alumni Office gets hundreds of inbound calls on the day from people wanting to make donations. "I think our constituents also know that you're making a difference with students, and that helps tremendously. It's really taken on its own set of people that follow it and are really excited about it. Their awesome support is truly awe-inspiring."

Matlick says students are grateful when they know the Spartan community as a whole is supporting their education and ensuring they have a very well-rounded Spartan experience. "You have a lot of amazing things that happen inside of the classroom, and you have equally amazing things happening outside of the classroom," she says. According to Matlick, the students understand and acknowledge donors are supporting a

portion of their overall experience and are especially grateful for that.

Several students have found the projects supported by Give Green Day to be a lifeline in times of unprecedented financial crisis. Michigan State student, Karli Ward, works for MSU Greenline and helps raise funds for the SOS fund. She also applied for the fund herself last year due to an unprecedented decrease in her FAFSA funds. The money she received from the SOS fund was applied to her tuition bill and made

"We want to do whatever we can to support them on their path because the last thing we want is for students to have to drop out due to financial hurdles" says Matlick.



it possible for her to complete her education at MSU. Ward says, when she received the news of her decreased FAFSA amount, finances consumed her thoughts. She had to pick up as many extra shifts as possible at her two jobs, but it was hard to do so while also juggling six classes. "The fund allowed me more time for my mental health as well as helping me enjoy my full college experience," says Ward. "It was the final support I needed to help me get across that graduation stage!"

Kennedi Robinson, an Animal

Science student at MSU, lost her mother at a young age and had to support herself entirely while facing numerous financial challenges that threatened her ability to continue her education. "The SOS fund has been a beacon of hope and support that has helped me overcome these obstacles and stay on track toward achieving my academic goals," says Robinson. The fund provided her with much-needed financial assistance that helped pay for her tuition, off-campus apartment, groceries and other essential

expenses. Without this support, she would have been forced to take out loans or find alternative sources of funding that would have added to her already considerable stress as a student. "I cannot overstate its importance for students like me who face financial challenges that are beyond our control," says Robinson.

Not only did the fund help them stay afloat during times of financial uncertainty but also enabled them to continue pursuing their education without sacrificing their well-being or academic performance. Robinson urges everyone to consider providing more funding to the SOS Fund so it can continue to make a positive difference in the lives of students struggling to make ends meet. They consider the fund a vital resource that helps to level the playing field. "It ensures all students have access to the same opportunities regardless of their financial situation," says Robinson. "The fund has truly changed my life by taking a significant burden off my shoulders and allowing me to focus on my studies and personal growth."

On Give Green Day, gifts must be made between the hours of 12 a.m. and 11:59 p.m. EDT to count in the campaign totals. Donations can be made online at givingto.msu.edu or over the phone by calling 517-884-1136. While the 2023 Give Green Day campaign has officially ended, student need and the opportunity to support students continues. Donations can always be made through the website. 🐾

MSU Unit Receives Honor for Town and Gown Partnership Following Feb. 13

Michigan State University's Student and Community Relations unit received the International Town and Gown Association (ITGA) Presidential Excellence Award for their partnership with the East Lansing community in the aftermath of Feb. 13. They received this award at this year's 2023 ITGA City & University Relations Conference.

The ITGA is a global non-profit association dedicated to college campus and community interests. As stated on their website, ITGA "is the premier resource for addressing challenges, emerging issues and opportunities between and amongst institutions of higher education and the communities in which they reside."

Suchitra Webster, director of Michigan State University's Student and Community Relations unit, was present to accept the award and posted on social media shortly thereafter, "We were absolutely honored and humbled to accept this award in the aftermath of Feb. 13."

On the evening of Feb. 13, 2023, a gunman opened fire on the Michigan State University main campus. By 8 a.m. the next morning, Michigan State University had partnered with the City of East Lansing's Parks, Recreation and Arts Department to offer a Mental

Health Support Facility for students, faculty, staff and family members at the Hannah Community Center.

Webster noted that setting up the facility and pulling the community together was an incredibly simple process due to the relationships that have been established between the community relations team and the City of East Lansing. She added Janet Lillie from MSU's Government Relations and Cathy DeShambo of East Lansing were instrumental in the planning.

"It was a matter of text messages, and within hours we had all the space we needed," Webster says. "I did not hear words like 'we'll see,' 'not sure' or 'no.' They were all in, all the time." The work at the Hannah Community Center lasted for roughly three weeks. Webster shared her gratitude to the staff at the center, as well as the many partners that came together to support the Spartan community.

"MSU's University Health and Wellbeing staff were also key after the center was up and running," Webster adds. "And we must also acknowledge the tireless work of support animals, handlers, and all of the clinicians and mental health professionals who came from across the state to volunteer."

The relationship between a university and the town in which it resides is a special one for Webster,

particularly the strength that can be found in coming together as one community.

"Every member is an asset and brings something specific to the table. Getting people to the table, even in divisive times, is critical, as are the simple (or not so simple) acts of communication and compromise."

This event highlighted the importance of consistently working together on safety, placemaking and big picture problems over the years.

"Feb. 13 was a crucible moment, and it made it clear that the mundane work of relationship and trust building is really lifted and illuminated when that moment of need and crisis emerges," says Webster.

The Presidential Excellence Award was created as a way to highlight ITGA members who demonstrate exceptional performance leadership, educational achievement and/or volunteer service. The president reviews nominations and makes the final selection based on who best reflects the mission of the ITGA.

This year's Presidential Excellence Award was an emotional one for the ITGA community. This long-standing partnership and mutually beneficial relationship played a crucial role in fostering prompt care and recovery following this tragedy. 🐾



Photos, left to right: Vigil for Feb. 13 victims, staff and students collect flowers laid in honor of killed students, support dog at MSU Library





GROUND BREAKING OF THE NEW MSU MULTICULTURAL CENTER

The weather was cloudy over campus on April 21, but nothing could dim the glow at the heart of campus that Friday afternoon as MSU officially broke ground on a standalone multicultural center. Given the go-ahead from the MSU Board of Trustees this past February, the \$38 million 34,000 square foot facility will be the culmination of demands that stretch back decades by students for a dedicated space to multicultural inclusivity and belonging.

Administrators, student leaders, staff, faculty, and community stakeholders gathered together at the northeast corner of Farm and Shaw lanes to partake in a special ceremony commencing construction at the

site. Once a field of green grass and trees along the Red Cedar River near Shaw Hall, construction crews have excavated the site and poured the building's concrete foundation. But this foundation is for much more than just a building.

"The new multicultural center will be a facility that exemplifies MSU's commitment to student success," said Vennie Gore, senior vice president for Student Life & Engagement. "The center will allow students to express their own individuality while also learning about others in a culturally rich environment."

A student representative on the Project Team, Shiksha Sneha, emceed the ceremony with speakers

and leaders offering remarks, acknowledging the road that has led to a new building. Fellow alumnus and Principal of Indegenise, LLC, Don Lyons provided an honor song and land blessing for the traditional lands of Anishinabeg while speaking to the importance of recognizing the project's long history.

More, it's legacy.

Council of Racial Ethnic Students (CORES) leaders also spoke, leading the land acknowledgement and libations portion of the afternoon. The leaders of each affinity group took time collectively to name internationally known and local

leaders, embracing the legacies for which each of their respective organizations stand. Each CORES group — Asian Pacific American Student Organization (APASO), Black Students Alliance (BSA), Culturas De Las Razas Unidas (CRU), and Native American Indigenous Student Organization (NAISO) — has a long history of advocating on campus, contributing greatly to the advancement of dialogue on a free-standing structure through the decades.

"It's an honor to be here today," said Education Junior and CRU President, George Ramirez Madrigal, at the event. "It's going to be a terrific resource. I know there's been so many people involved from the initial idea to making this a reality. So many contributed. I feel blessed to be part of the student body that sees this to fruition, finally. We know it means a lot to alumni and, of course, to us as well."

A common theme, many praised students for both their vision and persistence, linking students who walked on campus up to 50-odd years apart in the history books. Speakers like Gore, MSU Chief Diversity Officer, Jabbar Bennett, PhD, Assistant Vice President for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging, Genyne Royal, PhD, among others such as Board of Trustees Chairperson, Rema Vassar, PhD and Interim Provost, Thomas Jeitschko, PhD, each discussed their excitement for the project and offered context for how far the project has come.

Growing out of wider lists of demands in the 1960s and 1970s to increase racial and ethnic minority representation at MSU, a history of subsequent protests and sit-ins dot the decades following. In 1989, for instance, students participated in a 10-day study-in demonstration at the Hannah Administration Building.

In 1995, the Council of Racial Ethnic Students (CORES) presented a proposal to administration for a multicultural center, leading to its establishment as the first multicultural center in the basement of the MSU Union. It moved to the second floor in 2013 and renamed the Mosaic Multicultural Unity Center. Still, calls for a free-standing building remained with more demonstrations and petitions through the 2010s and in 2019, more than 100 students joined a sit-in at the Hannah Administration Building once again, submitting a formal plan that included a multicultural center and influenced SLE to complete a feasibility study.

In 2021, the MSU Board of Trustees approved the planning phase of the project. More recently, the process has included input and feedback from student and community stakeholders through a series of town halls and other engagement opportunities. Helping to facilitate the engagement sessions were representatives of SmithGroup. In January 2022, MSU selected SmithGroup, one of the nation's top higher education and cultural facility design firms, to facilitate the design process with students and community stakeholders.

The one-of-a-kind building plans include collaboration and study spaces, a large living room-type area, a kitchenette/dining space, office space for student organizations, relaxation and prayer rooms, art galleries, an outdoor amphitheater, and ceremonial fire pit among other important features.

The MSU multicultural center is expected to open its doors in fall 2024. More background on the project along with videos and renderings are available at mccenter.msu.edu. 📍



Photos: Groundbreaking Ceremony
 Photo, opposite page: Rendering of Multicultural Center

Spartan Family Connections:

Empowering Families for Student Success

Higher education can often be a long and complicated journey for both students and their families.

Supporting students' academic success and personal well-being is vital for universities within this dynamic landscape. Recognizing the important role families play within this landscape, Michigan State University (MSU) launched Spartan Family Connections (SFC), led by Director Laurin Gierman, in 2022.

SFC has since been working to create a supportive and communicative environment for both the biological and chosen families of MSU students. The unit works to foster student success by supporting their families throughout their student's academic journey.

In its first year, SFC began creating relationships with Spartan families by distributing more than 5,000 stickers, pens and tissue packs during residence hall move-in. It expanded its outreach through a series of nine webinars that were attended by families in 10 different countries. The webinars allowed families to interact with community members and university departments while learning about important topics surrounding student life and success.

Gierman explains how these webinars are held in the larger context of the academic calendar.

"Student experience can be somewhat predictable in a way," she says. "We know that at various points throughout a student's educational journey, they are more likely to experience certain things. So, we try to present information to families on those topics at the time or right before the time that their student may need that information."

This ensures families receive timely advice, tailored to the specific challenges their students may face. For instance, in September, when many students were beginning their first college semester, SFC held a webinar focused on student involvement in the MSU community. The goal was to facilitate a sense of belonging among incoming first-year students.

Informative and timely communication is at the heart of the work done by SFC. Ten monthly newsletters were shared to nearly 48,000 unique email addresses during the program's first year. The unit also oversees a private Facebook group with a membership of 21,000 and growing. The website, family.msu.edu, is an additional source for resources and information. In the light of the campus events

of Feb. 13, five situation-specific emails were also sent to the SFC mailing list.

"We have been building relationships with families since August 2022," says Gierman, "We sent out the first email in August and fostered that relationship with families over the months. So, when the shooting on Feb. 13 took place, we became a trusted source of information."

SFC also coordinates and hosts Family Weekend Presented by MSUFCU, where families can connect with various departments and resources on campus. The inaugural Family Weekend occurred Sept. 23-25, 2022, with 3,800 participants. SFC collaborated with many campus partners to offer an action-packed weekend. Some events included an information fair, tours of the Beal Botanical Garden, a viewing of the Spartan football game at the MSU Union, and much more.

At the heart of the unit's vision lies the understanding that families are vital adult-support systems for MSU students. Students reach out to family members for help and guidance. However, they may not always know of the avenues and resources available to their students and may be unsure on how to effectively help. SFC bridges this gap by acting as a comprehensive source of information and empowering families with the necessary resources or organizations and departments to approach for guidance on specific issues.

SFC actively collaborates with other university departments, such as Undergraduate Education, The Graduate School, Student Life & Engagement, and Athletic Department, to name just a few, to ensure a holistic approach to student success. These collaborations provide avenues for students to find others similar to them in identity and interests. Further, SFC facilitates a sense of belonging to the MSU campus and community in both students and families, improving the overall Spartan experience.

Gierman advises all families to visit family.msu.edu and sign up for the SFC newsletter. This year's Family Weekend Presented by MSUFCU was Nov. 3-5, and was a success with over 4,000 participants! 📍

Photos: top to bottom, left to right: Family Weekend 2022 check-in at Breslin Center, Beal Garden tour, photo opt at the Spartan Statue, fun night at Munn. Above center: 2023 Family Connections sticker





STUDENT PARENT RESOURCE CENTER

Helps Student Parents Find Success at MSU with \$1 Million Grant



The Student Parent Resource Center recently received a \$1 million grant from the US Department of Education to facilitate better resources and support for student parents at Michigan State University. The grant is called Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) and is meant to help student parents have access to childcare while they're attending classes or study groups and generally focusing on academic work. Its aim is to be applied toward anything that will help student parents make progress toward their degree. The Center received the grant in October of 2022, which can be renewed for \$1 million a year until 2026.

Kimberly Steed-Page, director of the Student Parent Resource Center and Laraine Walton, administrative assistant at the center work to make the MSU community and space an equitable and accessible one for student-parents at MSU. They're excited for the grant adding to their ability to facilitate and offer more and higher quality support to student parents at MSU.

The grant supports high quality childcare and early childhood education. For kids in full-time care, between the ages of 0 and 5, education is especially important. 85% of the grant is to be applied to direct service provisions. The center enters contracts with area child-care providers, both

daycare centers and home-based family daycare centers that are licensed and nationally accredited to help low-income students who qualify through Pell eligibility. Undergraduate students are eligible automatically if they receive Pell or even if they're just eligible for Pell. Graduate students, both domestic and international, are eligible through income-based qualification.

Each approved parent receives up to 1,200 hours of childcare per year per child, which amounts to about two full semesters if used for full-time care. The university enters into a contract with the provider, then the students and the provider track their hours of usage each week, submitting them to the university at the end of the month.

The grant allows the center to partner with high quality daycares that are nationally accredited, either through the National Association for Family Child Care Centers or the National Association for Early Young Childhood Education. This accreditation works to show that these providers are going the extra step to provide the highest quality of care for students.

"The idea is that no matter how much income your family brings in or what your socioeconomic status is, all children deserve access to quality education and care, and student parents need to be able to feel that their child or children are reasonably

safe while they're studying," says Steed-Page. She acknowledges it can be difficult to study and make progress on your degree as a student parent while also balancing concerns about your child's well-being. She says ensuring the children of student parents are well cared for is a vital piece of helping a student parent be successful.

Steed-Page calls the approach a "two-generational approach," as it's rooted in the belief that when student parents succeed, in this case by making progress toward their degree, their children succeed. The persistence and retention shown by student parents in their efforts at the university result in the future success of their children as well. She says that data shows that children who have at least one parent or caregiver who has earned a bachelor's degree are ten times more likely to go on to study at a two-year or four-year institution. Whether vocational or trade, their education results in higher quality careers for these children later in life. "It's really about setting that family up for success," says Steed-Page. She adds that helping the parents complete their degrees leads to higher paying, higher earning careers over their lifetime, which in turn leads to an increased and improved quality of life for their children as well.

Since the grant is renewable for 4 years, Steed-Page is also excited about

the long-term plans the center has with this grant. She hopes to be able to use these funds to increase knowledge about the needs of student parents. Some student parents don't start at the university with children; some start their families while attending. The grant will allow the center to work with the students and learn more about their needs and how the university can best support and serve their families while here. "Funding is just one part of it in childcare," says Steed-Page. Often, students have additional needs, including basic needs like housing and transportation.

Steed-Page shares, "One of our goals really is to capture information on who our student parents are. They come from all walks of life, from different areas of campus, all degrees, all majors, all levels, and we just want to get a better picture." The second aim of the center with the grant is to increase a sense of belonging on campus within student families and student caregivers, helping make student families feel like the campus is a place for them and that they're welcome on campus with all that they bring to the Spartan community. "We want them to be able to bring their whole self into the classroom and into activities," says Steed-Page. The center hence wants to work to increase opportunities for families and students to be engaged in life at MSU.

The overall mission of the Student Parent Resource Center is to be a place of support and provide access and information to resources both on and off campus to student parents and student caregivers. A number of students on campus serve in caregiver capacity, have children in their care through being siblings or other relatives. Students care for biological children, adopted children, foster children, as well as for an aging parent. The office's goal is to support student caregivers to graduation and beyond. It believes in a holistic approach, and wants students who come to MSU with their multiple identities to develop a sense of belonging and find their identity as a student on campus.

"We want our student families, our student parents to be involved in the

life of MSU the way they want to," says Steed-Page. "We want them to know that having a family is not a limitation; that they're not missing out or have less access or opportunities just because they also have a family."

The center also works to make sure faculty and students know about the portion of Title IX that speaks to the rights of pregnant and parenting students, so they can help empower students to be advocates for the rights afforded to them under the law. There also exists a registered student organization called Student Parents on a Mission (SPOM). The office works with SPOM to host a monthly program with fun and educational activities for student families and caregivers. For example, SPOM and the center offer a program on financial literacy specifically for parents while also helping expose children at an early age to thinking about savings and financial literacy.

Steed-Page talks about the importance of reminding people there are many different ways to define diversity and that those at the university must think more broadly to ensure inclusivity of all different groups. "Students hold multiple identities, and one of those identities is that of a student parent or a caregiver, and they're kind of a hidden population. But we know that they're here and there are resources to support them."

She stresses the importance of bringing about awareness of the Student Parents Resource Center and the work done by the office. If faculty and staff know about the office, they'll be able to direct people who could benefit from the office's resources to us," she says. "We're a two-person office and we're a team. We're small but mighty, and we're committed to supporting student parents."

Contact the center at sprc@msu.edu or by calling 517-432-3745. Students can email to get an application, to apply for the funds for high quality daycare, applying for state benefits and more. 🍪



Kimberly Steed-Page

Recommended Resources for Student Parents

- The Institute for Women's Policy Research (iwpr.org) conducts research on the role of women in higher education and how to better support all parents, but mothers especially.
- National Student Success Student Parent Success Collaborative is a consortium of different colleges and universities around the country with student parent programs. It holds a conference every year open to student parents and anyone interested in learning more about supporting student families on their campus.
- Student Parent Resource Center website: studentparents.msu.edu.



Laraine Walton

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Recognizing Excellence in Student Leadership at MSU Student Employee and Leadership Banquets



The Office of Spartan Experiences within Student Development and Leadership holds Student Employee and Scholarship Banquets to recognize the exceptional work and leadership exhibited by Spartan student team members. The awards provide an opportunity to recognize excellent leadership across campus and award the many valuable contributions of various individuals and groups.

Ladell Watson, a graduate student working with the office, says his favorite part of his job is preparing for these award ceremonies. “Many of our students come from different areas — the different populations of students on campus,” explains Watson. “So, it’s really nice to see all of these different groups of students come together and receive these awards.” During the ceremonies, held at the Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center, students receive certificates, plaques and medals for their achievements in student leadership. The two main categories for these ceremonies are the Student Leadership Awards and the Student Employee Awards. The Student Leadership Awards address about 14 categories of different forms of student leadership across campus. Nominations for

these awards include an explanation of the work done on campus and contributions to the Spartan community. The awards cover a wide range of different leadership areas such as student political organizations, graduate student leadership, fraternity and sorority life leadership, and even faculty adviser leadership. The Student Employee Awards are dedicated to undergraduate students working throughout the university. These are also nomination-based, with silver, platinum and Spartan level awards — Spartan level being the “grand level of award,” as Watson puts it. Any employer within the division can nominate

their student team members. The higher Leadership Awards are part of a three-tier ranking system (gold, platinum and silver) as well. The Student Employee of the Year Award for 2022 was won by Shantele Wilkinson, who worked as a front-desk receptionist for the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities. “She won the award due to her achievements and her focus within the office during the COVID-19 pandemic,” says Watson, “and she was one of the few people to come out to work even after COVID and during the transition into the restart of the school year.”



Shantele Wilkinson

The Student Employee of the Year Award is presented in conjunction with the National School Employee Association and the Midwest Association for Student Employment Administrators. That award goes at the state level, the Big 10 level, and then a national level as well. The awards are a great way to showcase students who are doing stellar work on campus and provide them with an opportunity in which their student leadership across different areas of campus becomes visible. Students nominated for these awards come from various functional areas across the division. The decisions regarding these awards are made in conjunction with a diverse group made up of 13 people across different areas on campus. The committee for the Student Leadership Awards looks for a variety of attributes in nominations. These attributes vary by student and by category with most coming from the work done within the department and the work done in the community. Some of the awards given out include Leader of the Year, Emerging Leader, Adviser of the Year, Outstanding Greek Organization and student veteran awards, to name a few. For each category, the selection committee reserves the right to choose the person or organization that receives an award and up to two honorable mentions for each category.

The nomination questions seek to understand the person or organization nominated and learn about their work and effort in being involved in and positively impacting the parts of the Spartan community they engage with. The questions also describe the nominees’ involvement and experience both on and off campus. Others ask for examples where the nominee has grown as a leader and

but also how students balance all the things they do.” Watson says one of the aims of these ceremonies is to show the pluralism of student leadership. “Student leadership isn’t just one-sided, and there’s not one form of student leadership. Many of our students come from a variety of backgrounds that inform their student leadership.” The awards give graduating students an opportunity to feel special on such a big college campus. “Be truthful, explain how these people have impacted your life and explain how the impact is also moving both you forward as a person, but also moving them or the MSU community forward,” offers Watson, while sharing advice to anyone thinking of nominating someone for an award. He urges the Spartan community to nominate people who have actively supported them and allowed them to be the person they are through the work through care and efforts, because that’s the ethos behind celebrating student leadership and community at Michigan State University. 📍



examples of them being proactive and taking leadership responsibilities, being able to maintain positive relationships with others, and how they maintain a balance throughout work and academics pursuits. “We really try to make sure we give all these students the opportunity to get what they deserve and receive all the information they need to be successful,” says Watson. He believes the awards provide the office with the opportunity to learn more about student life and effort and what it looks like to be in the shoes of students at MSU. “It’s really helpful for us to learn about what the students do in their job through the nominations,

