

# buzz

FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS FALL 2021 VOLUME 14, NO. 1



**Metropolitan  
State University 2021  
Alumnus of the Year  
Earlsworth "Baba" Letang '05**

**Metropolitan**  
State University





*Unity*  
Karli Chadbourn '20  
painting, 2021

# Office Hours

Dear Alumni,

Happy anniversary! We are celebrating 50 years of your university's growth, development, and accomplishments, the most notable of which are you and your achievements. As we kick off our once-in-a-lifetime celebration, I look forward to celebrating with you as the year unfolds at virtual and in-person celebrations. A 50th anniversary or birthday is a milestone that causes us to pause and reflect on what we have achieved so far and dream about the future. The last year and a half have certainly intensified our reflections. We have realized that students are truly at the core of everyone's work, whether it was designing new processes for delivering supportive services of tutoring, counseling, or food support, or faculty rethinking the ways to best deliver an excellent and engaging education remotely. We were inspired by the resilience of our students, the commitment of alumni and donors, and the ingenuity of our faculty and staff. We acknowledge the hardship and sorrow that many of us have faced, but have learned we can indeed look to our future with optimism.

You, our alumni and our future alumni (students) validate our optimism. In recognition of the university's 50th anniversary, we have devoted this issue of buzz to sharing stories and firsthand accounts of alumni.

Our First 50 Years - Metropolitan State Oral History Project\*, features firsthand accounts of experiences and stories from Metro State alumni, current and retired staff/faculty, and community members over the past 50 years. You can read excerpts from the interviews in this issue of buzz and we invite you to listen to the four resulting podcasts online at buzz online.

I am also delighted to congratulate Baba Letang as our Alumnus of the Year for 2020. Baba's leadership and commitment to the Lake Street community impressed the alumni board leadership who make the award each year. Baba's optimism shines through in his work to rebuild Lake Street. He is a remarkable person, and I know you will share my pride when you read his story.

Speaking of points of pride, Metro State has once again been awarded the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award from INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine. Additionally, CollegeNet's 2020 Social Mobility Index rankings continue to affirm Metropolitan State University's effectiveness at improving the economic outcomes for our students. Once again, we ranked at the top for Minnesota four-year institutions; Metro State also climbed into the top 2.7% nationally among the 1,449 ranked institutions. These awards speak to what you as alumni already know—Metro State changes lives by making a high-quality university degree accessible to all.

As heartwarming as it is to look fondly on our past, we are excited for the future. I am grateful to the many alumni who participated in our brand survey. Your insight and input were extremely valuable as we began our visioning process of representing Metro State to the world. I can't give away the details yet, but I encourage you to check in with us early in 2022 when we will reveal the new look for Metro State. I know you will be proud of a stunning look that helps illuminate the unique and significant strengths of our university.

Stay well, dear alumni; our history is inspiring and our future bright. Metro State is always your academic home and I look forward to seeing you at home sometime soon.

Sincerely,  
Virginia "Ginny" Arthur JD '17  
President

\* This project was made possible by the people of Minnesota through a grant funded by an appropriation to the Minnesota Historical Society from the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

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Cover photo by Jeff Achen

# Alumni Association

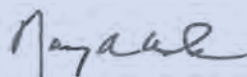
Dear Fellow Alumni:

David E. Sweet, Founding President of Metropolitan State, said, “I want Minnesota Metropolitan State College to be the kind of college which produces a significant change in its students. I am certain we can do this by remaining open to all who come. We must accept students where they are and help them become who they would be.” Amazingly 50 years later, that is still who we are and what we do! An audacious goal became a reality not because we stayed the same—we have expanded and innovated—but because President Sweet’s vision remains our guiding star.

As President of the Alumni Board, I have the pleasure of meeting fellow alumni. One of the first questions I ask them is, “What’s your Metro story?” Ninety-nine percent of the time, they know exactly what I’m asking and tell me the struggles before and during their time at Metro State. They needed a degree to support their family, further their career, and achieve their dreams, but most universities didn’t accommodate their schedule, their life, and/or their financial constraints. Then they found Metro State. They tell me it wasn’t smooth sailing. Our university has a high-quality, rigorous curriculum with outstanding faculty and high expectations. The vast majority worked full-time while attending college, and many have families. Despite these challenges, they persevered. They are grateful that they found Metro State. Our alumni recognize that Metro State made it possible to gain their degree when they thought it was impossible. I smile when I hear the stories; I can relate.

On behalf of nearly 50,000 alumni, I thank President Sweet and every president, faculty, and staff member since 1971 for their vision and conviction over the past 50 years. Our Metropolitan State University remains “the kind of college which produces a significant change in its students...by remaining open to all who come.... and accepts students where they are and help them become who they would be.”

Nancy Uden '88



President  
Metropolitan State University Alumni Board



The Metropolitan State University Alumni Board is comprised of alumni volunteers who share their time for the benefit of the university, fellow alumni, and current students. If you would like to learn more about volunteering for a committee of the Alumni Board, please email [alumni.relations@metrostate.edu](mailto:alumni.relations@metrostate.edu).

## 2021-22 Alumni Board Members:

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Nancy Uden '88, President  
Shanasha Whitson '00

## \$1.48M AANAPI Grant helps Metropolitan State serve 'Asian Minnesotan' students

By Robert Boos '20

Metropolitan State University has been recognized for its commitment to equity and inclusion with a U.S. Department of Education grant of \$1.48 million over the next five years to improve and expand Metropolitan State's capacity to serve Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander students.

Fourteen percent of the student population of Metropolitan State identify under the Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander (AANAPI) designation. The university is well-positioned to lead the fast-growing AANAPI community to a brighter future through better education. Minnesota is home to about 350,000 people of Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander heritage, about 6% of the state who live in more than 40 cultural communities under the label "Asian" or "Asian Minnesotan."

Metropolitan State has identified three goals—Promote Cultural Awareness and Competency, Advance Career Readiness, and Connect Graduates and Students—to better support and engage our Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander students and community.

## Challenge Accepted: Embodying Metro State's Dynamic Community

By Audrey Bergengren

### Metro State Rebrand Project

In January 2022, the university launches a new compelling, comprehensive brand identity system and value proposition to more fully live into its identity as a university known for accessibility, flexibility, and affordability. Through this project, the university will better integrate its core academic excellence with its mission, vision and values, including its longstanding commitment to equity, inclusion, diversity, anti-racism, and social mobility.

In my own work as vice president of the university's Strategic Enrollment and Marketing Division, I have found that, while our current logo and identity has served us well over the years, Metro has grown significantly in size, program offerings, and student support services. Our university is one of the most diverse academic communities in Minnesota and looks much different than it did even a decade ago. The project reflects these dynamics, updating the primary branding elements including the development of



"These focus areas were identified after reviewing academic scholarship about the activities that have significant, positive impacts for students who identify as students of color, and through learning more about the experiences of our Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander students from faculty and staff," says Amy Gort, provost and executive vice president for Academic and Student Affairs. "Our deliberations led us to choose multiple, impactful approaches to enhance the experience of our students and connections to the community."

The university will develop robust connections with alumni by supporting ongoing programs for alumni, forming mentorship networks between alumni and students, and building actionable data about graduates that can be used to improve the educational experience for our Asian American students.

Alumni in the Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander communities interested in being alumni mentors can contact LaBarre Spence at [LaBarre.Spence@metrostate.edu](mailto:LaBarre.Spence@metrostate.edu) to learn more about the opportunity.



a brand strategy, logo, graphics, color and font specifications, usage guidelines, graphic standards, positioning statements, and key messages.

The project kicked off in January of 2021 with a complete brand audit, competitive analysis, position mapping, SWOT analysis, and constituent research including more than 3,330 students, alumni, employees, and community partners who participated in surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

# Metropolitan State Receives Insight Into Diversity 2021 Higher Education Excellence In Diversity (HEED) Award

By Robert Boos '20

Metropolitan State University received the 2021 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award from INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine, the oldest and largest diversity-focused publication in higher education. As a recipient of the annual HEED Award — a national honor recognizing U.S. colleges and universities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion — Metropolitan State University will be featured, along with 100 other recipients, in the November 2021 issue of INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine. Having received this award in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2021, this is the fifth year Metropolitan State University has been named as a HEED Award recipient.

“This award reflects the commitment that all of our Metropolitan State community brings to achieving social mobility for the university’s students and social justice for our communities. I am grateful for all of this work,” says university President Ginny Arthur.

INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine selected Metropolitan State University for its strategic and innovative approach to serving a diverse community of students, faculty, and staff. Our equity, inclusion and anti-racism work is



grounded in our institutional values of excellence, engagement, racial equity, inclusion, and respect. As an institution greatly impacted by the death of George Floyd, Daunte Wright, and countless other black men killed at the hands of police, our work to address issues of racial equity, diversity, and inclusion became that much more urgent in the past few years.

Under the leadership of Vice President of Equity and Inclusion, Dr. Josefina Landrieu and the Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Council, the university focused on key campus climate, faculty diversity, and student success strategies.

In early 2021, Metro State implemented an employee and student campus climate assessment to embark in meaningful and intentional work to ensure that an ever-growing diverse university community can learn and work in inclusive and welcoming environments.

Other important strategies include the implementation of

Equity Champions (advocates) in all faculty and administrator searchers. These advocates are specially trained individuals who serve as members of search advisory committees to offer guidance, facilitation, and feedback to search committee chairs and committee members and ensure that search processes and practices are equitable for all candidates. Since establishing this strategy in 2019, the university saw a sharp increase in the hiring of faculty of color. Metropolitan State University is also proud of the Faculty of Color Mentorship Program. A key initiative implemented and led by faculty members to strengthen the retention of faculty of color. This program provides its members with cross-race/ethnicity mentoring, resources for professional development, strategic networking with peers, professional organizations, and communities of shared interests, a network of support and opportunities for leadership development.

Through a cross-functional team in 2020 the university began the implementation of Equity by Design. This is a multi-year, university-wide student success strategy. More importantly, it is a data-informed, equity-minded methodology aimed to dig deep and address educational disparities among Black, Indigenous, and students

of color. Equity by Design does not only help identify the university’s student populations that are impacted by the disparities but it creates a network of equity agents equipped in using data and inquiry to close racial equity gaps in student outcomes.

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



# ..... Metro at

## The First Class: Lois Young

By Rachel Hughes



**L**ois Young, a member of the first graduating class, shared her story about her experience of receiving a degree from Metro State. You can hear Lois's firsthand account at [buzz online](#).

**Lois Young:** I graduated from high school in 1945. I wanted to become a nurse. So, I joined the United States Army, and they took care of all my expenses, which I graduated from in 1948.

In 1970, I was living in Minnesota, I was married, had two children, and I had been working as a nurse and been promoted to Director of Education. I was the only Black person working in this hospital. I didn't feel that I could be in charge of so many white employees. At that time, the Health Education Department in Chicago wrote to the hospital administration and said that they needed more hospital-wide education for employees. And one morning, I woke up to see this article saying, "The arrival of a college without walls." For some reason, my insides jumped, and I was just as happy as I could be, that this college was coming into being. Nobody in the town of Minneapolis believed in Metropolitan State University. People in the town laughed, because they thought it was a college, like the other blood colleges in Minneapolis, that were not legal.

There were so many people without degrees because they could not afford to go to school, because they had to work during the day and this (Metro State) was allowing you to have your class anytime a day, anywhere. There were no walls to the university other than the walls of a room. You could have a class with a qualified instructor. The orientation was held at a building, on a school ground in

Minneapolis, a few blocks from my house. These teachers promised us that as mature students, we would be very knowledgeable in whatever we decided, and that the success of the college depended on us. They never asked us for any money. We never had to bring out our checkbooks. After the first orientation period, I was more than overjoyed.

Our first class was held in my living room, which was very adequate as a classroom. My goal was to be proficient in education and training. One of the doctors at the University of Minnesota was assigned as my instructor. He was a professor who worked with the masters' students on study. He said to me, "Lois, my home is two doors away from your office, if you would like, I will stop every Wednesday, and I will give you your class." That was one of the classes without walls. The skills that I learned at Metropolitan University helped me to become successful in any project, anything that I have tried to do in life. I was one of the first 12 graduates in 1973. At the first graduation, we did not have caps and gowns—they rented a church, and we had the ceremony at a church one Thursday night. Dr. Sweet and Dr. Mitau had a room full of people there with our families. At that time, it was a Bachelor of Arts because the school was still a liberal arts school. The town of Minneapolis just exploded—everybody was excited about our graduation. There were news people that wrote articles about the university. I was interviewed daily; I was on television—everybody wanted to know about this school. From 1970 when the school started to 1980, there were over 2,000 graduates.

Even though I didn't have a cap and gown on, I had a piece of paper. Because all my life I had been telling young people, 'Get a piece of paper.' Well, I had a piece of paper from a university. I'm a person who needed help in developing a life of helping people. Metropolitan State University gave me that opportunity. I learned a lot more than book learning. I learned how to work with people, I learned how to teach people, I learned how to enjoy life. I just enjoyed the whole experience there; I have no criticism. You see, it wasn't like going to school and I was going to get an A, B, or C. It was to accomplish knowledge—knowledge on learning on how to do something. This school was needed to help people in this world. The day they opened, people became somebody and had more confidence. I had more confidence in me to have someone say to me, "You can be anything you want to be, and we will help you reach that goal." Metropolitan State matters to me because I know how they can help so many people to achieve whatever they want in life. I believe in that school.



# The Oral History Project: Our First 50 Years

In celebration of 50 years of championing access to higher education in Minnesota, Metropolitan State recorded a series of oral history podcasts featuring firsthand accounts of current and retired faculty and staff, alumni, and community members. This project was made possible by the people of Minnesota through a grant funded by an appropriation to the Minnesota Historical Society from the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. You can find the complete recordings at [buzz online](#). Below are excerpts of the interviews about the founding of Metro State and alumni perspectives as students from immigrant and refugee communities at Metro State.

## *Excerpted and edited from Founding Metro State*

*The panelists, Jim Lukaszewski '74, Susan Rydell (founding faculty member), Karen Sweet (daughter of the first president Dr. David Sweet), Duane "Butch" Kramer '74, and Mel Henderson (early administrator and community faculty member), reflect on the university's visionary first president Dr. David Sweet.*



**Karen Sweet:** My dad was so enthusiastic, and he could make everybody just as enthusiastic about whatever it was he was interested in. He talked a lot about the school, he talked a lot about his work. He worked long days. He got up early every morning, way before me, and read the bible and other religious material first, and then he generally drove me to high school. He would work so late that my mom had a rule that he had to be home at six, supper was at six, and he had to be home at six. He tried to keep us all involved in it. I remember being at the opening when the office opened at that bank, in downtown Saint Paul, in September of 1971. They had

parties with all the faculty and staff. He was just so enthusiastic. So happy to be working on this project.

**Susan Rydell:** Probably the first week in January, shortly after I started, David Sweet invited me to lunch. He started to talk about this big research project that I had over at the University of Minnesota, what I had been doing, and all of that good stuff. Then he said, "Now you do realize, coming to Metropolitan State University, you can no longer do any research." I tried to argue a bit, and of course, you didn't really argue with David, but I tried. I said, "Well, I was doing research on student success in different ways of delivering education." He said, "No, no, you can't do that, that's your research, you are the faculty member, and you are there to serve the student, the job of a faculty member is not to do research and contribute to new knowledge in the field. It is to serve the student, find out what the student's goals are, find out where the student wants to go in life, find out where the student wants to end up." Then he said, "Of course, before you do that you need to know where the student has come from, what's their background, what are their interests and all that—focus on the student only." Not my business, not my interest in psychology or perception or research or any of that. He said, "That's why you have to take a 12-month appointment and be a 12-month faculty member at Metropolitan State because, without that, you're going to be tempted to do research in the summer on projects that are going to take you away from thinking about the importance of the student." That was a pivotal moment. In all higher education today, I think about student-centered education versus faculty-directed education, and we have moved to a faculty-directed education system.

**Butch Kramer '74:** In my early days at the school, I would run into him (David Sweet) in the office—in Metro Square when I was talking to my advisor or whatever. And so, I had several discussions with him and what I noticed most is what Susan said, the enthusiasm that this man presented to the student body. I'm talking student body of one—because he presented that enthusiasm to me. He was very interested in my thoughts about the school and was I getting the help that I needed in terms of setting up objectives and goals and strategies—to meet those goals and all that sort of thing. I was just amazed by the enthusiasm he had and that he would bother to spend (time) with me, one student, to talk to me about these kinds of things. I got the same feeling from every other instructor that I had. Also, from just secretaries and anybody who you would come in contact with, in the administration building was just so friendly. It was more than just Minnesota nice—these people really cared about the students, and that was always ever-present.



Clockwise from Top left: Kee Yang '17, Lucky Lee '16, Awo Ahmed '11, Emily Seddon

**Jim Lukaszewski 74':** Dr. Sweet and I would have conversations about things. Like Butch, I was 30 at the time, something like that. He really did have this extraordinary enthusiasm about everything that he did. But for some reason, he picked me to be the guy to kind of complain to about things. One of his favorite complaints a couple of years into his presidency was about the fact that the (university) presidents weren't given money. He needed money for gifts, for people at events—he had to take care of things presidents do. I said, "Well, what's the problem?" His wall is filled with signed pictures of Pillsburys and McKnights and all these famous people. I said, "Just pick up the phone and call; I bet you these people write you a check it would put you in good stead for the next 10 years." He said, "Well, a problem Jim. To get those names on the wall, I had to promise them I would not ask for money". So, I said, "Tell you what, I don't have any money, but I'm certainly willing to ask people. A little while later, he said, "I'm going to appoint you to the Foundation." He just started the College Foundation. So, I became the first student member of the Metro State Foundation. I served for nine years; it was really interesting.

**Mel Henderson:** We were convinced by David to basically look at what the student brings to the process of learning in terms of their experiences, their background, and tried to bring out from them that they can contribute to the process of learning. Giving the student that kind of credit was part of our early success, something new for us to understand. David came to me and said, "I need you to go to all the state universities and go into the departments and talk to them about allowing students to do internships through the various majors and programs. Part of what they were saying is that

theory is important, premises are important but what's important is that you can apply that knowledge in the real world. Based upon their prodding, I was able to at least convince some of the various departments in the state universities to begin trying to develop internships for the students so that they could begin to apply what they were learning in the classroom. So that was something that I always remember David Sweet and (Ted) Mitau coming together to do something new in the system. They used me as an instrument to do it because I had experience in the community.

*Excerpted and edited from Alumni and Immigrant Communities at Metro State*

*Alumni Shared their perspective as students from immigrant and refugee communities at Metro State. The panelists, Kee Yang '17, Lucky Lee '16, and Awo Ahmed '11, talk with moderator Emily Seddon about the benefit of diversity among students at Metro State.*

**Emily Seddon:** I'd like it if we could talk next about the diversity of the student body at Metro State. So, Kee, you said it was really important to your experience. I'm interested if the diversity at Metro feels different to the two of you, from Century or St. Kate's. If it did, does it make a difference in how your college experience went?

**Lucky Lee:** I noticed one thing when I started going to Metro was the difference in ethnicity and age range. At the time, I could be sitting in class, and next to me, there's a fresh high school graduate with just so much inspiration in their eyes. Then somebody (else) next to me is sixty-five years old just getting back in (to

college) also, and they had those same eyes. I'm like, oh man, I'm in between these two, I'm not going to make it [Laughter], But yeah, I do see a different demographic, a totally different kind of atmosphere. There's a lot of people that work full time and have families, and they know the struggle is real.

**Kee Yang:** From my example, in the MMIS, the Master of Management Information Systems, I had a classmate who had just had a baby two weeks before, and she showed up to class right away. Even the professor was like, are you sure you're alright to come out here? You should be resting, and she's just like, "No, I have to be here," because that was the capstone for that degree. "I just have to be here; I'm going to make sure I pass my degree too." Metropolitan State is not just diverse in ethnicity or race but also diverse in professional levels. That's an experience that you can't get anywhere else. Your classmates could be presidents of companies, senior-level executives, people in associate positions. These are things that are valuable to you in professional development. Because they allow you to communicate. You're communicating with classmates, and they're communicating back to you. Not only that, but you're sharing ideas and knowledge with them. There's a reason why they're in a president or a senior position. You can take that information, you can take their knowledge, you can pick their brains, and they can also pick your brains. Maybe they're a little older and in a higher position, but they're interested in the ideas we have as younger classmates and how they can incorporate them. These are the things that I think are so great about Metropolitan State University—it's diverse not just in the ratio of ethnicity, but it's diverse in the age group, it's diverse in the hierarchy of positions at a professional level as well.

**Awo Ahmed:** I would say the diversity at Metro really does enrich our overall education. Because, for example, we had a lawyer in one of my undergraduate classes, and we were like, why are you taking this class? And so, she was talking about how this relates to her field. You never would imagine that a lawyer would be interested in genetics or genomics and things like that. It gives the students a broader understanding of how they could apply their college education. Just because you're an undergraduate biology student or chemistry student doesn't mean you have to go to grad school to become a doctor or a bench scientist; all these other fields could indirectly or directly apply to your degree. Having people who have experience in the working world, come into your class, and take classes with you brings that layer of enrichment in your education.

**Kee Yang:** I'm just adding on—I think I might just pause and state, every student has their own unique story, and that's what makes Metro State really nice. Each student brings their own different story, and if you add that up, it makes for a really good product [Laughter].

**Lucky Lee:** Your fellow classmates—people who have been out in the field already have careers and jobs. I believe we had a group project and a couple of the students who actually worked for two

different competing companies. They knew the same topics and stuff like that, but they're like, "I can't really tell you this, because these are trade secrets, and your competitor and that kind of thing" [Laughter]. So, it's interesting to see a dynamic of how we're students. We want to share each other's knowledge and information and stuff like that. But then you're also like, okay, I also have a job, and I going to make sure I'm representing my workplace as well at Metro State; everybody kind of has their own story. Somebody can be fresh from high school, and somebody can be just retired, and they just want to take some classes to learn about a topic more. They could have a lifetime of experience. When you finally just sit down and start chatting with one of your classmates, you just find so many more interesting things. Metro State has just so much more variety.

**Kee Yang:** I remember way back probably ten years ago; I had a retired chief of police come in and be my classmate [Laughter]. It might seem like, wow, you've retired already, and you should be enjoying life. Well, I guess some people really do enjoy education, and that's sort of Metro state's slogan up with it—where life and learning meet, right? They really love their education, and that's what we all have been saying.

**Awo Ahmed:** Comparing my experience at St. Kate's—I think it's a really great school. But I felt like I was super shy the first two years of my education. Once I transferred over to Metro, I came out of my shell, I guess. Only because Metro faculty and professors really do want you to participate, they push you to participate, and they put you in like teamwork and things like that. I felt like more motivated, I felt I could be more friendly towards people and not be closed off. Because I feel like people were sharing their life stories, and I'm like, "That sounds similar to my life story," you know. So, I really did appreciate the diversity at Metro State, compared to my experience at St. Kate's.

You can listen to the complete series of Oral Histories online at [www.metrostate.edu/buzz](http://www.metrostate.edu/buzz)

**Founding Metropolitan State:** A conversation with Jim Lukaszewski '74, Susan Rydell, Karen Sweet, Butch Kramer '74, and Mel Henderson

**Metro State's Leadership in Credit for Prior Learning:** A conversation with Joyce LeClair, Daniel Abebe, Julia Eszlinger, Jay Jaffee, and Marcia Anderson

**Expanding Enrollment:** A conversation about expanding enrollment to include students with fewer than 20 credits with Marcia Anderson and Leah Harvey

**Immigrant and Refugee Student Experiences at Metro State:** A conversation with alumni from immigrant and refugee communities about their experiences at Metro State with Kee Yang '17, Lucky Lee '16, and Awo Ahmed '11

# The Genesis of a Utopian College

By Monte Bute '91



David Sweet and Theodore Mitau

**T**he course of history was therefore not that of a billiard ball – which, once it is hit, takes a definite line – but resembles the movement of clouds, or the path of a man sauntering through the streets, turned aside by a shadow here, a crowd there, an unusual architectural outcrop, until at last he arrives at a place he never knew or meant to go to. Inherent in the course of history is a certain going off course. (Musil, 1995:392)

Before Minnesota Metropolitan State College (MMSC) even opened its doors in 1971, the chair of the prestigious Carnegie Commission on Higher Education was proclaiming the school as “perhaps the most innovative institution of higher education in the United States” (Anderson 1972:A1). Who was that man and why was he saying this about a newly created state college? The man was Clark Kerr, former president of the University of California and one of America’s most highly regarded educators. And this piece examines the strategy that formed the genesis of a utopian college.

In 1972, a *Los Angeles Times* reported on MMSC thus, “It has burst upon the college scene with surprising force, and though its detractors tend to chalk it off to faddism, its supporters think it is opening a new era in higher education.” Metropolitan State had no campus, no academic terms, no classes, and no grades. David Riesman, the nation’s foremost sociologist of higher education in the 1970s and a skeptic regarding these new undertakings, singled out the Minnesota experiment as exemplary:

*I do believe that the combination of enterprises on which MMSC is launched is indeed unique; nowhere else to my knowledge is a similarly intricate effort being made... What makes MMSC such a highwire act over a still invisible net is its combination of these efforts in a novel way for which there are no guidelines or precedents.* (1972:5)

Legendary tales still circulate about the school’s early years as an experimental college at Metropolitan State. These tales led to an intriguing question; did the Minnesota State Legislature truly authorize such a radical experiment?

There are two plaques at the entrance of Founders Hall at the Metropolitan State University Dayton Bluff campus. One commemorates the school’s founding president, David E. Sweet and the other acknowledges the founding chancellor, G. Theodore Mitau. Dr. Sweet is the better known, having served as the first president, and yet among the mavericks responsible for founding a new state college in the metropolitan area of Minneapolis-Saint Paul, none stood taller than the 5-foot-6-inch tall “Ted” Mitau. Mitau not only formulated the original idea of the college, but also took charge of the strategy and tactics employed during the three-year campaign to pass the legislative authorization for Metropolitan State.

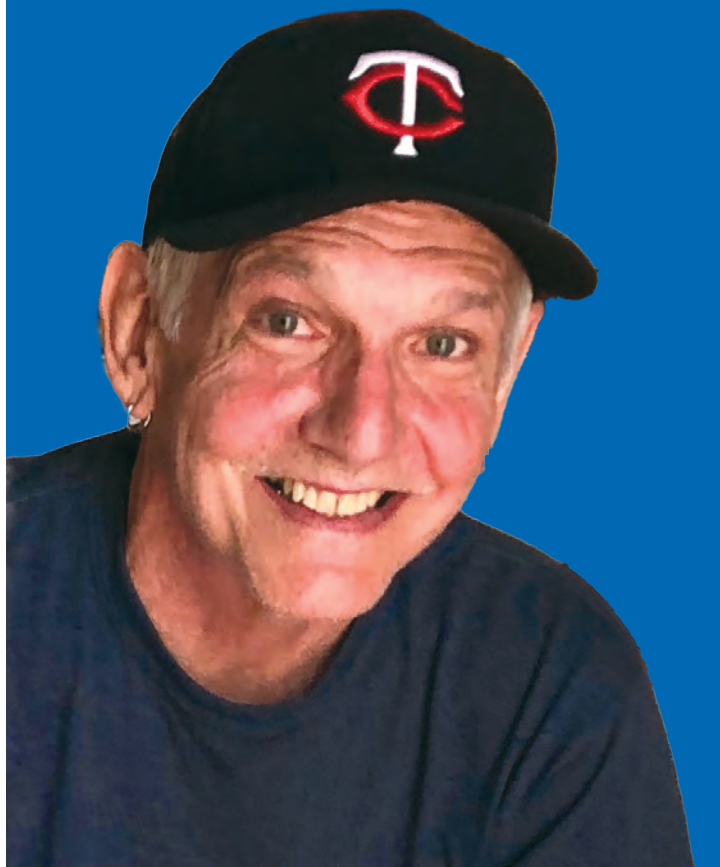
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Mitau was born in 1920 to a well-to-do Jewish family in Berlin. His father died by the time Ted was 10 years old and his older brother died in an accident a few years later, leaving Mitau and his mother to fend for themselves. He was just 13 when Hitler came to power to 1933. Mitau wore the Star of David and attended a segregated school for Jews. Sensing his eventual fate in Germany, Ted acquired a student visa in 1937 to study in the United States. Believing that Jews would remain safe in Berlin, his mother refused to migrate to New York with her son (Gonzalez-Campoy 1998).

You can read the full article at [buzz online](http://buzzonline.com). Visit [www.metrostate.edu/alumni/buzz-magazine](http://www.metrostate.edu/alumni/buzz-magazine)

# Big Questions:

Interview by Rachel Hughes



*Douglas Dumas graduated from Metro State in 1988 with an individualized degree. A lifelong learner, Douglas turned his compassion and curiosity into a career as a psychologist. In his conversation with Rachel, Douglas reflects on his Metro State experience.*

## How did you first learn about Metro State?

I knew what worked for me, and I heard about a school for working adults through a friend. I enrolled. The first class I took at Metropolitan State University was to design my program. I looked around that class and saw people who looked like me—an adult. I knew I was part of a cohort.

## Tell me about your Metro State Journey.

I was driven by the time I got to Metro State—after a career in construction and previously dropping out of college, I knew then I wanted to be a psychologist. I knew I would be going to graduate school. My plan had classes that Metro State didn't offer, so I did some classes at the University of Minnesota and wrote some myself. It taught me things I didn't know I could do or could

# Douglas Dumas '88

find interesting. I learned it didn't matter if I found something interesting as long as there was something for me to learn.

## Is there a class or faculty member that stands out to you looking back on your time at Metro State?

When I took statistics, my professor was a statistician by trade. The class was 12 weeks, and he divided this into nine sections, and each week we would work to pass a section. If we didn't pass, we were given a second chance to pass that section. I failed section 8 twice—he offered me a third chance to pass. Because he was more interested in me learning stats versus how I passed the section. This sticks out to me because it epitomizes the instructors at Metro State—they work in their fields. The instructor could get beyond the numbers to the why. All learning starts with a simple observation.

## What was important about your Metro State education?

It was accessible to me. They (the faculty) did not try to dumb anything down for me. They were respectful. There was no assumption that I could or couldn't do something but rather what I needed to do to execute successfully. My experience at Metro State gave me the motivation to go to grad school. I was exposed to people I wouldn't normally come into contact with. At Metro State, people came from a broad range of backgrounds, from poverty to college-educated families. I felt seen that way. And it taught me to think critically—we are all more complex and more similar than we know.

## How did your Metro State experience shape your career?

I entered my career with a broader perspective than I would have had at a more traditional university. Being in classes with women and being taught by women gave me a perspective that impacted me to identify as a feminist and join a feminist counseling circle. I don't think I would have developed that part of myself without Metro State.

## You give back to Metro with an annual contribution. Why is this important to you?

Metro's early emphasis on working adults and credit-for-life experience opened a world I never could've imagined: grad school, a successful 30-year career as a psychologist, and creating a small business with my wife. Their commitment to lifelong learning and helping underserved populations are all reasons we continue to donate to Metro.

# Alumni Spotlight .....

## Alum of the Year: Earlsworth “Baba” Letang ‘05

By Jessica Nadeau

Walking beside Earlsworth “Baba” Letang through the Midtown Global Market, a multicultural food destination in south Minneapolis, it becomes easy to see why he’s known as the “Father” of the market. Business owners and workers at Mapp’s Coffee, Salsa a La Salsa and Intown Sushi pause to wave warmly, none failing to greet Baba as he passes by.

To hear Nita Kay Logeman tell it, Baba has always been magnetic—an impressive man who naturally brought community together. Nita met Baba in his home country, the island nation of Dominica in the Caribbean, on a service group trip with the Good News Project. She remembers visiting the local school and getting to know a talented teacher—an extraordinary man whose life she would change.

“I immediately noticed how he taught with no textbooks,” Nita recalls. Often it would take all night for Baba to hand-write his students’ tests. His dedication was clear. He also taught music and choir. “Everything he did was by ear. The way he could pick up and learn music by ear with no formal training was extraordinary. He has such a gift.” Nita asked whether Baba’s students would sing in a farewell program for the crew from the Good News Project. But on the day of the event, rain poured down in sheets. Nita was shocked when more than two dozen of his students still gathered, coming from all over the island to sing for the send-off event. Baba, however, took it in stride, telling her placidly, “I think it was because I told them it was important to me.” Quietly magnetic, he simply brought together community wherever he went.

And where he wanted to go, at that point, was America. He wanted to further his education, and, Nita thought, “This is a man that needs a chance.” She helped Baba secure a loan, travel to America, and work toward his undergraduate degree, supporting himself as a full-time night security guard on campus.

“I rode my bicycle to school every day and used to pass by the abandoned Sears building and always wondered what was going on with it,” Baba remembers of the building that would one day be revitalized as the Midtown Global Market. “It was vacant for ten years, and I never imagined it would become a huge part of my life someday,” Baba muses.

In fact, Baba graduated (receiving his undergrad degree at

Northwestern University with honors), at which point he lost his student visa. Without a work permit, he had little choice but to return to Dominica, always keeping an eye on the Twin Cities. He deeply wished to return, to continue his education and build a life here, and eventually he pinned his hopes on an application to the Master’s program at Metropolitan State University. “I did not even tell people I was back home [on the island] because I still had such high hopes of going back,” he laughs. “It was a very nervous time for me.”

“I was on the islands just going by faith,” Baba says of the momentous day his acceptance to Metro State’s Master of Public and Nonprofit Administration program arrived. “When I got it, I cried. And from that moment a seed was planted that developed

and grew into so many crucial relationships in my life—in great thanks because of Metro State.”

Metro State’s nonprofit administrative program and project management courses were compelling for him, so aware of his own good fortune and so ready to give back to his

new community. Through his student job in the alumni relations office, Baba “learned a lot about fundraising campaigns and events management,” and he built connections within and beyond the school. One of those connections, the department’s vice president, would suggest Baba’s next step, encouraging him to apply to the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Emerging Leaders initiative. LISC’s program helps to fast-track emerging leaders into their career of interest. It is highly competitive, but of course, he was accepted.

The LISC program connects students with nonprofits, placing them in the hopes that the experience will lead to a full-time job offer after a year’s service. Baba was placed with the Neighborhood Development Center (NDC), a community focused entrepreneurship hub helping empower people and groups to create neighborhood businesses. For an energetic man who had already dedicated his life to building community, it was a perfect fit. NDC hired Baba after just three months.

Mike Temali, NDC’s Founding CEO, speaks of Baba as someone with an incredible spirit, then and now. Mike remembers that “It was an enormous risk,” yet NDC had no qualms about helping Baba get his green card to stay in America. “We absolutely saw the value in helping him,” he says, clearly sharing Nita’s strong sense

**When I got it, I cried. And from that moment a seed was planted that developed and grew into so many crucial relationships in my life—in great thanks because of Metro State.**



that Baba’s service-oriented nature inspires others.

At the time, NDC and other partners joined with the City of Minneapolis to transform the abandoned Sears Roebuck building in south Minneapolis. A hulking structure, they envisioned a neighborhood center of offices, residential units, and plenty of space for commercial and community uses. By 2006, the \$190 million Midtown Exchange project, including the Midtown Global Market, was complete.

As part of the LISC program, Baba was tasked with presenting a set of strategy recommendations for managing the new development. His presentation was so strong that Temali moved to hire him as the market’s manager.

“This year I am very proud to be celebrating fifteen years at the Midtown Global Market,” Baba beams. He credits Metro State with his “long-term success,” noting that his classes and the diversity of the school prepared him to meet an array of challenges. Plus, he says, after attending undergrad as an older-than-average student, it was a joy to study alongside a Master’s cohort with a huge range of life experiences. “Metro made me feel young again,” he grins.

Over the years, Baba’s knack for bringing together community has led him to serve as a member of the Lake Street Council, the president of the Midtown Business Association, and on the board of the Midtown Greenway Coalition.

“We want to make sure wherever we have a project, we are building community around that area,” Baba explains of his work with the NDC and other groups. “If you ask why my role is so significant at MGM, it is because this place was vacant for 10 years”—he saw it firsthand, riding his bike down Lake Street—and while it was empty it attracted all the bad things you can think about. This was an empty building in a neighborhood that many tried to avoid.” Today, the Midtown Global Market is a regional destination and an anchor of the Chicago-Lake neighborhood. “And since we opened, we created jobs for over 200 employees in the community. We went from an empty building to having 1.5 million visitors the market.”

The “Father” of the market speaks with obvious pride as he reflects on his work with Mike Temali and the NDC. “One of the big things we do are business incubation projects where we help small businesses to grow. Usually, the times when I see the significance of our work is when I go on a walk through the market and I hear statements like, ‘I made mistakes in my life, I messed up my credit and now I have an opportunity to work with people at MGM or NDC, and my life has been changed.’ That really makes you realize how powerful it is what you are doing.”

Indeed, our walk through the Midtown Global Market is a powerful demonstration of the economic impact of building strong relationships and nurturing fledgling businesses. NDC has trained close to 6,000 low-to-very-low-income people as start-up entrepreneurs. Nearly 90% of them are people of color, and they have gone on to launch more than 1,000 small businesses. Having been mentored by Mike himself, Baba has deep gratitude for NDC’s work and never forgets to pay it forward. That’s community, after all—a living thing that requires tending.

On the morning of May 28, 2020, Lake Street’s business owners stood amid the wreckage of a night of anguished protest following the death of George Floyd less than half a mile from the Midtown Global Market in one direction and the Minneapolis Police Department’s Third Precinct in another. In other words, they stood at the epicenter of a global uprising. And it was a mess. The iconic

former Sears building managed to stay intact with the help of neighbors, tenants and security guards standing watch night after night. Vandals broke doors and windows, and they stole some merchandise. Yet the surrounding area, Baba notes, was suddenly a vision of its former self: with newly burned and abandoned buildings, this stretch of Lake Street needed revitalizing again.

“Being on Lake Street Council helps me look at the bigger picture, because MGM is on Lake Street, so I wonder, how do we rebuild this area? This is some of the challenges we have to face. Even now people think this area is not safe because of all the buildings that were affected. For me my bigger role now is how do I help, not just create this global market but bring people back?”

After all, the uprisings and protests were taking place during a global pandemic. Months-long shutdowns had already devastated restaurants, and the closure of the Midtown Global Market meant losing up to 75% of its tenant revenue. The NDC estimates the costs of operating the Market alone run about \$1.5 million a year, yet it cut ailing retailers’ rents by half and plans to keep them low until the arrival of a hoped-for economic rebound. The NDC’s \$2.3 million recovery plan includes grants for small businesses displaced by rioting and to subsidize rent for those facing capital limitations related to COVID-19 lockdowns.

Embracing the spirit of mutual aid and community-building that animates Baba, small business owners also responded to the pandemic by supporting their neighborhood healthcare professionals. Allina Health, for instance, has some 2,000 employees based in the old Sears building right alongside the market, and Abbott Northwestern Hospital and a number of other Allina healthcare facilities are located just blocks away.







Baba Letang and Jim Lukaczewski

**Can you imagine, during the riots and COVID, and trying to figure out what to do here—and amongst all of that I got an email from the President of Metro State?**

So, the market’s vendors, neighborhood groups and volunteers raised money so that the otherwise shuttered restaurants could feed front-line workers through

“Meals for Medics.” The effort was a community-led win-win, says former Minneapolis Mayor, R.T. Rybak, now running the Minneapolis Foundation. Not only did Meals for Medics “help the incredible heroes on the front lines of health care,” he comments, it represented an innovative way to lift brave entrepreneurs who had spent years building their businesses.

Often considered East Lake Street’s “biggest store,” the Midtown Global Market faces years of rebuilding. The NDC and Baba are committed to the long-haul. “Revenue replacement grants” fall short of full restitution, though they are helping individual businesses that have demonstrated cost-cutting, innovation in keeping business alive and a growth plan for when shopping traffic returns. Baba remains hopeful.

“Can you imagine, during the riots and COVID, and trying to figure out what to do here—and amongst all of that I got an email from the President of Metro State?” Baba marvels. “It made me think about what what an amazing relationship that is. She was just checking in on everything and wanted to see how everything is going with the businesses and with me, and I just absolutely cherish that.”

He continues, describing himself as “humbled” but not surprised that the president of his alma mater reached out during the upheaval. “That is what a ‘personal connection’ means.”

“When I was asked about ‘what I’m really proud of,’ I honestly thought first of being nominated by Metro State for Alumni of the year. I couldn’t feel more humbled by this recognition. Metro State is in my heart. Whenever I will travel back to Dominica, I will think about my time there.”

As Nita Kay Logeman said upon her first time seeing Baba in that small school house on the island, “When I first met Earlsworth,” Nita Kay Logeman says years after walking into a school house and meeting the extraordinary Baba Letang, “I thought he was a diamond in the rough. I no longer think he is a diamond in the rough. He has risen to be the diamond he was always meant to be.”



# Metro Matters

## Breaking Down Financial Barriers

By Sai Chang

Earlier, Metropolitan State University Alumni Board President Nancy Uden shared Founding President David E. Sweet's vision for Metro State in her letter: "I want Minnesota Metropolitan State College to be the kind of college which produces a significant change in its students. I am certain we can do this by remaining open to all who come. We must accept students where they are and help them become who they would be."

In this milestone year of our 50th anniversary, President Sweet's remarks are truer than ever. Metro State was founded to provide access and a pathway to a college degree for busy working adults. Our mission of providing accessible, high-quality education to the Twin Cities communities and beyond has not changed—rather it's expanded in the understanding that students who come to Metro State come with different backgrounds and needs. The barrier is not just being a working adult; it is being a first-generation college student where access to higher education hasn't always been a given; it is being a student with a disability; being a student from a historically marginalized community; being a student and a single

parent; coming from a low-income household; coming from a life of poverty; or all of the above.

There is a myriad of barriers that students face—these barriers may have always been there—and we are hearing more and more about them because students are using their voice. They are telling us what challenges they're facing, what their needs are, and how we can support them. And, we're listening.

The Metro Fund is the university's most flexible resource to support students. Last year, the Metro State community gave over \$135,000 to the Metro Fund which in turn supported emergency assistance for students, scholarships and programs.

During this season of giving consider a gift to the Metro Fund and be source of continued support for Metro State students. Our goal and hopes for Metro State today are the same as President Sweet's 50 years ago. We accept each student where they are and help them become who they would be. That is our purpose. Join us!



# Student Success

## Christian Salazar: So close...

By: Sai Chang

Christian Salazar's journey to completing his degree has seen him declare and change his major three times at five different schools across Texas and Minnesota.

students figure out their college journey, he was able to figure out what he wanted for himself. "During those two years, I realized that working with young people was what I wanted to do for the rest of my



**"For 30 years, I had been battling myself," Christian said through tear-filled eyes. "I was battling to be my authentic self, to even be alive."**

After high school, Christian enrolled at Texas A&M University to study nursing because he felt called to help people. That changed quickly for Christian after taking a biology course. Even so, he was undeterred. And because he had an interest in the sciences, he chose to focus his studies on biotechnology. That did not work out either. Unsure of what his next step would be, Christian found himself in a pattern of being in and out of school—mostly due to financial issues and uncertainty of his purpose—until an email popped up in his inbox.

"The email itself was vague, but it was from someone I knew in high school who was recruiting for AmeriCorps," said Christian. "One thing led to another, and I had an interview, was accepted, and then placed." Christian ended up dedicating two years to serving students from low-income households at a charter high school as a college access coach. In his role, he helped students research and apply for scholarships and colleges and took them on college tours. "With AmeriCorps, I was able to help students like me who are the first in their family to go to college," Christian said.

The experience impacted him. As he helped

life," Christian shared. "Knowing that I was able to make a little difference in their lives changed the direction of my life."

Christian set his eyes on becoming a high school teacher and pursued his new dream. Internally, though, he was struggling. As a closeted gay man, he knew his family would not approve. Beyond his family, his Catholic upbringing hung over him. "For 30 years, I had been battling myself," Christian said through tear-filled eyes. "I was battling to be my authentic self, to even be alive." He turned to drugs to cope with severe depression and became addicted, dropping out of school and giving up on his dreams. Reflecting on that time of his life, Christian said, "I chose drugs over my education because I felt like I had no visible future."

After a four-year battle with addiction and a suicide attempt, he had had enough. Christian confided in trusted professionals and was referred to Pride Institute in Edina, Minn., a residential and outpatient program treatment center for substance use and addiction needs of the LGBTQ+ community. Christian knew he was making the best choice for himself even though it meant choosing to leave everything behind in Texas. It has now been more than two

years since he entered treatment. "Pride Institute helped me get sober and build a community," said Christian. "In Texas, I didn't know any gay people so it was a huge shock to me when I came to Minnesota. It hasn't been easy but I've been clean and sober since July 13, 2019."

Christian is also back in school. "I am so happy to be at Metropolitan State University," Christian said. "What drew me to Metro State was the affordability but what really caught my attention was the commitment to anti-racism. As soon as I saw that statement on the website site, it was a game-changer. I knew I wanted to go to school at Metro." Having been a Metro State student for one year now, Christian has since been a recipient of the Reginald and Frances Coakley Ames Scholarship and is determined to be a student in the School of Urban Education. At the time of the interview for this article, Christian shared enthusiastically, "I just turned in my application and spoke to the dean. I'm taking some urban education courses right now but I haven't officially been admitted into the program. I'm just waiting to hear back." Christian has been trying to graduate college since he started at 18. Now, at 31-years old, he is so close.

# President's Outstanding Graduates

## Spring 2021 Award Recipients

Each semester, academic advisors and members of the faculty nominate undergraduate and graduate students from their respective colleges to be recognized at the President's Outstanding Student Award reception. The celebration was held over Zoom in the spring of 2021.

**Fatima Ayour** of Savage was selected as the outstanding undergraduate student from the College of Management. Ayour double-majored in management information systems and business administration. As a first-generation, Moroccan immigrant college student, she credits her parents for their sacrifices for herself and her siblings as instrumental to her success.

**Bobbi Chavez** of Minneapolis was selected as the outstanding undergraduate student from the College of Liberal Arts. Chavez earned a bachelor of arts degree in philosophy and plans to continue her studies in the topics of Decolonial Philosophy, Third-Wave Feminism, and Race.

**Claire Drake** of Isanti was selected as the outstanding undergraduate student from the College of Individualized Studies. Drake graduated with a bachelor of arts degree, focusing in outdoor leadership and education. She plans to look for opportunities that allow her to connect others with the natural world through experiential and environmental

education. She especially hopes to find opportunities that focus on expanding outdoor leadership and environmental education with a unique understanding of communities that have been alienated and marginalized by the outdoor industry due to race, gender, sexuality, etc.

**Uche Franklin** of Burnsville was selected as the outstanding graduate student from the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. Franklin earned a doctorate of nursing practice degree.

**Victor Garrido** Hernandez of Saint Paul was selected as the outstanding student from the School of Urban Education. Hernandez will teach eighth grade social studies in the Saint Paul Public School System.

**Alyssa Maki** of Mahtomedi was selected as the outstanding undergraduate student from the College of Sciences. Maki graduated with a bachelor of science degree in cyber security and is pursuing a career as an IT analyst working with the information security team at Kimley-Horn.

**Tytiana Reid** of Saint Louis Park was selected as the outstanding graduate student for the College of Community Studies and Public Affairs. Reid earned a master of public administration degree.

**Caitlin Smith** of Bloomington was selected as the outstanding undergraduate student from the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. Smith chose Metropolitan State for its specific MANE-BSN program. The dual-admission program allowed her to complete the associate of science in nursing degree at Normandale Community College, and then transfer seamlessly to the baccalaureate level nursing courses at Metropolitan State.

**Carly Sturm** of Saint Paul was selected as the outstanding graduate student from the College of Management. Sturm earned a master of business administration degree with a concentration on management information systems and a graduate certificate in business analytics. She plans to return to Metropolitan State to complete the Master of Science in Management Information Systems program,

which prepares graduates for management, high-level work and potential leadership in management information systems and related fields, and general management in organizations where information technology is important.

**Sarah Zafar** of Oakdale was selected as the outstanding undergraduate student from the College of Community Studies and Public Affairs. Zafar earned a bachelor's degree in psychology.

*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.*

# Taking a Leap of Faith: Antavia Paredes

By Lucia Rivas '22

“I want to acknowledge the privilege it takes to make school your whole life, and I feel so lucky to have been able to do that,” says Antavia Paredes, an undergraduate chemistry student and Jason Carter Endowment in Science Scholarship awardee.

Antavia completed her Liberal Arts associate's degree at Minneapolis College, one class at a time, while working full time and caring for her son as a single mom. She knew continuing her education that way would take her a very long time but decided to wait for her son to start kindergarten before committing to a more demanding academic workload.

When a childhood friend shared her rewarding experience at Metro State, Antavia was convinced to give it a try by taking one course—precalculus. Antavia recalls, “I decided that if I did well in this class, I would allow myself to pursue a chemistry degree.” As a first-generation college student, she lacked confidence and mentorship and felt unsure about pursuing a career in STEM (Science,

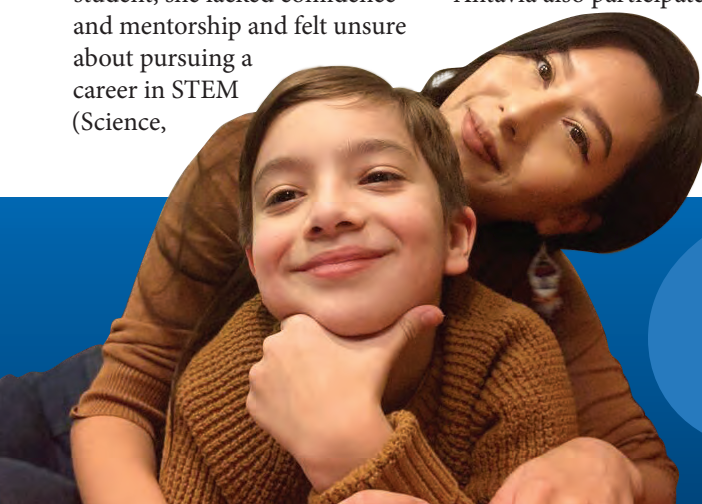
Technology, Engineering, and Math). However, with the support of faculty, staff, and peers, Antavia persisted and was able to succeed in the class. “Something that is obviously unique to Metro State is that it's an Asian Pacific Islander and Native-serving institution. And so, there are a lot more Native students like me here,” says Antavia.

“I took a leap of faith and enrolled full-time and ended up doing really well,” Antavia continues. “I didn't know how I was going to do that financially, so I applied for scholarships.” Her leap of faith was rewarded, and she earned a number of scholarships, as well as a student worker position at the Institute for Community Engagement and Scholarship (ICES) that allowed her to stay in school. In addition, Antavia gives credit to services at Metro State, such as the Student Parent Center for providing support and groceries through the Food for Thought Food Pantry.

Antavia also participated in the

Conservation Corps' Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers (IDEC) fellowship, a “college-to-careers pathway” for ‘underrepresented’ STEM students—women, racial and ethnic minorities, and individuals with disabilities—who are interested in pursuing environmental careers. She did not know what to expect when she applied, but after her interview, she was welcomed into the cohort of 16 selected from more than 100 applicants across the state. Antavia was provided with a scholarship and mentorship and later an internship at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. She says, “It was a full-time job, and they paid me really well. Fair pay is definitely a major piece in building educational equity.” She decided to stay and is now working as a hydro-geochemist, in charge of conducting literature reviews for research as well as collecting and analyzing groundwater samples in the lab. Antavia says, “My passion is at the intersection of environmental equity and making sure our water is safe for the next generation. And I love science, so I really love what I am doing.”

Antavia will graduate in December 2021 with a BS in chemistry and is applying to PhD programs in Water Resources Sciences. She is determined and says that if she does not get in this year, she will continue working and apply again next year. “My goal is to be a research scientist and use my own labor and love of science to create a more equitable relationship with our environments and with our people,” Antavia says. She plans to work to correct the disconnect between the science done in the lab and how the things researchers study affects real people outside the lab. To her, it is also important to see the representation of minorities in science to benefit all communities, enrich scientific knowledge, and create a better world for future generations.



**My passion is at the intersection of environmental equity and making sure our water is safe for the next generation. And I love science, so I really love what I am doing.**

# From You

## Darkness into Light

By Mark Gallagher '10

**M**y 21st birthday should have been one of the happiest days of my life—but it turned out to be the darkest. During the previous two school years, I had just begun my college odyssey with a pre-business administration curriculum at the University of Minnesota. The Vietnam War was heating up, and I had a low number in the draft lottery. I applied for and received a 2-S student deferment, so I could complete college before going into the military, but things didn't work out the way I had planned.

In the spring quarter of my sophomore year, I lost my 2-S student deferment and was drafted into the military, so I joined the Minnesota National Guard, which would enable me

to do military service and be in college at the same time.

On the night of July 20, 1972, my 21st birthday, I was at my first annual training at Camp Ripley, Minnesota, and was coming back to the company area at 10:15 p.m. after four hours of guard duty in the field. I was the passenger in a jeep that slid off a trail and crashed into a tree during a heavy rainstorm. I was thrown headfirst into that tree and sustained a severe brain injury that left me in a coma for four weeks.

When I awoke from the coma and slowly, ever so slowly, began my recovery, darkness hung out with me like a best friend, but every once in a while, I saw a few glimmers of

light. Just about every day of my initial recovery, I could see more and more good things happening. My life seemed bleak from day to day, but over time there were small increments of improvement.

After waking up from the coma, I had to relearn how to walk and talk, so I took three months of intense physical, occupational, and speech therapy at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

I couldn't wait to get out of the hospital and thought to myself, I don't need any help; I am a strong and tough 21-year old. At the end of November,

I finally got discharged from the hospital and said to myself, "Hey, I am free; I am finally free."

Then I realized that no, I was not free and fell not so much into darkness again but on a precipice with nowhere to turn. I didn't have a clue how to manage my recovery. All of the support systems I had at the VA were gone. There were no more physical therapists saying, "Come on, Mark, you can do it—just one more step." There were no more speech therapists encouraging me, "Come on, Mark, you can do it—just one more word."

So, I did what I had always

**When I awoke from the coma and slowly, ever so slowly, began my recovery, darkness hung out with me like a best friend, but every once in a while, I saw a few glimmers of light.**

## Driving Towards Equity

By Kristin Burgess '11

**T**he Center for Accessibility Resources (CAR) ensures that all programs, services, spaces and activities at Metropolitan State University are accessible. We recognize that disability is one of many identities that an individual may have and that these individuals are a vital and welcome part of our diverse university community. We also recognize that disability is a social and/or cultural construct that often creates barriers for people. We strive to eliminate or minimize these barriers and empower individuals by facilitating an interactive process and building universally accessible campuses and programs.

Depending on when you were at Metropolitan State University you may have known this office as Disability Services. In 2017, after surveying students, faculty, and staff, we made an intentional name change to the Center for Accessibility Resources and saw a double digit increase in the number of students meeting with us. This was

in part due to the fact that for whatever reason, they didn't identify with the word disability. Over the years we have seen consistent growth between 2-5% from one semester to the next. We work with students with all types of disabilities, apparent and hidden. In fact, just over 80% of the students we work with have hidden disabilities, such as depression, ADHD, anxiety, learning disabilities, etc. Through the process of individualized accommodations, we make sure that each student has the same level of access as any other student without disabilities. We believe, when barriers are not an issue, students have the opportunity to be successful in their academic endeavors.

We also work with faculty and staff to help them create more accessible learning environments through trainings on universal design, creating accessible documents and other media. The staff within CAR are a highly collaborative group and we work frequently with our partners in TRIO and the Center for Academic Excellence, Center for Faculty Development, Center for Online Learning and Information Technology Services.

**I graduated from Metropolitan State University in May of 2010 with a Professional Writing degree. My hope continues to brighten as I am exposed to more opportunities and make them part of my life.**

done when encountering a difficult problem; I put one foot in front of the other and just kept doing it until something happened. If it helped, I kept my focus. If it didn't help, I changed my focus. It was almost as simple as that.

But it wasn't quite as simple as just "mind over matter." I had to insert the recovery variable into the equation, and throughout the recovery process little bits of light would come into my dark and broken world. Sometimes I'd stumble and fall back to where I had come from. Frustration was my constant companion!

I wanted to get a college degree—that was my dream.

I got a job with Deluxe Check Printers (now Deluxe Corporation) in 1974, and by virtue of their extraordinary education program, I took 44 classes in 23 years to rebuild my life. Those classes were all taken at community and technical colleges because I could not do college-level work, and Deluxe paid for most of the classes. After each class, the light got a little brighter. I also took two memoir-writing classes at the Loft Literary Center through my next employer's education program and am in the process of getting my book-length memoir about my recovery from my brain injury ready for publication.

I graduated from Metropolitan State University in May of 2010 with a Professional Writing degree. My hope continues to brighten as I am exposed to more opportunities and make them part of my life. I have written and published 56 articles for two community newspapers since 2012, and I am not done yet.

Volunteering at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center and the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance (MBIA), where I have been a mentor to persons with brain injury, are wonderful additions to my life. Currently, I am on the MBIA Speaker's Bureau and also go to the State Capitol with other people from MBIA to advocate for my friends with brain injury every Tuesday when the legislature is in session (January-May). In 2016, I received the "Volunteer of the Year" award from MBIA.

I volunteer at a number of other organizations and was selected to be a member, as a

brain injury survivor, of the Legislative Sub-Committee of the State of Minnesota TBI Advisory Committee in January of 2017. That committee advises the Department of Human Services (DHS) on brain-injury issues. In November of 2018, I was selected to be a member of the Steering Committee for the Advisory Committee.

I have since resigned from the Minnesota TBI Advisory Committee and haven't volunteered very often at the VA or the MBIA because of the COVID-19 virus, but I still try to stay engaged with those organizations and volunteer in any way I can.

All this could not have happened without the support of my family, many, many people, and the awesome Grace of God.

## OUR TEAM IS COMPRISED OF:

**Director Kristin Burgess**

**Program Assistant and Accommodation Coordinator Michael Elliott**

**Office Specialist and Test Proctor Dave Johnson**

**Lead Sign Language Interpreter Julie Bauch**

**Sign Language Interpreter/Assistive Technology and Alternative Format Specialist Ezra Kesler**

**Sign Language Interpreter Kristen Norrgard**

**Sign Language Interpreter Laurissa Rector '21.**



**Top Row:** Kristin Burgess, Michael Elliott, Julie Bauch, **Middle Row:** Ezra Kesler, David Johnson, **Bottom Row:** Laurissa Rector, Kristen Norrgard

# News and Notes



**Jalilia Abdul-Brown** '20, Ramsey, College of Individualized Studies, received a Health Care Hero award in the Health Equity Champion category by the Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal for her work with Governor Walz to get COVID-19 vaccines to North Minneapolis and her partnership with the city of Minneapolis to test 1,000+ people for the coronavirus and distribute hundreds of flu shots.



**Tauna Allan** '01, West Valley, Utah, College of Liberal Arts, joined Utah State University, Uintah Basin as the new nursing academic advisor after a 12-year career as an Allied Health Instructor at Uintah Basin Technical College.



**Cassandra Altringer** '12, Killdeer, N.Dak., College of Nursing and Health Sciences, was featured in an article in The Dickinson Press for her high-quality work serving underserved communities at Coal Country Medical Clinic in North Dakota during the pandemic.



**Raouf Barboza** '20, Burnsville, College of Liberal Arts, won a Fulbright Scholarship to serve as an English Teaching Assistant in Cotonou, Benin, West Africa.

**Heidi Behrends Cerniwey** '98 Olympia, Wash., College of Individualized Studies, was hired as city manager of Ellensburg, Washington.



**Stephen Burgdorf** '10, Minneapolis, College of Liberal Arts, received a MA degree in English, Technical Communication at Minnesota State University, Mankato, and accepted a new role as a senior technical writer at Voya Financial.



**LaToya Jones Burrell** '17, Minneapolis, College of Management, joined Zinpro Corporation's Anderson Foundation as Executive Director and will manage activities of the Foundation and serve as Zinpro's global diversity, equity and inclusion champion. Burrell also published a book titled, *Be Bold: How to Prepare Your Heart and Mind for Racial Reconciliation*. Find *Be Bold* on Amazon.

**Michael Capecchi** '10, Minneapolis, College of Community Studies and Public Affairs, was named a 2019 Officer of the Year by Chief Axtell after receiving a Life Saving Award for providing aid to people who had been shot.



**John Lee Clark** '16, Hopkins, College of Individualized Studies, received a grant as one of 20 Disability Future Fellows around the country. The Disability Future Fellows is an initiative of Ford Foundation and Andrew W. Mellon Foundation designed to increase visibility of disabled creative practitioners. Lee Clark was also a recipient of the 2021 Bush Fellowship and will be working on leading a movement for the DeafBlind community.

**Gary Cunningham** '91, Washington D.C., College of Individualized Studies, was published in *Nonprofit Quarterly*. Cunningham's article, "Confronting Dominant Identities" sheds light on what it means to be a leader in both marginalized and dominant groups as an African American male and shares lessons he's learned.





**Jamaica DelMar '09**, Tucson, Ariz., College of Individualized Studies, accepted a new role at the University of Arizona, Tucson as Associate Professor and Director of Project SOAR, a service-learning experience that places 100+ undergraduate mentors in under-resourced middle schools. Previously, DelMar held the position of academic advisor in the College of Management at Metro State.



**Jeremiah Ellis '20**, Saint Paul, College of Community Studies and Public Affairs, received the 2020 Virginia B. Kunz Award for exceptional historical research and writing for his article St. Paul's Distinct Leadership Tradition: A Century of the Sterling Club published by the Ramsey County Historical Society. Ellis wrote the story of the Minnesota African American men (and women) behind the

Sterling Club, who worked alongside civic leaders to highlight and address racist practices, helped heal a community torn apart by the construction of the interstate and serve as a haven from discrimination.



**Melissa Flod '17**, Saint Paul, College of Management, was recognized as the 2020 Saint Paul Police Department's Civilian of the Year by Chief Axtell. Prior to her work as an analyst for SPPD, Flod was an Army intelligence analyst. In 2020, Flod was also named Analyst of the Year by the Minnesota Association of Criminal Intelligence Analysts.



**Laura Gilbert '78**, Saint Paul, College of Individualized Studies, released her sixth book *Enough: A Retirement Life That Works for Me*. *Enough* offers a down-to-earth path for those who fall short of the oft-cited million-dollar mark for a

financially secure retirement. Find *Enough* on Amazon.

**Jill Hillebregt '18**, Elk River, College of Community Studies and Public Affairs, has been participating on the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) Onboarding workgroup and DHS' Employee Vision Statement workgroup to create DHS' first ever Employee Vision Statement. In 2020, Hillebregt joined the Anoka County Community Action Program Board of Directors and was a subject matter and policy expert for DHS' award winning report on Deep Poverty.



**Munira Maalim Isaq '19**, Brooklyn Park, College of Nursing and Health Sciences, received the Park Nicollet Methodist Hospital 2021 Nurse of Excellence Award.

**Kjersten Jaeb '11**, Minneapolis, College of Management, was recognized as the Building Owners and Managers Association International's (BOMA) 2021 Senior Property Management Professional of the Year.



**Brandon Jones '11**, Woodbury, College of Community Studies and Public Affairs, a practicing psychotherapist, consultant and Metro State Community Faculty was profiled in PACES (Positive and Adverse Childhood Experiences) Connection, a social network that recognizes the impact of a wide variety of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in shaping adult behavior and health. The piece chronicled Jones' traumatic childhood, the impact the CDC-Kaiser Permanente ACEs Study had on his own health and outlook on life, and how he serves those in need today.

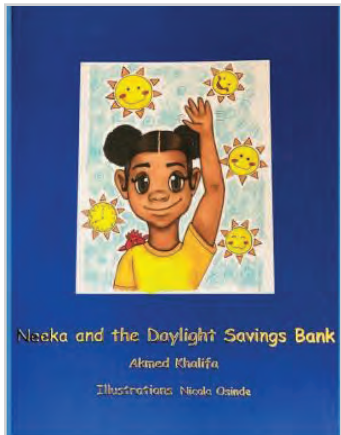


**Tameka Jones '14**, South Saint Paul, College of Individualized Studies, owner of Lip Esteem, a plant-based and gluten and cruelty-free lipstick and lip care online shop, was selected by Deluxe Corporation as one of six Minneapolis-Saint

Paul Black-owned businesses featured in its small business makeover TV series, “Small Business Revolution.”



**Dennis Kelly** '75, Saint Paul, College of Individualized Studies, released a new novel titled *A Comedian Walks into a Funeral Home*. In *A Comedian Walks into a Funeral Home*, “an inner-city funeral home is the last stop for a destitute, unclaimed female murder victim and a failed comedian who inexplicably feels compelled to tell her story.” Find Kelly’s novel on Amazon.



**Akmed Khalifa** '08, Homestead, Pa., College

of Individualized Studies, published a children’s book that supports children in acquiring phonemic awareness titled *Naeka and the Daylight Savings Bank* about a young African American girl and her adventure to find the Daylight Savings Bank.



**Sandra Kilde** '76, Palisade, College of Individualized Studies, received the Agatha Hodgins Award by the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology.



**Ashley Lauren** '11, Minneapolis, College of Individualized Studies, owner and designer of Diva Rags, an online boutique specializing in couture scarves, accessories and clothing, was featured in the Spokesman Recorder’s Black Business Spotlight. Find Diva Rags at [divarags.com](http://divarags.com).

**Jim Lukaszewski** '74, Bloomington, College of

Individualized Studies, released a new book titled, *The Decency Code: The Leader’s Path to Building Integrity and Trust*. Find Lukaszewski’s book on Amazon.



**Tou SaiKo Lee** '18, Saint Paul, College of Liberal Arts, received the 2021 Minnesota TRIO Achiever Award. The award is given to outstanding TRIO alumni who have achieved a high level of success in their current field of work or study. Lee was also accepted to University of Wisconsin-Madison for the MA in Southeast Asian Studies with a Hmong language, culture and arts concentration.

**Nancy Lyons** '96, Minneapolis, College of Liberal Arts, was profiled in *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal*. The article highlights Lyons’ 2016 Minnesota Technology Diversity Pledge (launched through her company, Clockwork, an interactive design and technology agency) and her plans to reimagine what it looks like.

**Jason Maher** '05, Portland, Ore., College of Liberal Arts, accepted a position as Registrar at Reed College in Portland, Ore.



**Pamela Mercado Michelli** '20, Maple Grove, College of Community Studies and Public Affairs, completed her master’s degree and published a children’s book titled, *Daniela y Mateo viajan a Puerto Rico* (Daniela and Mateo travel to Puerto Rico), a children’s book celebrating family and culture.



**Lora Patterson** '89, Spencer, Okla., College of Individualized Studies, published a book titled, *Are You Being Less Than Honest with Yourself?* Find Patterson’s book on Amazon.

**Sarah Reynolds** '18, Morton, College of Individualized Studies, founded Child’s Place, new nonprofit children’s

advocacy center (CAC) that provides services to children who are victims of crime or witnesses significant violence.



**Jeanette Rupert '18**, Minneapolis, College of Nursing and Health Sciences, received a Health Care Hero award in the Health Equity Champion category by the Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal for her work as a COVID-19 ICU nurse at Methodist Hospital and community nonprofit serving South Minneapolis, 612 MASH. Rupert was also honored by the Minnesota Twins and received a trip to the All-Star Game in Denver where she was also recognized by Major League Baseball.



**Jessica Seibert '05**, Deerwood, College of Individualized Studies, was accepted into the University of Minnesota Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs Policy Fellows

program for 2020-2021. The program is one of the country's most respected public affairs leadership experiences for emerging and mid-career professionals.



**Susan Solomon '08**, Saint Paul, College of Liberal Arts, was a recipient of the 2021 Art Purchase Award for her piece titled, Magdalena. Solomon is a freelance painter whose work has been shown in many art venues, including Theatre in the Round and the Phipps Center for the Arts. Solomon's work will be shown at the Hutchinson Center for the Arts in Fall 2021.



**Rubén Vázquez-Ruiz '00**, Saint Paul, College of Liberal Arts, accepted a new role as Director of Equity and Inclusion at Minnesota Community Care and has since been promoted to Vice President of Equity, People, and Culture.

**Virginia "Ginny" Arthur '17** (honorary alum), Saint Paul, was honored in Pollen Midwest's 50 Over 50 list which recognizes Minnesotans over the age of 50 who have made significant contributions and achievements in their communities. President Arthur was recognized for her leadership of Metro State.



**Kate Barr '82**, Saint Paul, College of Individualized Studies, was honored in Pollen Midwest's 50 Over 50 list which recognizes Minnesotans over the age of 50 who have made significant contributions and achievements in their communities. Barr was recognized for her work in the nonprofit sector as President and CEO of Propel Nonprofits.



**Jacklyn Milton '06**, Saint Paul, School of Urban Education, was honored in Pollen Midwest's 50 Over 50 list which recognizes Minnesotans

over the age of 50 who have made significant contributions and achievements in their communities. Milton was recognized for her work in the community as a literary leader.

## IN MEMORIAM

Donna Bedin-McCollor '90, Robbinsdale, College of Management

Donald Belzer '77, Minneapolis, College of Individualized Studies

John Bernhagan '75, Hutchinson, College of Individualized Studies

Barbara Berscheid '87, Waite Park, College of Nursing and Health Sciences

Carolyn Bockelman '84, Mound, College of Individualized Studies

Ann Bushnell '03, Stillwater, College of Individualized Studies

Michael Bross '76, Titusville, Fla., College of Individualized Studies

Lucas Campbell '19, Apple Valley, College of Management

Dean Chapman '92, Saint Paul, College of Individualized Studies

Emily Devine '79, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, College of Individualized Studies

Mary Ernst '90, Shakopee, College of Management

Theresa Frost '77, Minneapolis, College of Individualized Studies

Michele Gemmel '87, Punta Gorda, Fla., College of Individualized Studies

Irene Gomez-Bethke '88, Saint Paul, College of Individualized Studies

Shirley Graham '99, Saint Paul, College of Liberal Arts

Beverly Handy '78, Saint Paul, College of Individualized Studies

Jean Hart '79, Saint Paul, College of Individualized Studies

Mary Rischmiller Holt '86, Eden Prairie, College of Individualized Studies

Marshelle Hunt '87, Webster, Wis., College of Individualized Studies

Thomas Jacobson '86, Saint Bonifacius, College of Individualized Studies

KuoDi Jian, Woodbury, faculty, Computer Science and Cybersecurity

Susan Johnson '97, Richfield, College of Individualized Studies

Andrew McBride, II '90, Midland, Ga., College of Individualized Studies

Miriam Meyers, Minneapolis, retired Metro State employee

David Mielke '95, Hopkins, College of Management

Doris Mulholland '87, Rochester, College of Individualized Studies

Eleanor Michelson '76, Buffalo Lake, College of Individualized Studies

Ardelle Osnes '76, Northwood, Iowa, College of Individualized Studies

Thomas Pletcher '91, Minneapolis, College of Individualized Studies

Manuel Rivera '78, Saint Paul, College of Individualized Studies

Keith Rohde '11, Maple Grove, College of Sciences

Barbara Schwientek '86, Monticello, College of Individualized Studies

Patrick Seka '18, New Hope, College of Individualized Studies

Joycelyn Shingobe '98, Garrison, College of

Individualized Studies

Elizabeth Shippee, Saint Paul, retired Metro State employee

Jerry Showalter '02, Saint Paul, College of Individualized Studies

Steve Steingruebl '16, Baldwin, Wis., College of Community Studies and Public Affairs

Michael Utecht '74, Hugo, College of Individualized Studies

Robert Vogt Jr. '79, Cottage Grove, College of Individualized Studies

Jane Vohs '90, Forest Lake, College of Individualized Studies

Elaine Current Wallin '89, Ham Lake, College of Individualized Studies

Elizabeth Witt '83, Mankato, College of Individualized Studies

Lindsey Wuollet-Anderson '14, Saint Paul, College of Community Studies and Public Affairs



# From the Director .....



**I**t is a funny thing to be older than the university from which you graduated. I had already reached the ripe old age of four years old when Metro State was approved by the legislature. For much of its history, Metro State graduates have carried more life experience than the university itself. It might be what makes Metro State so unique. The students and the university have learned from each other.

To those unfamiliar with Metro State, the word university might conjure up an image of a vine-covered brick building, marble columns, and a sweeping staircase. When I close my eyes and picture Metro State, I think about the people I have met along the way. I think about Tracy, who sat next to me in Exploring Functions and picked me up at my workplace every Tuesday and Thursday, so I didn't have to take the bus to Energy Park in the middle of the day. I think about our professor in that class, Don James, who would let us take and re-take quizzes because he believed that it didn't matter when you learned; it mattered that you learned. Thinking about Tracy and Don always brings a warm smile to my face. I imagine each of you reading this holds a similar feeling for someone at Metro State.

I hope you can take some time to listen to the complete recordings from the oral history project. The stories of Metro State and our

shared history make me proud to be a part of this community. I encourage you to share your Metro State experience with the people in your family and community.

As our university turns 50, we look forward to the next 50 years, preparing to serve the needs of the next generations of students. As a staff member, I see the hope and aspiration of our students mirrored in my colleagues. In our Metro State community, the future is bright and full of promise.

With Metro State Pride,  
Kristine Hansen '07

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristine Hansen".

Alumni Relations Director



# Faculty Spotlight—Daryl Parks

By Matthew Spillum '06

Through the screen of our zoom interview, Professor Daryl Parks exudes a laid-back, engaging energy, though he admits that life over the last year and a half has been a struggle at times: “It was emotionally and mentally difficult to be a raging extrovert trapped at home. With too much exercise and a supporting family, I was able to stay afloat.”

Asked how he found himself at Metropolitan State University, Daryl cites the diverse, non-traditional student body, as well as his own Metro-like story. “I was a non-traditional student starting college at age 25,” he says. “Prior to that, I’d worked in factories, nightclubs, basically every labor job you could do.” Following his studies at what is now Century College and the University of Minnesota, he spent around eight years teaching in urban high schools before returning to the University of Minnesota to complete his PhD. When Metro State posted its first vacancy for an English education professor, Daryl “sent out one application, to Metro State, which was 15 minutes from home—not the usual way things go in academics.”

Daryl is emphatic when asked if his experience in the classroom lives up to his vision when he started: “The first class I taught at Metro State had a 17-year-old student and a 71-year-old student. I’m most comfortable in diverse environments, and my classrooms are overwhelmingly diverse in terms of BIPOC students, LGBTQ students, older students, veteran students, conservative and progressive students. Just every walk of life is present in my classroom so, yes, it’s more than exceeded my expectations.”

Aside from his work as an instructor, Daryl also directs the Center for Faculty Development (CFD). While maintaining the center’s usual offerings of conferences and workshops for community and resident faculty, his focus has been leveraging the center’s potential for informal connection and relationship building. “I’m really interested in the ways in which the CFD can become a hub, drawing together all the resources around the university and channeling them in a focused way in support of the needs of both community faculty and resident faculty.”

**I was a non-traditional student starting college at age 25,” he says. “Prior to that, I’d worked in factories, nightclubs, basically every labor job you could do.**

In addition to building interpersonal bridges between “what are, to some extent, siloed parts of the university,” he is working to empower faculty to create their own ways of collaborating and supporting each other’s professional development. “This last year we created something called the CFD collaboration grant,” says Daryl. “Under this model, instead of us thinking that we know what everybody needs or wants, we basically say ‘here’s some of our budget, what do you need or want that is utterly consistent with the direction the CFD is going, which by extension is consistent with the way the university, strategic plan is going?’ We’re really trying to empower people at a grassroots level in terms of what they need. So, for example we distributed grants related to people collecting data on how students were doing during the pandemic to figure out how to better serve them online, we supported urban education by bringing international keynote speaker to establish a workshop, and many others.”

Daryl’s desire to expand access and empower others doesn’t stop at the classroom or faculty development level either. As a person with decades of experience working with community organizations and nonprofits, he saw more opportunities for connection when Metropolitan State was named an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI). “For years I served on the board of Hmong American Partnership, which is on the east side of Saint Paul,” Daryl says. “When Metro State became the only four-year institution in the Minnesota State system to receive this grant, it was really consistent with my past interests and passions. As part of this work, the CFD hopes to support faculty growth in understanding the needs of our Asian American, Native Pacific Islander students, incorporating cultural

.....

## The first class I taught at Metro State had a 17-year-old student and a 71-year-old student

elements into curriculum, into assessments, and expanding the voices of the students at Metro State. The other part of the grant that I'm working on is with (Career Center Director) Bill Baldus in career readiness. Like many of our students, our AANAPI students are not always experienced at connecting the dots between their degree completion and career opportunities. So, we're trying to develop ways to connect curriculum and career readiness through this grant."

Daryl sees the fruits of this work in Metro State's alumni, and hopes to lean on their experiences and wisdom to guide future efforts to improve student service. "One of the great things about alumni, is that they come into their own. When they were students, they may have had perspectives and opinions that they weren't comfortable sharing. But now that they've emerged in the workplace, 'they grown,' as we say. It may be that they're able to share the perspectives that could help us grow and improve that they were unwilling to share in the past. So, I would love to see, in relation to the AANAPISI grant for example, some of our students who have gone on to great lives and careers come back and help inform us about ways that we can better serve their younger selves."





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**MINNESOTA STATE**

*Metropolitan State University,  
A member of Minnesota State*



*Hoarfrost in Bloom*  
Pat Sullivan '15  
Photograph, December 2013