

“I think there are a lot of people here with a bend toward caring. We saw faculty and staff twist in unimaginable ways to accommodate students and it was because they care deeply about students being successful.”

Travis Morgan
Center for Online Learning



Ascension
Kimber Starnes '17
painting

Office Hours



Dear Alumni,

Lately, I find myself writing, “I hope this finds you well.” as the opening sentence of emails, letters, and notes. My expression of care holds a new weight because I know that some of you may not be well. It also carries one of the defining characteristics of our Metro State community: hope.

I find tremendous inspiration in our students and the resilience they have shown this year. Their persistence and determination fill me with hope for the future and prompted the question; what are your hopes? To answer this question, we put out a call to you, our alumni, to share your hopes for the future. We heard from many of you. You responded with hopes for peace, health, and understanding, and you were kind enough to allow us to share your hope for the future with your fellow alumni.

A year ago, I wrote to you about the work our faculty, staff, and administration were undertaking to become a resilient student ready university. I never imagined that our efforts would be so thoroughly tested. I am incredibly proud of the way all members of the university community stepped up to support students. Administrators, faculty, and staff have held countless conversations over Zoom to ensure that our students feel supported on their academic journey. Members of our team, who usually work behind the scenes, have become the fulcrum in our pivot to online learning. We share some of their stories in this issue of *buzz*. You can be proud of your university and know that we continue to put students first as we navigate new ways of delivering knowledge to our lifelong learners.

You can also be proud of the way your university has come together to acknowledge that despite our best efforts and greatest hopes, our community suffers from a second deadly pandemic—racism. The killing of George Floyd spotlighted the sad truth that justice is not a reality for every member of our community. As an anti-racist learning community, we are charged with continually examining our role in promoting justice and dismantling racism.

At Metro State, we champion the idea that access to education is an essential tool against racism. With the partnership of generous donors and the trustees of the Metropolitan State Foundation, this fall, we awarded the first George Floyd Memorial Endowed Scholarship for Racial and Social Justice to one of our students.

Looking ahead, I have decided that I am out of the prediction business for the academic year; as president, I have learned it is better to be responsive to the needs of our students rather than right about the future, but I am filled with hope. Our path is uncertain, but our purpose is clear, and you can be sure that your university will continue to be the academic home for our alumni, students, and lifelong learners long into the future.

Remember you are #MetroStrong.

Take care,

Virginia Arthur

Virginia “Ginny” Arthur
President

TABLE OF CONTENTS

News	6
News@Metro	
Alumni Spotlight	10
Hope for the Future	
Student Success	15
Misty Young '20: Student Success Scholarship Recipient	
President's Outstanding Graduates	16
Spring 2020	
Leading the Way	18
Gini McCain, From Second Graduating Class to Legacy Donor	
Metro Fund	19
Spotlight	20
The Big Pivot	
News and Notes	24
Faculty	26
College of Nursing and Health Sciences Welcomes Dean Doris Hill	
From the Director	27

VOLUME 13 NUMBER 1

Metropolitan State University *buzz* is published twice a year by Metropolitan State University Alumni Relations, University Advancement division for alumni and friends of the university. Metropolitan State University is a member of Minnesota State.

Executive Editor
Rita Dibble

Vice President for University Advancement,
Foundation Executive Director

Managing Editor
Kristine Hansen '07
Alumni Relations Director

Editor
Emily Seddon
Development Director

Design and Layout
Diane DeRosier '05

Associate Editors
Matthew Spillum '06
Emily Kelson

Editorial Assistant
Noriko Ramberg

Correspondence and corrections should be sent to:
Alumni Relations, Metropolitan State University
700 East Seventh Street
Saint Paul, MN 55106-5000

Phone: 651-793-1808
e-mail: alumni.relations@metrostate.edu

An equal opportunity educator

Alumni Board of Directors 2020-21

Mohamed Ahmed '13	Thulani Jwacu '05	Scott Pilgram '10
Sandra Best '88	Lucky Lee '16	Andrea Steen '11
Fowsiya Dahir '13	Salman Mian '01	Nancy Uden '88
Samuel Farrand '17	Sam Mwangi '01	Shanasha Whitson '00
Kjersten Jaeb '11	Fidelis Odozi '18	Jolanta Young '16

Alumni Association

Greetings from the Alumni Board!

I am honored to greet you as the new president of the Metropolitan State Alumni Board of Directors, and I hope this issue of *buzz* magazine finds you well. The members of the Alumni Board began our September meeting by going around the room to share our hopes for the board and what we want to accomplish this year. The hope and aspiration expressed by my fellow board members inspired me. The common theme rising from our collective hopes as a board is that at the end of 2021, we have inspired you to get more involved with the university and have created meaningful opportunities for you to connect with your fellow alumni.

This year we welcomed eight new board members who are excited to engage with you. In addition to the new board members, several new committee members have joined our efforts. I invite you to visit the Alumni Association web page, www.metrostate.edu/alumni/association/board, to read more about our board members. I think you will be as excited as I am to have them volunteering on behalf of the university.

Since my term as board president began on August 1, I have spoken to many alumni. Some tell me they want to get involved with the university but aren't sure how to begin. Others tell me that they are grateful for the opportunities they had as students and want to help create opportunities for current students. This is excellent feedback. It allows the board to focus its energies on ways to help you connect to Metro State.

I also heard from alumni that they don't feel connected to the university. I can understand that sentiment. I was so proud of earning my degree, but after a few years, I drifted away. I even became a little disillusioned with the university when I thought they were moving away from their original mission by establishing a permanent campus. It took a phone call from a staff member in the university advancement office to pique my interest again. One conversation led to another and I asked the folks in alumni relations to put me to work. I have been off and running ever since.

The thing that brought me back was learning that the spirit and mission of the university continue to be an unwavering commitment to meeting students where they are in their lives. Metro State has never been about bricks and mortar. It remains committed to people who want to learn and grow. I am so glad that I picked up the phone when Metro called. I invite you to join me.



We are working to reimagine what it means to be alumni of Metro State for the next 50 years. What do we value? How can we connect and how can alumni promote and support each other, and the university? These are the questions that the alumni board and I will be asking ourselves and you. We are the university's greatest asset; I hope that when we reach out, you answer the call.

Stay well

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nancy Uden'.

Nancy Uden '88
President, Alumni Association Board

Alumni Awarded Bush Fellowships

By Emily Kelson

Since 1953, the Bush Foundation has been devoted to bettering communities in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and the 23 Native nations that share the same geography. They offer grants and opportunities to individuals who think outside the box and want to solve our area's problems. In 2020, two Metropolitan State alumni were selected from the field of over 700 applicants for 24 fellowships.

Each year, the Fellowship is available to 24 individuals. The Bush Foundation states, "the Bush Fellowship is an investment in individual leaders. It provides Fellows with up to \$100,000 over 12 to 24 months to pursue formal and informal learning experiences that help them develop the skills, attributes, and relationships they need to become more effective, equitable leaders who can drive change in their communities and region as a whole."

Individuals that apply are often already in the field and doing the kind of work the Fellowship promotes. Bush Fellow and Metro State alumnus, Matthew Koncar '02, was a Humphrey Policy Fellow at the University of Minnesota's

Humphrey School of Public Affairs before becoming a Bush Fellow. He found out about the Fellowship one day when he was out for coffee. Matthew regularly networks with leaders in criminal justice and he learned about the Fellowship at one of these meetings. His advice for those going through the application process is, "pick a topic that is timely, important, and that you are genuinely passionate about."

Another Bush Fellow, Guy Bowling '19, is a graduate of the College of Individualized Studies. He says, "my Metro State experience inspired me to identify my educational challenges and develop solutions that motivated me to accomplishing my goal of receiving my undergraduate degree after a 35-year journey." His education and support from advisor Stanley Hatcher '93 and instructor Dr. Carol Lacey gave him the confidence he needed to make it through the competitive application process. Guy said that after graduating he had a better sense of how to be an effective community leader and bring about positive change.



Dr. Carol Lacey, Guy Bowling '19 and Ginny Arthur '19 at the Fall 2019 President's Outstanding Graduate Celebration.

JEFF ACHEN

Partner Schools Celebration

In August, President Arthur and Director of International Programs, Dr. Carol Bormann Young attended a virtual graduation ceremony for students from the Bachelor of Science dual degree program with our partners China University of Technology and Takming University of Science.



Graduating students with families, friends and faculty.



Welcome sign for the virtual celebration.

Virtual Commencement Spring 2020

By Abdulmajed Mohammed

In the Spring of 2020, when it became clear that the traditional commencement ceremony scheduled for late April would not be safe due to the spread of the coronavirus, President Arthur assembled a team to re-imagine commencement in a pandemic. Metropolitan State University adapted and celebrated the accomplishments of the Spring 2020 graduates

virtually. Students and parents were overjoyed with the virtual commencement, which kept everyone socially distant but united in celebration.

Abdulmajed Mohammed is a student in the Master of Individualized Studies Program



Meghan Lovegren '20



Peyton Pollard '20

Metropolitan State University Foundation Establishes George Floyd Memorial Scholarship

By *Emily Kelson*

On June 4, 2020, hundreds gathered at North Central University (NCU) in downtown Minneapolis to remember the life of George Floyd. Rev. Al Sharpton said, “what happened to Floyd happens every day in this country, in education, in health services, and in every area of American life.” This reminded many of their role in the fight for equality.

To open the service, NCU President Dr. Scott Hagan challenged the nation’s universities to establish scholarships in Floyd’s name. He said, “it is time to invest like never before in a new generation of young Black Americans who are poised and ready to take leadership in our nation.” So far, over a dozen universities across the country, including Metropolitan State University, have accepted that challenge and established memorial scholarships.

The George Floyd Memorial Endowed Scholarship for Racial and Social Justice was established at Metropolitan State thanks to a leadership gift from former Dean of Student Services Joyce LeClaire ’75. Her gift was matched by the University Foundation’s Board of Trustees and has inspired others, like Ernest Grumbles from Grumbles Law PLLC, to make similar leadership gifts.

Joyce has been advocating for civil rights since the ’60s, and Floyd’s memorial service reminded her that there is work that still needs to be done. She said, “when I heard the President of North Central University challenge other institutions of higher education to join him to start a George Floyd scholarship, I knew Metro State was the perfect place to take on the challenge.”

The scholarship will be awarded annually to an undergraduate student who demonstrates a commitment to racial equity and social justice. The first award was made this fall and growing the endowment is a top priority for the Foundation. We need to be better for things to get better. Oluwafemi Okelola, Metropolitan State University Black Student Union President, put it best, “right is right, wrong is wrong, and enough is enough.”

If you’d like to give to the George Floyd Memorial Endowed Scholarship for Racial and Social Justice, you can give online at www.metrostate.edu/give/give-now or call the Foundation at 651-793-1830.



Emily Kelson is a student in the College of Liberal Arts

George Floyd
BookaB ’13
paper, pencil, digital

Essence Williams awarded Metro State's first George Floyd Memorial Scholarship



JEFF ACHEN

Incepted in tragedy and designed to promote social justice, the first George Floyd Memorial Endowed Scholarship for Racial and Social Justice was awarded to Essence Williams, a student in the College of Community Studies and Public Affairs.

Majoring in criminal justice, Williams hopes to follow in her mother's footsteps. "She received her master's degree in criminal justice and seeing her work in the field filled me with admiration."

From an early age, Williams wanted to bring justice to families, particularly African American families. "I want people to see someone who looks like them in a system that was designed to be against us. I want to give people hope for a change," says Williams.

The scholarship is awarded to one student each year who demonstrates a commitment to social justice. When asked what she would say to someone who wants to make change in the world, she encourages open-mindedness. "Strive towards a transformative justice outlook and keep pushing for equity. Keep your head up, and never stop, even when this journey may seem never-ending."

Alumni Spotlight

Hope for the Future

Editor's note:

As the alumni relations director, I have the good fortune to talk with Metro State alumni regularly. Over the last several months, I have been heartened by the wisdom of my fellow alumni. The conversations regularly address the future—rarely resulting in predictions, but almost always turning toward hope. In that spirit, we put a call out in our July e-newsletter for alumni to share their hopes for the future. I am grateful to

the alumni who shared their hopes with us. I understand that living in an extraordinary time doesn't allow everyone to expend their precious energy to write or share expressions of hope. We see you. I hope you find these expressions of optimism heartening, and when you are able, you share your hopes with us. We are in this together—Metro Strong.
Kristine



I'm hopeful we can make something good out of the challenges we face today, to live up to both the words and spirit of the U.S. Constitution.

I envision a future where empathy and respect are put before politics and party lines. Where diversity in all its forms is embraced as one of our greatest strengths. Where we look for common ground and eschew divisive rhetoric. Where we achieve equality across society—in education, housing, healthcare, employment, and the criminal justice system.

I hope we can all take a step back and remember to celebrate our shared accomplishments. And there are many. Then I hope we can start stepping forward, together, to work towards that more perfect union.

The good news is that we're already seeing this happen in law enforcement—officers standing shoulder-to-shoulder with people opposing police brutality, people from all walks of life signing on to serve their communities as law enforcement professionals, police departments across the country evolving to focus more on prevention and intervention and less on enforcement of antiquated laws.

I hope we see more of this across our community and believe we will. Because most people are good. Most people are kind. And most people care about our collective future.

Todd Axtell '02

Chief of Police, City of Saint Paul

We are one.

We find a way
To unify for good.

We create a world
Equitable and fair
For all.

We are collectively
Advocates
For social change.

We build a better world
For today
And future generations.

Nancy Uden '88

Metropolitan State University Alumni Board President

***“Always look for the helpers. There will always be helpers...
because if you look for the helpers, you know there's hope.”***

– Mr. Fred Rogers

Contributed by Lucky Lee '16

Metropolitan State University Alumni Board Member

Alumni Spotlight — Hope for the Future *continued*

Hope requires us to develop a positive mindset.

“If you look for the bad, you will always find it. If you look for the good, you will find that too. Our experience of humanity and life itself is truly up to us.”

– Esse Dagogo

Societal negativity can be overwhelming, causing anxiety, despair, or even hopelessness. Use optimism and a positive mindset to overcome life’s challenges, along with the support of family, friends, colleagues, and community. Humility, compassion, gratitude, integrity, generosity, kindness, and respect for others are essential to remaining hopeful against all odds.

Be the example. Be kind to yourself and others. You are not responsible for fixing the world’s problems. But you can make a positive impact, one small act at a time. Never lose hope that better things are ahead. Be thankful. Look for the positive in situations. Out of adversity comes strength.

“Hope is passion for what is possible.”

– Soren Kierkegaard

Commit to being part of the solution. What are you doing to make the world a better place? If not you, then who? Be hopeful, be helpful, be the (s)hero you were born to be.

With gratitude,

Sandy Best ’88

Metropolitan State University Alumni Board Member

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to plague our state, country, and world, I have a clear vision for Minnesota’s future.

One where we use data and science to make decisions, work together to find solutions for Minnesota’s upcoming budget deficit, and address racial inequities and injustices, including police brutality. I am also committed to keeping all communities safe by reducing gun violence.

Minnesotans want a good life and a better future for our families and our neighbors. I am committed to building strong public schools, affordable and accessible health care, good jobs that sustain our families and give us time to care for loved ones, and clean air and water for everyone, everywhere. Our shared values are what bring our communities together and serve as a guide for how we make our state work better for all of us. My vision includes making sure our shared value of community, opportunity, accessibility, and equity are heard, respected, and addressed.

We need to work together to build a better future for all Minnesotans—no matter what you look like, who you pray to, or where you live.

Senator Sandy Pappas ’86

Minnesota State Senate

In just one year, we have been hit by a pandemic, global uprising protesting race relations, and had our outlook on life changed completely. It is in a crisis that the leader within is exposed. I hope we can lead with cultural humility by taking time to listen with empathy, normalizing not knowing so we can ask questions, and then staying open to learning.

Lyna Nyamwaya ’09

CEO, Bold Impact Group

I believe our youth, who have witnessed both terribly disturbing events AND Minnesota's incredible capacity to come together to help each other and to fight for social justice, already have a greater understanding of the challenges of our time than I ever did as a child. My hope is that our youth will ask the hard questions and demand to learn our true history, because just as education is crucial for living a better life, it is also the key to understanding each other and moving forward together with compassion.

Andrea Steen '11

Director of Alumni Relations, Century College
Metropolitan State University Alumni Board Member

I found this quote among many that made me think about the future.

“Change the way you look at things and the things you look at change.”

– Wayne W. Dyer

We all need to take some time to see how we have been looking at what is going on in the world. We may be surprised that our view may not be what we previously assumed was the right perspective; if not, it is time to change!

Scott Pilgram '10

Accounting Manager, CBRE
Metropolitan State Alumni Board member

Even in times of crisis, inequality, and a devastating pandemic, we don't give up because the promise of a hopeful future makes the motivation to pursue our dreams even greater.

Samuel Mwangi '01

Executive Director, Global Fatherhood Foundation
Metropolitan State University Alumni Board Member

I pray you are staying safe and healthy despite 2020 being fraught with many challenges.

In times like this, we must remember the true challenges are an opportunity for us to learn, grow, and overcome both as individuals and our collective society. This storm, too, shall pass, and we shall emerge on the other side as stronger people.

In response to COVID, for example, employers as well as local, state, and national governments have created and implemented new policies and toolsets, including new cross-industry intercommunication, preparation-response pipelines, collaboration capabilities via remote technologies, etc. These changes and improvements have resulted in creating new types of jobs demanding skillsets Metro State is already teaching.

Regarding the economy, are many facing hardships? Yes. We must remember what we learned in our macro-economic course: recessions occur every seven to ten years and are expected, necessary, and healthy for Minnesota and our nation. Greater efficiency, innovating new products and services, and creating new types of jobs are always the result of every economic recovery.

This is my third economic downturn since graduating from Metro State. I'm thankful to be an alumnus because the skills and knowledge helped me weather the past two recessions. I am confident that all of us will make it through this downturn as well.

Eric Lucero '01

Minnesota State Representative

Alumni Spotlight — Hope for the Future *continued*

“Sometimes people don’t want to hear the truth,” wrote Friedrich Nietzsche, “because they don’t want their illusions destroyed.” Welcome to the United States.

The first principle of the American Creed is that the world is redeemable. We believe that we are exempt from the constraints of the human condition. I disagree. As Albert Camus suggests: We are Sisyphus.

Whatever their faith, ideology, or party, most Americans are utopians. Since the Puritans washed ashore and John Winthrop foresaw “a city upon a hill,” the American experiment has been a perfectionist project and exceptional escape from nature and history. No matter if you believe in free markets, a welfare state, democratic socialism or anarchism, your agenda is grounded upon an unshakeable faith in human perfectibility and inevitability of creating a heaven on earth.

Awash in cognitive dissonance

Every so often, a calamity of such magnitude occurs that it shakes the foundation of our taken-for-granted reality. COVID-19 is such a moment. The United States is awash in cognitive dissonance: Our illusion is that America is redeemable, that the Promised Land is just around the corner; the truth is that we are embedded in nature and history, tossed about by their unpredictable vicissitudes.

“The world is a hellish place,” said singer-songwriter Tom Waits. In all societies, power struggles between groups are ubiquitous and perennial. The powerful are predators who prey upon the vulnerable—they always have, and they always will. In all environments, natural and human-made, calamities are ubiquitous and perennial. No amount of Shangri-La prophylactics will shield us from injustice and cruelty, or death and destruction.

To acknowledge this is not a brief for quietism; by no means does unblinkered realism absolve us from acting against suffering, cruelty, and injustice. Nevertheless, we are Sisyphus, forever condemned to push the rock of righteousness up the mountain, only to see it roll back down perpetually. The world is not redeemable.

But what if we have it all wrong? What if redemption is not a “forever after” thing? Perhaps it is more like extended epiphanies, interludes in which we transcend our mundane lives.

Redemptive moments

For sure, communities do not experience forever-after redemptions; nevertheless, they do have redemptive episodes. Throughout history, exemplary communities have stood up against pestilences, disasters, and social catastrophes like war, human slavery, ethnic cleansing, and climate change. Regrettably, too often, these redemptive communities have faced unresponsive dominant communities and nation-states. In this time of COVID-19, our essential workers are redemptive communities, inspiring the rest of us to listen to our better angels, ignoring the shrill voices of our demons.

During this plague, the selfless acts of courage rise to heroic levels when speaking of healthcare workers, first responders, transit workers, and workers in essential industries. As a more prosaic level, we must not overlook a contagion of kindness, the millions of small acts of care and compassion that emerge like blades of spring grass. Amidst all the death and destruction, this, too, is a redemptive moment in American history.

Still, Camus closes “The Plague” with a cautionary note:

“Nonetheless, he knew that the tale he had to tell could not be one of a final victory. It could be only the record of what had to be done, and what assuredly would have to be done again in the never-ending fight against terror and relentless onslaughts, despite their personal afflictions, by all who, while unable to be saints but refusing to bow down to pestilences, strive their utmost to be healers.”

The world remains a hellish place. It cries out for our attention. We must create what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called “beloved communities” who answer please by pushing the rock of righteousness toward the peak, acting against suffering, cruelty, and injustice. I am one with Camus: “The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.”

Monte Bute ’91

Professor, Metropolitan State University

[Originally published in MinnPost](#)

[Community Voices column May 12, 2020.](#)

www.minnpost.com/community-voices/2020/05/covid-19-is-a-cruel-reminder-of-the-human-condition/

Student Success

Misty Young '20: Student Success Scholarship Recipient

By Emily Kelson

The students at Metropolitan State are the university's greatest strength. Every student has something they can teach us about resilience and responsibility. Misty Young exemplifies these lessons. Confident and self-aware—it's easy to see her passion for her work. Her story of overcoming adversity is inspiring.

When Misty was young, she lived in an abusive household. When she was twelve years old, her mother saved them from the abuse and moved her family from Oklahoma to Minnesota. Misty says, "looking back at my emotions back then I could have really benefited from having services. I want to be there for children who are in a situation where they really need that safe person." Coming to Minnesota was an improvement, but her trials did not end there. In 2010, Misty attempted suicide. That's when it became clear to her that she needed to start prioritizing her mental health. For Misty, this meant taking breaks from school when needed. While this was necessary for her to get healthy, it extended her time in college.

As her mental health improved, she became more motivated to finish school. She says, "I wanted to be able to feel like I accomplished something." Misty worked towards her degree for twelve years and, as a result, exhausted her Pell Grant eligibility. Pell Grants are federal assistance designed to help low-income students earn their degree. This meant, to accomplish her goals, she was going to have to take out more loans or take even more time to finish her degree. The Metropolitan State University Foundation offers the Student Success Scholarship for students like Misty who are close to finishing their degree but have exhausted their Pell Grant eligibility. Receiving the Student Success Scholarship allowed Misty to complete her goal without those additional barriers. "With my mental health, all the progress I have made from 2010 to now, I am so proud of myself." Her experiences have inspired her to aim for a job in child protection, working in mental health therapy.

After graduating in Spring 2020 with her bachelor's degree in social work, Misty is working in child welfare. She values the work and says that it's preparing her for what she may encounter in her future work. To fulfill her dream of working in children's mental health therapy, Misty will need to receive her LICSW (licensed independent clinical social worker). Clearly, Misty is not afraid of hard work and she has a level of determination that inspires us all.

There are not enough funds to provide all students who have exhausted their Pell Grant eligibility the Student Success Scholarship. If you'd like to contribute to this scholarship you can do so online at www.metrostate.edu/give/give-now or by calling 651-793-1830.



President's Outstanding Graduates

Spring 2020 Award Recipients

Each semester, members of the faculty and academic advisors nominate undergraduate and graduate students from their respective colleges to be recognized at the President's Outstanding Student Award reception. The university celebrated the Spring 2020 graduates at a virtual celebration on August 15.

Brittanie Aune of

Hugo graduated with a bachelor of arts in business administration degree from the College of Management. She will continue to work as the Annual Giving Coordinator at Regions Hospital Foundation.

Her future education goals may include pursuing a master of business administration degree. She is a 2009 graduate of White Bear Lake Area High School.



Robin Johnson of Pine City graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology from the College of Community Studies and Public Affairs.

Jillian Knight of Minneapolis graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor of arts, minoring in history from the College of Liberal Arts. Knight now plans to gain experience as a substitute teacher as she applies to graduate programs, with special attention to Metropolitan State's School of Urban Education.

Meghan Lovegren of Woodbury graduated with a bachelor of science in biology from the College of Sciences. She plans to pursue a master of science in nursing degree and become a nurse practitioner in pediatric oncology or a neonatal intensive care unit. She graduated from Saint Agnes School in 2006.



Jonathan Harms of Crystal graduated with a master of public and nonprofit administration degree from the College of Community Studies and Public Affairs. Harms is employed by Hennepin County, where

he is currently the supervisor of the Fourth Judicial District Court Violation Bureau and Criminal e-File and Serve units.

Kathrine Michalek of Otsego graduated with a master of science in advanced dental therapy from the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. She earned her undergraduate from Minnesota State University, Mankato in 2010. Michalek is a dental hygienist and now plans to use her advanced dental therapy degree to pursue a career in dental therapy.

Peyton Pollard of Saint Paul graduated from the Minnesota Alliance for Nursing Education bachelor of science in nursing (MANE BSN) program and was selected Outstanding Student for the College of Nursing and Health Sciences.

Cieara Octavia Sparkman of Saint Paul graduated with a bachelor's degree in urban elementary education from the School of Urban Education. She plans to obtain a Minnesota Teaching License and pursue a career as an urban elementary educator. She also intends to pursue a master's degree. She is currently working as a paraprofessional for Saint Paul Public Schools.



Brianna Tanner of Minneapolis graduated with a master of science in technical communication degree from the College of Liberal Arts. She earned her bachelor's degree in English language and literature from Metropolitan State University in 2014. She is employed as

a manufacturing technical writer at Boston Scientific. She is a graduate of Blaine High School.

Ru Xue of Woodbury graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor of individualized studies degree focusing on health and environmental science from the College of Individualized Studies. Xue is employed by Pace Analytical Life Sciences in Oakdale.

Kee Yang of Vadnais Heights graduated with a master of science in management information from the College of Management. He will continue his educational path at Metropolitan State University in the doctor of business administration program starting in fall 2020. Yang is a graduate of White Bear Lake Area High School.



Editor's Note: We celebrate the achievements of all our President's Outstanding Students; given safety concerns, we were only able to capture some of their photos.

Leading the Way

Gini McCain '74, From Second Graduating Class to Legacy Donor

By Rachel Hughes

Gini McCain '74 was a member of the second graduating class of Minnesota Metropolitan State College now called Metropolitan State University. She fondly remembers the admissions office with brightly colored walls over a drugstore on Seventh and Wabasha, where she worked before enrolling as a student. Those were the days, of course, when the unconventional college had no campus.

When the company she worked for closed, she was hired as one of Metropolitan State's first admissions officers. She truly believed in founding President David Sweet's vision for the new college. She was drawn to the college's innovation and commitment to growth.

In her thirties, Gini tried to work full time and go to school at a traditional college. It wasn't sustainable. She dropped out. When the company Gini had worked for reopened and she was rehired, she decided to finish her degree at Metropolitan State. "Competency-based education at the very new Metro U led to validation of the skills and knowledge I had gained in county government, a nonprofit agency, and a start-up company in biomedical communication systems," she said.

Her fondest memories of Metropolitan State are the people she met. She explained that as a student "the community faculty that I worked with were amazing experts in their fields. We met in their homes and I met people I otherwise would never have met. This provided big exposure to the real world as I finished my degree." Because of Metropolitan State, she had a new beginning to her life in her thirties.

This new beginning "inspired [her] to seek bigger challenges." This included a 23-year career at 3M and extensive volunteerism, including to help build the Metropolitan State Alumni Association.

Gini served on the Alumni Board from 1976–1978 and has continued to volunteer with the university since. She says that as an alumni community, "We share a history. And we pay attention." She encourages all alumni to proudly include their Metro State degree in how they describe themselves, even if they must explain the university.

Today, Gini is also a proud annual donor to Metropolitan State University and has planned for the future with a legacy gift. When asked about her legacy gift, Gini explained that Metro State is one of four organizations that she is truly passionate about. She wanted to make sure she provided for each of the organizations in her estate plans, which includes a gift of 3M stock to the university. As she thought about her giving and reflected on the impact she wanted to make, she "picked the organizations that are really meaningful to me." Metropolitan State is honored to be included as one of her choices.

When asked about what she wants her legacy gift to accomplish, she cited her trust in the organization. She has left her gift undesignated so that it can be used in the area of greatest need when the foundation receives it. She explained, "I have learned that organizations will use the money in the best way that they can at the time." The current situation has called this flexibility into focus as she reflects on the fact that nobody could have planned for the effects of COVID-19. The flexibility and adaptability of unrestricted gifts allow for Metropolitan State University to adapt to the needs of the students, no matter what is happening at the time the gift is received.

As you think about your own legacy as an alum, Gini invites you to look back on the impact that Metro State had for you—the value it had for you. Can you measure that and use it to inspire your own legacy gift? You will join with other Legacy Circle donors to secure the future for the next generation.

If you'd like more information on legacy giving, please contact Rachel Hughes, Development Officer, at 612-499-8754 or rachel.hughes@metrostate.edu.

Metro Fund

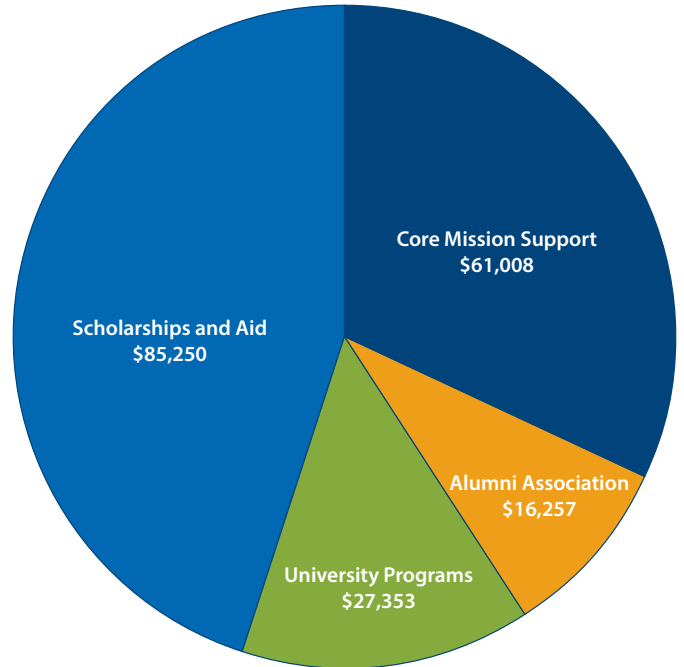
By Emily Seddon

The Metro Fund is the university's most flexible resource to meet our student's most urgent needs each year. The Metro Fund's flexibility was key to our ability to help students stay safe, enrolled, and supported on their path to graduation. Last year, the Metropolitan State University Foundation spent 59% of Metro Fund dollars on scholarships, aid, and programs that directly benefit students.

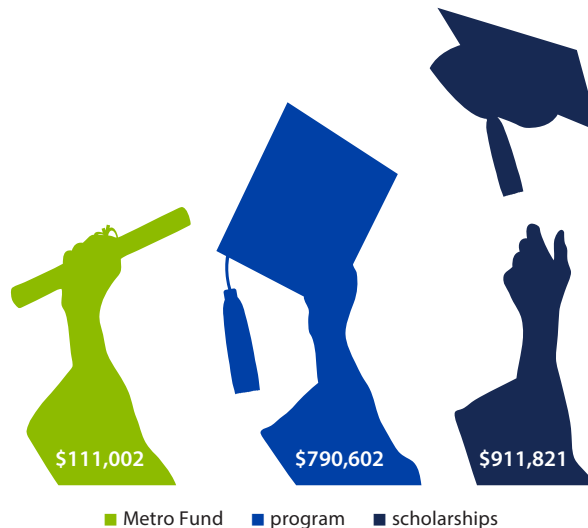
This includes 32 cents of every dollar funding SAFE (Student Assistance for Emergencies) grants that helped students maintain their housing, keep utilities on, and access urgent medical care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Forty-one percent of Metro Fund dollars last year kept core university divisions, like the Alumni Association, operating.

Your gift to Metropolitan State University is a vote of confidence in our students and a recognition of their dreams. For that, we thank you. Last year, alumni, faculty, staff, students, and friends of the university gave more than \$1.8 million in support of the university's mission to provide student-ready, accessible, high-quality liberal arts, professional, and graduate education in the Twin Cities.

Amount Spent FY20



Contributions FY20



Totals represent cash.

Spotlight

The Big Pivot: How Metropolitan State Shifted to an Online Spring Semester in the Face of COVID-19

By Matthew Spillum '06

The life of the modern university can feel non-stop, with continual improvement and evolution of academic delivery and technology competing with meeting the practical needs of students, staff, and faculty. Add in Metropolitan State University's long-standing dedication to working with a post-traditional student body, and it can feel like a precariously balanced high-wire act at the best of times. When faced with a crisis on the order of the COVID-19 global pandemic, many systems worldwide seemed

to partially or totally collapse. Metropolitan State pushed on, pivoting to an all-online work and learning model swiftly, and negotiating the ever-changing obstacle course of keeping the institution operating while planning for a very uncertain near-term future. A combination of adept planning, a culture inured to adaptability and constant change, and dedicated staff and faculty kept Metropolitan State going, and arguably positioned it well for what came next.



Center for Online Learning Staff Top: Owen Hansen '05, Travis Morgan; Bottom: Alejandra Estrin Dashe, Dominic Jennen '16.

Early Days

“We started having some university pandemic planning meetings in January,” says Vice President and Chief Information Officer Steve Reed ’05, “trying to see what that (having to move fully online) would look like, knowing that things were really picking up, particularly on the East coast. From a technology perspective, the true reality of the situation hit us around the last week of February.”

Scrambling and putting in extra hours were the order of the day for Information Technology Services (ITS) and the Center for Online Learning (COL). Reed says, “between ITS and COL working together, we were meeting and working... 10, 11 o’clock at night, during weekends, just trying to figure out what the best approach would be to put training together, how were we going to support students and faculty in this transition, even what is that going to look like. No one knew the scope of this change, and planning for the short-term can be very different than the long-term.”

A lot of the initial progress rested on that foundation of preparation, particularly by COL. Senior Instructional Technologist Travis Morgan of COL notes that, “Center for Online Learning has worked for years in a pandemic planning model—we are not new to the idea that we could have trouble and at any given moment we would have to spin up for full university support. Our focus in March was getting everyone on the same platforms and comfortable with remote teaching.”

Early awareness certainly also helped the team in Library and Information Services. “In the library, we really started planning for this before March,” says Dean of Library and Information Services Beth Clausen. “We were attuned to what was happening in the world and also at other academic libraries around the country because others had already made moves to close down, in some of those early regions.” Come March, those early conversations paid off. “I think it was early March; I was approached by the Provost and asked what it would take to keep the Library as the primary access point for computer and internet access for our students that might not have those things readily available. I think there was agreement in the administration that the Library is seen as a place providing student support... people have a positive outlook about the Library, and so we just transitioned into moving toward that role.”

Student Parent and Resource Coordinator Khou Vue similarly notes that “once the shutdown took place, we had to quickly pivot the way we offered our services, especially because the food pantry was such an integral part for some students experiencing needs for services. When the university notified us that we needed to start planning on how we were operating going forward... we quickly realized that our food



Library Student Staff Member Jay Olivares.

pantry area was so small, that if we remained operating the way we had been, it would be a risk for our students. But we still wanted to find a way to offer food support to our students during the pandemic.”

Answering the Challenge

So how does a large institution like Metropolitan State University not only shift how it works but also how it delivers its services? The answer to so many of these initial challenges quickly became apparent to all concerned. Collaboration is always a benefit, but it can be a challenge itself for large institutions. Still, in crisis situations, many of those institutional barriers fade away. “It really showed the dedication and creativity of our employees,” says Reed. “We pulled off, together, a pretty large task. One thing to be really thankful for as we reflect on this is that our president and student body supported us investing in our digital infrastructure over the last three years, because a number of institutions were not positioned to do what we did.”

“I think there are a lot of people here with a bend toward caring,” says Morgan. “We saw faculty and staff twist in unimaginable ways to accommodate students and it was because they care deeply about students being successful.”

As ITS and COL collaboratively spun up and rolled out something like two years’ worth of new systems in a month or two, the Library and the Student Parent Resource Center leaned into the synergy of working to offer student services. After the initial efforts to get non-perishable food bagged up for pick up, Vue “worked with the Library staff since that was the only place on campus that would be open. The Library staff was so helpful... students could just schedule an appointment online any time that the Library was open, and then pick up whatever food was available to them based on

Spotlight — The Big Pivot *continued*

their household size.” Clausen adds, “we served to back up the student food shelf, as well as being the access point for the IT laptop program... we expanded our role, really to help other areas provide their services for students that might have been limited in the arrangements they could make... the librarians also built on their strong relationship with the Center for Academic Excellence to expand on the synchronous online student support they could offer.”

This new way of doing student services had benefits for staff as well. “I learned a lot helping students adapt to the changes as well,” says Circulation Technician Elizabeth Keeler. “They were very appreciative that the library was open so they could print, get help, and needed time to make equipment purchases or make other arrangements themselves. It also helped a lot that IT created the loaner laptop program.” The Metropolitan State community certainly put forth its best foot in most cases. “With dealing with face-to-face interactions in the midst of a pandemic,” recalls Keeler, “library patrons were quick to adapt social distancing and wearing masks and understood the changes we had to make regarding quarantining books, helping them from 6 feet away, and blocking some computers to create the needed spacing.”



Library Student Staff Member Ken Thao.

Surprising Successes

Children home from school, adults working from home or losing their jobs, relatives and community members falling victim to the disease... for a school like Metropolitan State, with students of all ages and stages of life, the pandemic's effects hit hard, even before taking in to account the challenges faced by staff and faculty. But the story of the pivot is as much about how the university rose to this occasion as anything else.

For the COL's Morgan, the biggest surprise was the adaptability and resilience of Metropolitan State's faculty. “I think the biggest surprise for us was how little most faculty needed our help in transitioning in March. We expected to not sleep from March to May and truth be told, we did, and quite well, because we had far fewer calls than we anticipated. I think the departments and faculty colleagues helped each other out. Of course, since then, their familiarity has gone up and now they are keen at improving their courses, so our time now is helping faculty put their ideas into pixels that work for online learning.”

The relative success of the institution's digital transformation is also what CIO Reed cites as his biggest surprise. “I am hopeful that our utilization of the technology is going to stay. We went from using web conferencing solutions sparingly to now using them every day. The etiquette we now have along with the familiarity in using the tools... we have just matured as an institution so quickly in this way. For the most part, things are working pretty well for people with working and teaching remotely.”

“I think the biggest surprise was how understanding and resourceful students were,” says Student Parent and Resource Coordinator Vue. “If you are living in a constant state of survival, which some of our students are, changes are harder to deal with, and so I was surprised at how understanding our students were. Our biggest success was being able to pivot delivery systems quickly enough that there was really no real break in service for our students. I know that a lot of food shelves had to stop service for a while, and we never really had to stop service and say to our students, ‘no, you can't come and get food right now.’”

“I always try to look on the bright side of things,” says Dean Clausen. “And I think that this has opened up the door toward some more collaborative support steps that we've been talking about for a while now, but sometimes it takes a big change to make it happen.”

One nearly universal change, remote employment, has also had its benefits. “Being able to take walks or work in the garden on teleworking days during what would be my travel time has been an advantage,” notes the Library's Keeler. “All the jokes about being able to wear casual clothes when working at home are true.” COL's Morgan adds, “As to working from home, COL has been testing this out for years. We work in confined quarters, so if one of us gets sick, we stay home so as not to infect the herd. We had very little interruption in moving home.”



Food for Thought resource distribution: Student Volunteer Jay Olivares, Student Volunteer Anh T Tran, Student Staff Member Hyunji Kim.

A Resilient University

So, what were the characteristics of Metropolitan State University that allowed the pivot to succeed as well as it did?

For Morgan, in addition to the community's bend toward caring about student success, there is the dedication of faculty to deliver for students. "There is great pride that runs through the veins of our faculty—a pride in doing a job well. I sat through countless hours of trainings with our instructors over the last couple months, and most of them were there to improve their skills, but all of them were there because they wanted to be able to do their job well in an online environment."

Expanding on that, Keeler points out, "Metropolitan State attracts those students, faculty, and staff who juggle lots of responsibilities like work, school, and family with limited incomes, which makes them resilient, persistent, and inventive when it comes to handling life challenges."

"I would have to say that the diversity of the students and staff made a really big difference," says Vue. "Because of their experiences and backgrounds, they are able to be more understanding of what was happening, and the value of what food security means to the students and families that utilize the food pantry. So that made us different, because we had so many people willing to step up and ask, 'what can I do to help?'"

On an institutional level, Reed mentions the dedication of staff. "I'm biased, of course, but I think highly of the people that work in ITS, and the dedication and connection to the mission of serving students they have. And a lot of them are Metro State grads, but even those who are not are very dedicated to the institution. The dedication of all of our students, faculty, and staff was obvious in the multiple ways we worked together during a very challenging time."

Clausen points out student dedication as well. "The conversations I've had with students during this time really underscored how dedicated they are to their own education, plus their family and work commitments. So many of our students have other challenges and difficulties to navigate, and our staff, faculty and administrators work hard to try to remove some of those barriers—the students were at the center of all the plans and changes of plans we made. It was an impressive team effort."

Metropolitan State continues to learn and adapt to this situation, navigating the fall semester on into the spring. The future may feel quite uncertain, but for an institution founded on a model of adaptation and nontraditional pathfinding, it could have an exciting outcome. In the words of Travis Morgan, "This has been quite an adventure; it's not over, but we are a university that is no stranger to adaptation and succeeding in remote teaching and learning."

News and Notes

Note: All towns are in Minnesota unless otherwise noted.

Guled Abdullahi '19, Chanhassen, was sworn in as an Edina police officer in July. Abdullahi began his career with the Edina Police Department as a reserve officer in 2017. In 2018, he became a community service officer. At the ceremony, Abdullahi's mother, Jamilla, pinned his new badge on his uniform.

Marcia Anderson '77, Golden Valley, was awarded the Excellence in University Service Award by The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities for her vast leadership skills, advocacy work, and more. Anderson serves as the student-directed learning director at Metropolitan State University.

Linda Bryant '10, Minneapolis, joined Hope 4 Youth as the new Executive Director in February. Bryant has three decades of experience working with youth, homelessness, and nonprofits and developed programs to advocate for the wellness of homeless youth and struggling families. Currently, Bryant is focusing on growing capacity, ensuring sustainability of programs, and maintaining high quality services to those she serves at Hope 4 Youth.

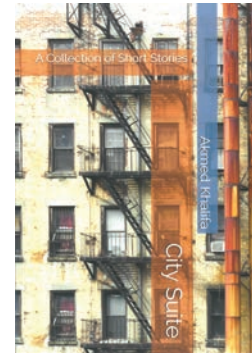
Jennifer Cherry '00, Hudson, Wisc., was named Assistant Superintendent for Stillwater Area Public Schools. Cherry will oversee technology, curriculum and staff development, and student support services.

Ramona Dohman '98, Maple Grove, was sworn in as the U.S. Marshal for the District of Minnesota. Dohman has served in law enforcement for thirty-seven years. Her past positions include Chief of Police for the City of Maple Grove and Commissioner of Public Safety for the State of Minnesota.

Michael Gordon '14, Springfield, was introduced as a new police officer. Gordon serves in his new position alongside his brother David Gordon, another dedicated police officer to the Sleepy Eye community.

Anisa Hajimumin '10, Minneapolis, was hired as the Assistant Commissioner for Immigrant and Refugee Affairs with the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). She is working to boost Minnesota's economy by helping refugees find work and start their own businesses, while helping employers hire and retain immigrant workers. By collaborating across state agencies, Hajimumin is working to remove structural barriers that immigrants encounter.

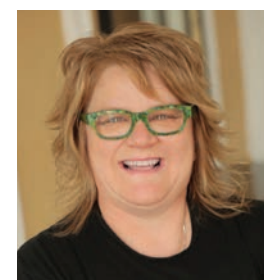
Greg Johnson '97, Minneapolis, received a 2020 *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* Pride in Business award. An advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Johnson is the Lead Human Resources Partner Director at Children's Minnesota.



Akmed Khalifa '08, Homestead, Penn., release his most recent book *City Suite*, a collection of short stories and urban poetry. The book is available on Amazon.com

Ramesh Karki '19, Minneapolis, joined GrowByData as a junior business analyst.

Sarah Lukemire '07, Greeley, Colo., was published in the May 2020 issue of the Apartment Association's *Trends* magazine. Lukemire is the founder and digital marketing director of Brindle Digital Marketing, which she launched in 2017. Brindle Digital Marketing specializes in digital marketing services for the multifamily housing industry. Lukemire's marketing service has grown to nearly \$1 million in revenue in a span of a few years.



Nancy Lyons '96, Minneapolis, published her second book, *Work Like a Boss: A Kick-in-the-Pants Guide to Finding (and Keeping) Your Power at Work*.

The book is available on Amazon.com

Stay Connected

Stay connected with the Metropolitan State Alumni Association and your fellow alumni. We'll keep you updated with the latest Metropolitan State alumni news and events.

 **Follow us on Facebook:**
Metropolitan State University Alumni Relations

 **Connect with us on LinkedIn:**
Metropolitan State U Alumni Relations

 **Follow us on Twitter:**
MetroStateAlumniMN @MetroAlum_MN

In Memoriam

Jacklyn Milton '06, Saint Paul, released a new children's book, *Justice Makes a Difference: The Story of Miss Freedom Fighter, Esquire*. Milton has been promoting literacy and diversity in books through her work at the nonprofit Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute. The book is available on Amazon.com.



Stephen Moore '06, Saint Paul, founded The Ovation Group, a boutique consulting firm, and serves as the co-founder of Culture Booster. Currently writing his first book, *The Seven Core Factors of Culture*, Moore is a motivational speaker, helping teams reach sustainable profitability and growth.



Jamal Osman '14, Minneapolis, recently won the special election for the Minneapolis City Council, representing Ward 6. Osman works as an advocate for renters facing eviction with CommonBond Communities, a nonprofit housing organization.



L.E. Rogers '85, Naples, Florida, retired Plymouth police sergeant, announces the release of the Harding Knox detective series. In three exciting exploits, Knox, accompanied by a compelling cast of characters, investigates complex cases from the streets of Minneapolis, to the jungles of Columbia. Solving murder and mayhem are part of the job description. In the murky shadows, obligation, justice and revenge are sometimes blurred. The books are available on Amazon.com

Mariah Wilberg '17, Saint Paul, wrote an article chosen by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) as a winner in their 2020 American Public Servant Writing competition. The article, entitled "What governments can do to end HIV stigma," is included on Apolitical, the online learning platform for public service employees.



Barry Bernstein '03, Minneapolis

John Franklin Burford '78, Windsor, Colo.

Delores Elizabeth Elliott '76, Hugo

Kay Schwie '78, Minneapolis

Eric B. Marquardt '99, Cottage Grove

Cory Muller '97, Mound

Miriam Meyers, Professor Emerita, Minneapolis

Earl R. Printz '85, Inver Grover Heights

Peter Urbanski '86, Maplewood

Simeon Avon Wagner '92, Tucson, Ariz.

Barry W. Webster '76, Barre, Vt.

Jane Cecillia Widmer '82, Cologne

We want to hear from you.

Send your news to alumni.relations@metrostate.edu

Faculty

College of Nursing and Health Sciences Welcomes Dean Doris Hill

By Matthew Spillum '06

One of the most interesting aspects of life in the COVID-19 global pandemic is welcoming new team members while in a largely remote work situation. Fortunately, the kind of individuals drawn to Metropolitan State University seem to thrive on adaptation, follow passions more than set plans, and can excel in unusual situations. New College of Nursing and Health Sciences Dean, Doris Hill, certainly fits that bill. “I’m originally from the west coast, Tacoma/Seattle area—the longest time I’ve ever lived anywhere was there. Because my father was in the military, we moved a lot, until we moved there when he retired. I came to the Midwest when my husband’s job transferred here. At the time, I was working in banking and finance.”

Hill expected her time in Minneapolis to be another brief stay, until she met a person in her church who was in nursing school. “I learned that you could get a nursing degree in two years, and I had always liked science. I had done a lot of customer service and really liked working with people.”

The winding path that brought Hill to Minnesota and nursing served to ignite something within her, and she quickly began climbing the nursing academic ladder. After earning her associate degree, Hill continued on, finishing an RN to BSN program, “and then decided, ‘well, I probably should go further,’ after a teacher suggested it. I did go to the University of Minnesota and finished a master’s degree, and while I was there, one of the faculty said I should really think about finishing a doctorate.” Not content with just that, Hill accepted a national fellowship through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, which is part of the National Institutes of Health, and then completed a post-doctoral fellowship in the school of medicine at the University of Minnesota-Duluth to round out her research experience.

Hill returned to teach at the school where she first began her nursing studies and, while there, once again, the advice of another led her to explore an opportunity. “I had a faculty member come up to me and say ‘Doris, I think you’d be really good at this,’ and they handed me an application packet for the Minnesota Board of Nursing. I decided to apply, and I was appointed to the Board of Nursing. I served two terms, and also served as president. I hadn’t planned on doing that, but that really served as a learning experience for me.” Hill’s time on the Minnesota Board of Nursing offered her the opportunity to see the world of nursing at the state and national levels, adding a guiding and governance aspect to her already existing practical and academic experience.

Immediately prior to her time at Metropolitan State, Hill worked with the Minnesota State System Office. “I just spent six months, from January until July, as a Chancellor’s Fellow working on the Equity 2030 initiative, with a focus on target setting.” As her work with the Minnesota State Chancellor’s advisory team wrapped up, and with the pandemic on, Hill had the opportunity to transition into work at Metropolitan State. “I had always been interested in working here. I wanted to work at the university level—working with research and the students, especially at the master’s and doctoral level, and I knew the people here through varied partnerships with Metropolitan State.”

Settling in amidst the pandemic has been a challenge, but Hill’s primary focus is building on and promoting what she sees as the core strengths of the college and the opportunities for growth in Metropolitan State’s innovative offerings. “I really appreciate the initiatives here looking at equity, inclusion, and anti-racism. As a community, we really need to look at our population needs and our student needs, and I feel that Metropolitan State provides that...coming from the Equity 2030 initiative, I really wanted to bring some of the ideas that we were thinking about in that initiative to the campus.”

As the new dean works through these challenging times with the rest of the university, Hill is focused on the positive and the opportunities available going forward. “I brought some different ideas when I interviewed for the position. One of them was extending ourselves out to more diverse communities and populations. In addressing health disparities, that is a focus for nursing and dental—maybe extending out to the indigenous populations in the state, the Latinx, Black and African American populations.” On a more immediate level, Hill hopes to “emphasize the quality programs we have here. There are a few new programs I plan to work with the marketing department to highlight—we are bringing the Doctor of Nursing Practice in Nurse Anesthesia to our campus beginning in spring, for example. And also extending the College of Nursing and Health Sciences to more collaboration with the other colleges on campus.”

Hill also notes the role alumni play in the college’s work to come. “I invite alumni to connect with us—we’re always looking to partner with our former students from our varied programs. If they are interested in joining our advisory committee, please contact us—we’d love to have their insights as former students and now practitioners and build that relationship with them.”

From the Director

Last year, I was fully engaged in the 50 Conversations series of events where several times a month, we would gather to share some food and talk about how Metro State should celebrate its 50th anniversary. The highlight of my job has always been meeting you. So, headed into 2021, I find myself missing those gatherings. I am confident we will gather again. But when I count my hopes and then my blessings seeing you all again ranks right near the top.

The optimist in me reflects on the last nine months and finds a great deal of hope for the future. I hope that we will all have a greater understanding of our co-workers and friends' real-life struggles and joys. If you have been in a Zoom meeting where a toddler chooses that exact moment to announce their presence or delight in a dog who has really had enough of its person talking to the screen, you know what I am talking about. We are graced with moments of humanity in progress.

I also have hope that finally, after too many centuries, our society is ready to face systemic racism as the existential threat to the health and wellbeing of our community. We have seen the result and have the opportunity and responsibility to examine our role in disrupting the damage and righting the wrongs in our communities.

We have devoted a lot of space in this issue of *buzz* to informing you of the ways your university has responded to the series of pivots required to make sure that students can continue their education and even celebrate their graduations when gathering to celebrate is not possible. We share these stories not to ask for a pat on the back, but to reassure you that Metro State remains true to its mission.

We have a great deal to look forward to in 2021—a 50th anniversary, learning more about ourselves and, hopefully, the joy of gathering. Until then, take care of yourself and those close to you.

In hope and gratitude,



Kristine Hansen '07
Alumni Relations Director



TOM POSTER

Welcome New Staff



We are delighted to welcome a new Associate Director of Alumni Relations, Sai Chang, to the Metro State University alumni relations team. Sai comes to Metropolitan State University with a background in fundraising, communications, and program development, and has a B.A in Journalism with a focus in Strategic Communication from the University of Minnesota. She is deeply rooted in community building, real connections, and passionate about providing marginalized communities access and opportunities.

Sai will be managing our social media, monthly newsletters, and supporting *buzz* magazine.

Connect with Sai at sai.chang@metrostate.edu.



700 East Seventh Street
Saint Paul, Minnesota
55106-5000

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Twin Cities, MN
Permit No. 4591



MINNESOTA STATE

*Metropolitan State University,
A member of Minnesota State*



Yesterday's Dream Today
Isaiah Flemister
painting