

Metropolitan State University

buzz

FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

FALL 2019 VOLUME 12, NO. 1

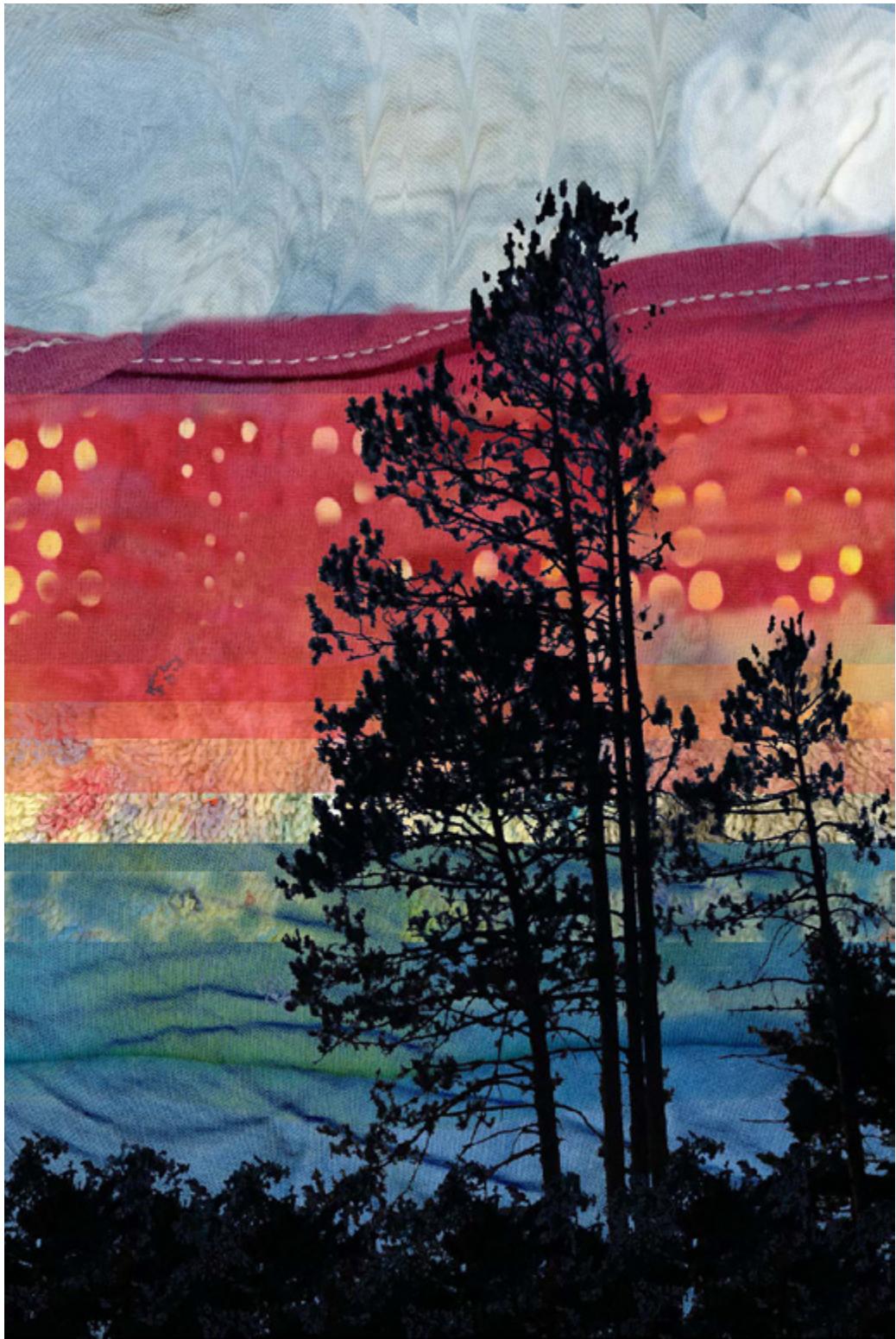
"MOST TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS
PERPETUATE WHITE SUPREMACY."

"URBAN ED IS A DIFFERENT PROGRAM; WE
SET OUT TO DISMANTLE THAT SYSTEM."

RENÉ ANTROP-GONZÁLES
DEAN, SCHOOL OF URBAN EDUCATION

Metropolitan
State University





Trees
Jazlyn Erickson '19
digital inkjet print

Office Hours

KNOCK



Greetings! I am excited to introduce this issue of *buzz*, which lifts up the aspiration, “Be the Change.” Metropolitan State is being enriched through positive change in many forms.

At this year’s convocation, our all campus opening of the academic year, I had the privilege of welcoming over 70 new colleagues to the university community. They bring a variety of strengths and are highly motivated to serve our students and their communities over the months ahead. I know they will be agents of meaningful change, for the university and for the students they will encounter.

Your university is changing, in powerful ways! My convocation address introduced Metropolitan State’s new strategic plan and invited the 300 members of our faculty and staff in attendance to join in the new work it lays out for all of us. This plan challenges us to set new standards for student-centered support that enables learners from diverse backgrounds to thrive and complete their chosen programs. We commit to expanding the role of the high-impact educational practices, and to implementing innovative learning environments that engage students in transformative growth.

Our commitment to fostering a culture of respect, equity, and inclusion permeates our plans. Our goals explicitly include dismantling bias and erasing achievement gaps, so all students can realize their potential and begin fulfilling their life goals.

We can only achieve these goals with community support. We are so grateful for our strong partnerships across the region and our state. Such collaborations enhance students’ learning experiences, and strengthen their university. We are also focused on building sustainable systems to maximize our effectiveness and to assure that our student support programs are best-in-class.

Metropolitan State’s agents of change include our colleges, faculty, and alumni, as you will see in this issue. For example, in addition to preparing gifted classroom teachers, our School of Urban Education has undertaken the long-term work of building strong partnerships to bring about systemic change, so that urban schoolchildren can be taught by skilled members of their own communities.

Professor James Densley was honored this year as a University Scholar, in recognition of his significant record of effective teaching and timely and relevant scholarship that helps our students and community understand how to improve policing and our criminal justice system. By directing attention to national and international best practices, he is bringing change to an area of great concern to our society.

As you will see, alumnus Alan Lessik ‘88 is changing societal understanding through his writing and changing students’ trajectories through the university by supporting vital scholarships.

I am proud of the significant financial support from our own faculty and staff which answers so many student needs. I am equally grateful for growth in the ranks of our President’s Circle donors—47 percent in two years! These alumni and friends are building something valuable and lasting, through the contributions our students will make to the prosperous and civically engaged communities that our future requires.

I invite you to join me, my colleagues, and your fellow alumni in the adventure of building Minnesota’s future, one amazing student at a time! This is a great year to be the change you wish to see!

Thank you so much.

Virginia Arthur

Virginia “Ginny” Arthur, JD
President

TABLE OF CONTENTS

News	6
News@Metro	
The Big Picture	10
Morphology	
Spotlight	12
The School of Urban Education	
Leading the Way	16
Alan Lessik '88	
Metro Matters	18
Why the Metro Fund Matters	
Student Success	19
Alyssa Perry	
Outstanding Graduates	20
Spring 2019 Award Recipients	
Big Questions	23
Art Alexander III '00	
Community	24
Retaining Faculty of Color	
Out and About	26
News and Notes	28
Faculty Profile	30
James Densley—School of Law Enforcement	
Arts@Metro	32
From the Director	34
Calendar	35

VOLUME 12 NUMBER 1 FALL 2019

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

Executive Editor
Rita Dibble
Vice President for University Advancement,
Foundation Executive Director

Managing Editor
Kristine Hansen '07
Alumni Relations Director

Editor
Emily Seddon
Development Director

Design and Layout
Diane DeRosier '05

Associate Editor
Matthew Spillum '06

Editorial Assistant
Noriko Ramberg

Correspondence should be sent to:
Alumni Relations, Metropolitan State University
700 East Seventh Street
Saint Paul, MN 55106-5000
Phone: 651-793-1808
e-mail: alumni.relations@metrostate.edu

An equal opportunity educator

Alumni Association

It's an exciting time to be an alum of Metropolitan State University. We are part of a unique network of more than 40,000 lifelong learners who share experiences of engaging in meaningful classroom conversations, embracing differing viewpoints, developing cultural competencies, and preparing for our futures at this comprehensive, urban university located in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Whether you just walked across the stage with diploma in hand a few months ago, or have been part of the Metropolitan State University Alumni Association for many years, we invite you to join the Alumni Board, as well as university faculty, staff, and students as we prepare to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our alma mater. That's right, unlike many colleges and universities across America who are just starting to offer adult-friendly education, Metropolitan State University has been dedicated to serving working adults since 1971.

This important milestone in the university's history provides us with an opportunity to come together to reflect on the richness of the university's past, to celebrate the lives that have been transformed here, and to imagine what the next fifty years will bring.

Over the course of the year, President Arthur will host a series of listening sessions throughout the Twin Cities metro

area and greater Minnesota called "50 Conversations". These interactive discussions are intended to provide you with a platform to share your story, your vision for the university's future, and your ideas for the 50th anniversary celebration. Please join us. We want to hear your story, and we want your help planning celebratory activities that will engage and inspire students, faculty, staff, alumni, and members of surrounding communities.

We are also growing the Alumni Board as we prepare for this momentous event and continue to support the university's mission. If you're passionate about Metropolitan State University and engaging with fellow alumni, please consider volunteering your time with us. It's a fun group and an exciting time to get involved.

We look forward to seeing you on campus, at an upcoming alumni event, or in one of the "50 Conversations" happening in various locations throughout the year.

In it together,



Carmen Shields '15
President, Alumni Association Board

If you are interested in hosting one of the "50 Conversations" or learning more about serving on the Alumni Board or a committee, email our Alumni Relations Office at alumni.relations@metrostate.edu.



Not present: Sandy Best '88, Carmen Shields '15

2019-2020
Alumni Board members
Sandy Best '88
Steve Campos '17
Ron Edlund '04
Isaac Muhammad '12
Sam Mwangi '01
Lyna Nyamwaya '09
Scott Pilgram '10
Carmen Shields '15
Andrea Steen '11
Nancy Uden '88
Shanasha Whitson '00

Studio Arts faculty member awarded McKnight Fellowship for Visual Artists

by Robert Boos

Community faculty member Leslie Barlow was named a recipient of the 2019 McKnight Fellowship for Visual Artists. She is one of six artists in the Twin Cities to be recognized with the award, announced by the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) on behalf of the McKnight Foundation.

"It's an honor to be acknowledged in this way, and I look forward to these next two years of the fellowship and everything that it may bring," Barlow says. She teaches in the Studio Arts program in the School of Communication, Writing, and the Arts, College of Liberal Arts at Metropolitan State University.

Barlow's paintings share stories through portraiture that explore the politics of representation, identity, otherness, and racial constructs. Barlow's work, which can be viewed on her website lesliebarlowartist.com, has been exhibited both locally and nationally, and been featured in *Vice*, *Huffington Post*, *Hyperallergic*, and *Shades of Noir*.

She has received two Minnesota State Arts Board Grants and has been commissioned for several large site-specific projects including work for the Hennepin County Medical Center and the TCO Performance Center Vikings facility. Barlow teaches at Metropolitan State University, University of Minnesota, Juxtaposition Arts, and collaborates with Public Functionary to lead the new emerging artist project Studio 400.

Barlow is also an active member on the leadership team of MidWest Mixed, an organization that works to expand our understanding of race and identity through educational outreach, arts engagement, and a biennial conference.

The McKnight Fellowships for Visual Artists identifies and supports outstanding mid-career Minnesota artists. The fellowships provide recipients with \$25,000 stipends, public recognition, professional encouragement from national visiting critics, and an opportunity to participate in a speaker series. The fellowships are funded by a grant from the McKnight Foundation and administered by MCAD.

The 2019 McKnight fellows were selected from a group of 210 applicants by a panel of arts professionals of varying backgrounds whose careers intersect with the visual arts in different ways. This year's jurors were Sama Alshaibi, professor and co-chair of photography, video, and imaging at the University of Arizona, Tucson; Evan Garza, independent curator based in Texas (previously curator of public art at Rice University); Amanda Hunt, director of education and senior curator of programs at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

The McKnight Artist Fellowship Program is one of the oldest and largest of its kind in the country. Established in 1981, the fellowship program provides annual, unrestricted cash awards to outstanding mid-career Minnesota artists

in ten areas, totaling nearly \$1 million each year. Nonprofit arts organizations oversee the administration of the fellowships and structure their own programs to respond to the unique opportunities and challenges of different creative disciplines.



Associate Professor Andrew Carlson's research supports UNICEF USA

by Robert Boos

Andrew Carlson, associate professor in Metropolitan State University's School of Communication, Writing and the Arts, is supporting the mission of the United States Fund for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF USA) with research on children's rights and wellbeing in the United States. The research and analysis team, led by Rain Barrel Communications, a New York-based communication consulting organization, has recently completed work on an analytic report with recommendations for UNICEF USA's advocacy and engagement work in the United States. The organization plans to publish parts of the report later this year at www.unicefusa.org/.



The research and report will provide UNICEF USA with an analysis of children's wellbeing across five thematic areas: health and nutrition, education, protection, clean environments, and equity. The resulting advocacy and engagement strategies that will be implemented by UNICEF USA will improve the wellbeing of children and provide support for parents, caregivers, and others who are responsible for fulfilling the rights of children.

The United States ranks 37th of 41 industrialized countries in fulfillment of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals related to the wellbeing of children. Across multiple indicators of child wellbeing, including poverty, food security, birthweight, vaccination rates, infant mortality, and others, the United States ranks below the majority of industrialized countries.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to support an organization like UNICEF USA with research and analysis on the situation of children in the United States," Carlson says. "The report will have far reaching consequences for the organization as it determines how to expand its advocacy

and engagement in the United States, a country in which it was previously known mainly as a fundraiser. The report has identified several areas in which UNICEF USA will be able to contribute to children's well-being in the United States. I have also appreciated the support of my colleagues at Metropolitan State, who have supported me in my work with UNICEF USA and on several other global projects related to children's rights and wellbeing."

Carlson is an associate professor of communication at Metropolitan State University, where he has taught for eight years. His area of expertise is communication for development, also known as C4D.

"Dr. Carlson's work will contribute to the wellbeing of children in the United States. Metropolitan State has a deep commitment to partnering with the community, and in this case, we can partner with UNICEF USA for the betterment of a national community," says Craig Hansen, dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Metropolitan State University. "Dr. Carlson takes these experiences and brings them to the classroom, where his students experience insight. This kind of work benefits everyone."

Carlson's research contribution is part of a global UNICEF effort to strengthen and recognize engagement of UNICEF country programs on issue that affect children in their countries. The research offers UNICEF USA a data-driven approach to focus key domestic advocacy priorities and inform strategy around legislative advocacy campaigns, grassroots volunteer engagement, strategic partnerships and marketing efforts. It will help to further align advocacy and fundraising efforts around UNICEF global priorities, and strengthen the ability to deliver results for children, as outlined in the vision of UNICEF UNITE:

To reach a day when children in the United States and around the world can be healthy, learn, play and be empowered to speak up and take action to build the world they want.

For more information about this project or UNICEF USA's work and this project, please contact Dr. Andrew Carlson at andrew.carlson@metrostate.edu. Learn more at his website, professorcarlson.net.

"Dr. Carlson takes these experiences and brings them to the classroom, where his students experience insight."

Can we count you among Metro State's supporters on Give to the Max Day?

On November 14th, an annual day of philanthropy, Minnesotans and people who care about Minnesota's future will give generously. Please join your fellow alumni, faculty, staff, and friends to Give to the Max for Metropolitan State University Foundation.

Maximize your impact by giving today! For every alum who makes a gift before the end of the year, the Metropolitan State University Foundation Trustees will give an extra \$50!

You can easily give online at www.metrostate.edu/give/give-now. You can also send your

gift to Metropolitan State University Foundation,
700 East Seventh Street, Saint Paul, MN 55106.

Let us know if you'll be giving to the Metro Fund, which supports the areas of greatest need on campus, or the SAFE (Student Assistance For Emergencies) Fund to help a student through a crisis.

Thank you for your support!



Meeting student need beyond the classroom

By Lucia Rivas

"I believe I go to the best university in the world because they care about my everyday life, not just my life while I am on campus," shared Yolanda Olmo. Metro State students are post-traditional learners. They often juggle multiple obligations, including work and family, in addition to paying for tuition, childcare, transportation, utilities, and mortgage or rent. For students like Yolanda, an unexpected life event such as a medical issue, car repair or loss of a job could easily jeopardize their ability to stay in school.

Since 2008, Metropolitan State has offered emergency grants to help students weather a crisis. DASH Emergency Grants, the Random Acts of Kindness Fund supported by the Kopp Family Foundation, and the Roger and Nancy McCabe Military Fund have all provided critical support for students facing financial challenges.

In the last two years, the DASH Emergency Grant program awarded over \$397,000 to 409 students. In some cases, emergency grants have prevented students from leaving school completely due to a financial emergency. Marie Nleme, a DASH Grant recipient, said "I can feel a different and fresh commitment to my education after receiving the grant. I am now able to offer pointed focus and attention to my schoolwork without being adversely distracted by my financial hardship."

The DASH Emergency Grant program ended this year, but thanks to a thoughtful gift left by an alumnus in his estate plans, Metro State has built on its success and launched the Student Assistance for Emergencies (SAFE) Fund. Associate Provost Roberta Anderson '16 said, "It is critical that we are able to offer emergency grants to both undergraduate and graduate students. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we are finally able to expand eligibility for emergency assistance this year." Alumni and supporters can give to emergency grant funds by designating their support for the SAFE Fund, Random Acts of Kindness Fund, or McCabe Military Fund.

Lucia Rivas is a student in the College of Community Studies and Public Affairs.

President Arthur recognized by the Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal

By Emily Seddon

The *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* recognized President Ginny Arthur '17 as one of the Twin Cities exceptional women in business for her leadership of Metropolitan State University, an anchor-institution that employs 1,100 faculty and staff across four Twin Cities locations. The Business Journal recognizes that President Arthur's vision for the university addresses changes and gaps in the state workforce and includes historically overlooked populations in creating solutions for the future. Her leadership to improve access and the student experience also makes a difference in the lives of our students and their families.

Under President Arthur's leadership, Metro State has:

- Been federally recognized as an Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American minority serving institution.
- Improved its rank on CollegeNet's Social Mobility Index, moving into the top two percent of colleges and universities nationwide that help low-income students achieve higher incomes through their education.

President Arthur is also a leader in higher education nationally. She serves on the Board of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.



President Ginny Arthur '17, Dr. Reatha Clark-King

The Big Picture

Morphology

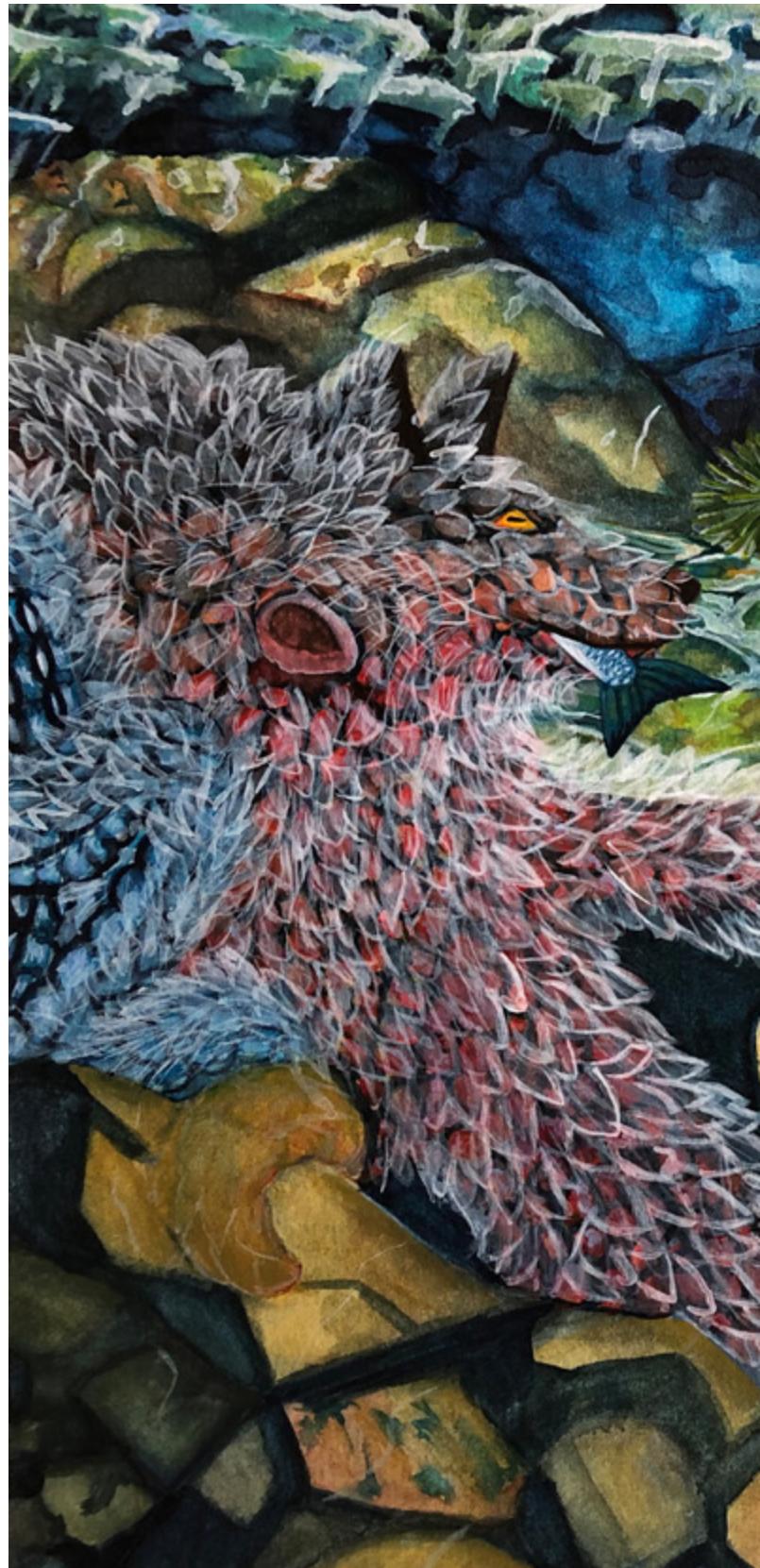
By Cindy Harley and Amy Sands

In this collaboration, ARTS 306 Intermediate Drawing students were paired with BIO 322 Comparative Physiology students to research two animals and morph them into a new creature. In this process, students learned about the anatomy, physiology, and habitats of each animal and then made inferences about how the morphed animal would appear. Students collaboratively decided the visual and physiological adaptations present to create these drawings and paired writings. Adaptations of each animal to their habitat had to be defended using physiological theory and primary literature while visually representing them in the drawings.

This project expanded the way students approached their learning. They had to communicate effectively with someone outside of their discipline. The biology students found that working with the art students allowed them to think more openly and creatively about animal adaptations. The art students were exposed to structural components that influence the external appearance of the animals. In addition, this collaboration required critical thinking that allowed the pairs to visualize and articulate the habitat and apply scientific knowledge to an invented space.

Cindy Harley is an assistant professor of Biology in the College of Sciences.

Amy Sands is an assistant professor of Studio Arts in the College of Liberal Arts.



Wolf Octopus
Kong Bla



Spotlight—The School of Urban Education

Changing Our Schools

By Matthew Spillum '06

Metropolitan State University's School of Urban Education (UED) is at the forefront of bringing schools in the Twin Cities the diverse educators needed to improve students' educational outcomes. As the most diverse teacher education unit in Minnesota, UED is succeeding at its legislative mandate to have more than half its student body identifying as being of color, having first met that threshold in 2015. Considering the lack of a full-time recruiter, this is impressive, says UED Field Experience Director Eric Fotsch: "We have no recruiter, but we have the highest percentage of students of color in the state, and that's just word of mouth. Individuals feel comfortable at Metro State, and that they can grow, so we have Hmong, Latinx, American Indian, Somali, and African-American students coming to us because they can learn from us and they are not going to be the tokenized 'victory story' that one person that we get through."

Minnesota has often been cited as an exemplar in education, however recent years have illustrated that the benefits of the state's schools are unequally distributed. According to the Minnesota Department of Education's 2018 data, while graduation rates among all racial/ethnic groups improved over a five-year period, large gaps remained between white students and nearly all other racial groups. Metropolitan State's School of Urban Education, as mandated by the state and envisioned by its members, seeks to address that gap directly, by training and equipping educators with tools to "be an effective teacher-activist, who works for and with marginalized communities," according to UED Dean René Antrop-González.

Antrop-González notes that this work is a critical part of UED's mission. "Structures don't happen by accident. I would argue that most teacher education programs reproduce white supremacy. Urban Ed is a different program; we set out to dismantle that system." Fotsch concurs, adding that, "We are unabashed, when we talk about our program, about white privilege, about institutional racism, about absent narratives and Eurocentric teaching that is out there."

One of the primary ways that UED seeks to address those issues is through what Fotsch refers to as an asset-based outlook: "urban education reaches every student where they are at, and it is an asset-based philosophy, meaning that every student comes with different life experiences, whether they are from another country or have another language... some schools might perceive those traits as a negative, but from an asset perspective, you would say that is a positive. You have another culture, another language, you have so much more to share and add to our classroom community." The focus on diversity is also felt by those in the program. "Even most of our preservice and in-service teachers in our program would say that they don't remember having many teachers of color, if any at all. So, seeing someone who looks like them teaching the program, regardless of ideology, is refreshing for our students," says Antrop-González.

...every student comes with different life experiences, whether they are from another country or have another language..."

The fruits of this work are found in the committed and resilient teachers graduating from the program who go on to become those effective teacher-advocates Antrop-González mentions. Each educator coming from UED is equipped to relate to the life experience of youths in urban schools and communities, culturally and linguistically diverse students who might not have had the ability to relate to instructors before. “I hear from our partner schools all the time that our students are the most prepared to work with our urban youth,” says Fotsch. “They understand completely how to build rapport, gain connection with, and forge relationships with their students.”

Bringing in the most diverse pool of teaching candidates in the state without earmarked legislative funding, a program recruiter, or admissions quotas provides UED some challenges. As part of its mission to increase the percentage of teachers of color and American Indian teachers in the Twin Cities metro area, UED recognizes the financial and societal barriers faced by some candidates from these populations in

completing the program. To address this challenge, UED has sought alternative resource streams. Grants and scholarships are a key part of the push, including efforts to bring a dedicated recruitment specialist on board. These resources can have dramatic effect. “Teachers of color who are mentored by other teachers of color, and physically and financially supported throughout their student teaching, are less likely to quit within their first five years,” says Sabrina Tapia Contreras ’14. “They are also more likely to pursue leadership roles within their schools and obtain higher degrees. This allows these teachers to become more visible in their community, and less likely to be tokenized, as most are among the few teachers of color in their building.” Given UED’s mission and legislative mandate, it seems that the solution to one of our state’s most intractable problems may well be a vibrant, healthy, and expanding School of Urban Education at Metropolitan State, producing culturally competent educators for our urban schools and students of color.



School of Urban Education graduates, April 2019

Alumni Perspective: The School of Urban Education

By Matthew Spillum '06

As the School of Urban Education (UED) strives to equip teachers with the tools to thrive in urban schools and provide a path for aspiring teachers of color to succeed, one of the most important elements for success is strong partnerships with area schools. Forging relationships, whether institutionally or individually, is the core of the urban teaching experience, according to UED Field Experience Director Eric Fotsch. “As I like to tell it, when you are a teacher, you have an effect on your 24 to 34 students every day you are there; you’re transformational in those kids’ lives. In the role that I have now, every single teacher I’ve helped shepherd through their field experiences will go on to have that same effect on their classrooms, and my ripple effect of what I learned (in 13 years of teaching in Saint Paul Public Schools) becomes that much greater.”

That ripple effect might manifest in many ways. “I had a leg up on a lot of the challenges our student population faced,” says Britni Theodis ’17, entering her second year teaching at Hazel Park Academy. “Everything I learned in the program I got to use every single day, especially in forming relationships with the students and their families.”

families.” This reflects one of UED’s strengths as a program, according to Fotsch: “Anyone can be taught how to deliver content, but it’s classroom management, relationships, and built rapport that has to be there, and I think we do a phenomenal job of doing that.”

One of UED’s partnership districts is Osseo, where Mark Spurlin is beginning his second year teaching English at Osseo Senior High. Spurlin notes one of the most important

“Everything I learned in the program I got to use every single day, especially in forming relationships with the students and their families.”

aspects of an urban education curriculum is the “expansion of the educator’s identity. Designers of an urban education curriculum will find themselves on a similar journey (to that of their students) of discovering pieces of the world they’ve never experienced before through the eyes and ears of students.” He also believes that the lessons of the UED program have a broad effectiveness. “I believe that graduates of the program, regardless of gender, race, or socio-economic background, working in the metro area or beyond the metro area, have a unique preservice experience that will help them be successful in any classroom, but most importantly help them create positive disruptions in the minds of students immersed in the traditional cultures of urban schools.”

To Sabrina Tapia Contreras ’14, who teaches first grade Spanish immersion at La ola del lago in the Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools, the situation is simple: urban education curriculum “is what Minnesota needs.” As she puts it, “you need to realize that this program is specifically addressing a key issue to supporting students of color: placing teachers of color in the classroom. Students of color need to be able to see themselves in successful careers, while being supported by someone who can speak their language and understand their background.” She also agrees with Spurlin that the fruits of UED have potential impact far beyond urban schools. “This pedagogy needs to be applied to all schools in the state. Not just because we have marginalized students in every district, but we also really need to have teachers begin to evaluate how they are making connections to their students, and facilitate students making healthier relationships with each other.”

“...this program is specifically addressing a key issue to supporting students of color: placing teachers of color in the classroom.”

Ask a Teacher

By Dr. Yvonne RB-Banks



Supporting children in school is a team effort. Parents and teachers can work together to make sure that every child reaches their highest potential by making sure they have a great experience at school. We asked a veteran teacher and School of Urban Education faculty member

Dr. Yvonne RB-Banks for her thoughts on ways that families and community members can connect with teachers.

As a parent, what are some things I can do to help my child be successful in school?

Parents can help their children be successful by celebrating and encouraging each child's uniqueness! Communicating to a child, "You are loved! You are appreciated, and we celebrate you every day" is the best ways to make sure your child is ready to be successful in school.

How can I partner with my child's teacher to reinforce classroom expectations?

The essential word here is "Communication!" You and your child's teacher are the most productive partnership for educational success! A tip: check-in regularly. Start with "getting to know you" types of check-ins." Most teachers send newsletters, use that as

an opportunity to connect—ask questions. Use the local PTA/PTO (parent organization) to become knowledgeable about what is happening at school. Look at information (usually on the school's website), such as the school's anti-bullying policy and teach your child whom to contact if there is a problem.

"Communicating to a child, "You are loved! You are appreciated, and we celebrate you every day" is the best ways to make sure your child is ready to be successful in school."

If I feel like my child is being treated unfairly or not heard in the classroom, how can I communicate my concerns and expectations to the teacher?

Share information with your child's teacher about changes at home. For example, if something is going on related to medical issues, traveling, grandparents, etc.; kids get impacted by "life in the family." Also, annual events can be fun, but kids get tired from birthday parties, sleepovers, and other happenings, all of which can affect school performance.

Making a connection with your child's teacher can be as easy as sharing what your child's favorite subject or activity is at the time to help develop positive communication between you and the teacher. Starting early to build a communication connection with the teacher (and school in general) is the best way to helping your child succeed in school.

Is there a way I can get my child to tell me what is happening at school? When I ask, I get the same answer, "Nothing."

Start early and model the behavior you would like to see. Talk about your day with your child by saying things like "this was the best part of my day" or "I could use a do-over for my day."

When asking your child about school, ask specific questions. For example, you could say, "What was one thing that was brand new today" or "How many unexpected things happened in your day?" To be specific, ask about a class that you know they will have (e.g., how did the _____ go today and how did you feel about it?) Be engaging. Practice it—if you do it often enough, they know you mean it and they will chime in. There are funny books for car time talk—check one out of the local library.

How frequently should I communicate with my child's teacher? I want to know what is happening, but I don't want to bug the teacher.

Go for it! Technology should reduce any major problems with connecting. Email is a great way to check-in between conferences. Most teachers communicate early on how they handle emails, phone calls, and notes. Most schools now have a type of "app" system for connecting with parents—ask about it. Also, check in with other parent groups to see what they are doing or how they are receiving general school messages. Check with the school office as well to learn what the format is for communicating with parents.

Leading the Way

Alan Lessik '88

By Emily Seddon

“Metropolitan State prepares you for the life you want to lead,” Alan Lessik told students when he joined them, alumni, faculty, staff, and friends on Sept. 5 to read from his book *The Troublesseeker* and talk about his upcoming novel *The Kenzo Koan*. As he encouraged students to share their truth in their writing, he talked with *buzz* about some of his identities.

The Lifelong Learner

Alan graduated in the first Master of Management and Administration (MMA) class at Metropolitan State University in 1988. While the 1980s saw the rise in demand for traditional Masters of Business Administration (MBA), Alan enrolled because he wanted to apply his learning to the nonprofit he was running. He received a scholarship for his first few classes and then continued as he saw the daily usefulness of his coursework. He even continued after he was accepted to Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies.

Alan thought about leaving the program, but his advisor, Dr. Kenneth Zapp, encouraged him to continue. Dr. Zapp suggested Alan write a thesis that would fit for both programs. Completing the MMA turned out to be a wise choice. His degree from Metropolitan State, not Johns Hopkins, was the one that interested most employers, even in the international field. He said, “Dr. Zapp had a better understanding of the marketplace than I did, and I am glad I followed his advice.”

Alan’s Metro State MMA helped propel his successful career in international development as well as with U.S.-based nonprofits focusing on housing, HIV/AIDS, education, art, and social justice.



The Writer

Recently, he has taken on a new title: novelist. Alan never thought he’d be a writer. His friends and colleagues praised his writing, but he always had difficulty with outlining, perhaps due to his dyslexia, so he thought he could never be a true writer. One November, a friend encouraged him to participate in NaNoWriMo, National Novel Writing Month, where the goal is to finish a 50,000-word novel in 30 days.

When Alan sits down to write, he does not know what’s going to happen. One of his friends described it as “dream writing.” Alan shared, “The writing just happens, it pours out of me; I rarely know what’s next. One time, I thought I knew the main character, but he kept wanting to veer in a different direction. I stopped writing for three days just to prove I was in charge, not some fictional character I was making up. When I came back to it, the character veered off in a different direction. This time, I trusted him, and it turned out to be fantastic.”

Alan used his time during NaNoWriMo to write a story inspired by the life of his late partner and gay activist René Valdes. In six weeks, Alan wrote René’s story as a fictional retelling of the Odyssey, complete with a cast of orishas, the gods of Santeria.

The Philanthropist

For Alan, simply showing up is the most important thing a philanthropist can do. Early in his career, Alan did not have much money, so he volunteered. Over time, he committed to giving ten percent of his income to causes he cared about. While some of those gifts were bigger, many were small. He loves to support his friends doing events like the AIDSRide. He said, “Even \$10 can be a really big thing as a representation of your support.”

Alan’s first gift to the Metro Fund was \$19.88, representing the year he graduated. While he knows from his own experience that general support is what organizations need most, he has also directed his philanthropy to benefit specific programs he is passionate about. So, today he also gives to the LGBTQ and Allies Scholarship.

As an alumnus supporter, he said he’s proud of how the university has grown and changed over time. “What Metro State is doing to promote equity and opportunity for all people in Minnesota—adult learners, immigrants, people of color, and queer people—is unfortunately not common. Few other universities include anti-racism and equity as part of their missions, and implement programs based on this mission.” Due to Metro State’s commitment, Alan recently announced that he has included the university in his living trust. “I have dedicated my life to changing our society and world. Metro State is the best means to continue my life’s work into the future.”



Alan Lessik at a public reading at the Metropolitan State Library and Learning Center.

Metro Matters

By Emily Seddon

Why Give?

Metropolitan State University depends on your support. State appropriations cover 39 percent of the university's operating costs, depending on the year. Your support is critical to running our student-centered university.

This is a big responsibility. Your gift is your vote for the university to continue to innovate, to meet students where they are, to prepare them for careers of the future. A recipient of the Reatha Clark King Scholarship said it best, "When you invest in my education, you are investing in your own community."

Being able to count you among Metro State's supporters helps the university build partnerships with organizations that provide learning opportunities, career pathways, and financial support to students and academic programs. These companies want to know how many alumni, students, faculty, staff, and friends give back in support of the university.

As an alum, your gift is also a continued investment in yourself. Every time you raise your hand to say, "I am a proud Metro State alum," and every time you give, you help build Metro State's reputation. Together, these actions reinforce the value of a Metro State degree to future students, faculty and staff recruited by the university, and employers that make up Minnesota's economy.

The fact that you give is more important than the amount you give. About 43 percent of our supporters last year gave \$250 or less. We know these gifts are meaningful contributions for the giver and they add up to have a big impact. Last year, our community gave over \$91,000 to the Metro Fund.

Where To Give?

The Metro Fund supports the areas of greatest need at Metro State. Last year, 63 percent of contributions went directly to support students and university programs. Thirty-seven percent supported core divisions that work behind the scenes to make Metro State a world-class university.

For example, last year, 33 cents of every dollar contributed to the Metro Fund went towards emergency aid to students. When a student had an unexpected crisis—like a medical bill, car repair, or loss of a job—the emergency funds helped them stay in school.



The Metro Fund's assistance to core divisions last year benefitted both students and university faculty and staff. The Metro Fund allowed the University Foundation to award nearly \$366,000 in student scholarships. It also helped create learning opportunities for faculty and staff at events like Convocation.

By pooling our resources together in the Metro Fund, our university community can meet student and university needs that not covered by tuition and state appropriations.

Last school year, 770 alumni, students, faculty, staff, and friends supported Metropolitan State University. Were you one of them? If so, thank you; we hope we can count on your support again. If not, we hope you will join us this year as we work to meet the needs of students as they enter the workforce and advance their careers. You can easily give online at www.metrostate.edu/give

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

Emily Seddon
Development Director
651-793-1807

Student Success

Caring for the future

By Emily Seddon

Alyssa Perry understands nutrition is medicine. She wants to help people understand how the foods they eat can help them live healthier lives. Her path to this healthcare career, however, has taken some turns that she did not anticipate when she graduated high school.

Alyssa earned her bachelor's degree in physiology from the University of Minnesota and quickly enrolled in their competitive master's in nutrition program. After completing her internship in 2013 and 2014, she learned that the job market for nutritionists was over-saturated. She looked for a stable nutritionist job for three years.

In 2017, when she was pregnant with her daughter, Alyssa realized that she wanted a career path with a guaranteed job. After some research, she realized that this meant computers or nursing. Given her desire to help people manage their health, there was no question which she would pursue.

Alyssa jokes that she applied to Metropolitan State University "on a whim." Really, she was just surprised to find a school that met all her requirements. Alyssa had debt from her previous degrees, so the nursing program had to be high-quality and affordable. Metro State checked that box. As an expectant mother, the university she chose also had to be

family friendly. Metro State's flexible schedule and services for part-time students let Alyssa know that this was a place that she would be welcome.

Since enrolling, Alyssa has not been disappointed. Many of her classmates are also going through career changes. And, she's not the only one who can be a bit squeamish. She and her classmates cheer each other on when the work is challenging. Alyssa feels lucky to have so many sources of support. She added, "my daughter makes me feel like I can do anything."

Alyssa received the Beverly N. Grossman Endowed Scholarship for the 2019–2020 school year, which supports both undergraduate and graduate students in the nursing program who are interested in gerontology.

Alyssa hopes Metro State alumni continue to support scholarships for students, saying, "For years, every time someone told me I could easily find a job, I felt awful. I was trying, so what was I doing wrong? This scholarship let me know I am worthy. When you gave me this scholarship, my whole family benefited."

If all goes as planned, Alyssa will graduate in December of 2020 with an Entry Level Master of Science in Nursing and many job prospects.



Alyssa Perry, recipient of the Beverly N. Grossman Endowed Scholarship.

Presidents Outstanding Graduates

Spring 2019 Award Recipients

Jordan Berg graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in law enforcement was named the Outstanding Undergraduate Student from the College of Community Studies and Public Affairs.

Berg participated in student life at Metropolitan State University as the vice president of the Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Club. In the community, he mentors for One2One and volunteers at Loaves and Fishes. Berg is also involved in the Burnsville Habitat for Humanity Homeowners Association and the River Heights Vineyard Church.

"I quickly learned that his positive, enthusiastic attitude is how Jordan approaches everything he does. He is a caring helper. That is just who he is. Whether it's helping the neighbors in his Habitat for Humanity community, preparing and serving meals for Loaves and Fishes, leading co-workers at every job he's ever had, or offering moral support to a professor whose dog was just diagnosed with cancer, Jordan cares," says Lesli Blair, assistant professor, School of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice.

Arthur John Carlson, Outstanding Graduate Student for the university's College of Community Studies and Public Affairs, graduated with a master's degree in public and nonprofit administration.

Carlson works for the City of St. Louis Park and is also active in community service. He participates in mental health and multicultural advisory groups, promoting proactive outreach, and the city's Parks and Recreation basketball program, which serves kids in the neighborhood.

"He is employed as a crisis/hostage negotiator at the St. Louis Park Police Department, serves on the City of St. Louis Park Multicultural Advisory Committee and Police Advisory Commission...is a mentor through the Big Brothers and Big Sisters program, and speaks at Minnesota Drivers' Education Trainings to promote safe driving practices," explains Associate Professor Crystal Fashant, who nominated Carlson.

Carlson has also received a commendation for de-escalation and received a lifesaving award. Eventually, he may pursue further education and teaching, as well as leadership opportunities within the city and police department.

Caylin Crawford, the President's Outstanding Undergraduate Student award recipient for the university's College of Sciences graduated with a bachelor's degree in biology.

At Metropolitan State, Crawford was encouraged by her professors to become more involved on campus and in the community. She eventually became president of the university STEM Club and, with the support of Dr. Kate Ries, an active member in The Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) with the Northstar Stem Alliance. She volunteered for the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Minnesota, raised and trained service dogs, led children's school programs at Tamarack Nature Center in White Bear Township, and taught children about chemistry at the American Chemical Society.

Dr. Kate Ries, assistant professor of chemistry, says "(Crawford) is the most giving person I have seen with her time and is passionate about helping those in need. Caylin is also a gifted networker and group leader, always willing to make introductions and provide connections between individuals and groups while emphasizing the specific strengths that each member brings to the table. She is a well-rounded student who is always willing to lend a helping hand."

Tsion Fekadu, who graduated summa cum laude with a master's degree in computer science, is a President's Outstanding Graduate recipient for the university's College of Sciences.

"Tsion is a first-generation female student, who will be graduating this semester with an MS in computer science with a concentration in cybersecurity," says her advisor, Faisal Kaleem, professor of computer science and cybersecurity. "She is a hardworking, determined, and a committed student with an interesting story of her hard work and hardships she faced after coming to the U.S. She is a good example for those women who think that they will never be successful in fields like computer science and cybersecurity, as they are male-dominated. With good community service and many professional accomplishments, I don't know if there is anyone else better deserving than Tsion for the President's Outstanding Graduate Student award."

Jana Gegen graduated with a master's degree in nursing and was selected as the President's Outstanding Graduate Student Award recipient for the university's College of Nursing and Health Sciences.

Gegen earned her bachelor's degree of science in nursing from Metropolitan State in 2015 and currently teaches nursing clinicals part-time at a local community college. Upon completing the Family Nurse Practitioner certification test, Gegen plans to get a job. She also wants to pursue additional certification in Functional Medicine.

"I am in awe of Jana's intellect; critical analysis skills that include the ability to contextualize problems far beyond the typically narrow focus of the healthcare sector; compassion; commitment to anti-racism, anti-oppression, and social justice work in healthcare and education; and perseverance," said Ruth Staus '94, Gegen's advisor.

Susan Ann Gust graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in community-engaged scholarship and was chosen Outstanding Student for the university's College of Individualized Studies.

Gust is active in community service, participating in The Alley Newspaper (serving the Phillips community) and

the Backyard Community Health Hub, an initiative of the Cultural Wellness Center.

"As I complete my degree within the College of Individualized Studies, it is about taking stock, reflecting upon and seeing all that I have learned," Gust says. "I have also discovered how much I love learning. I know, and I can continue to inspire others to value their own ways of knowing and learning too."

Thazin Hlaing graduated with a bachelor's degree of science in nursing with the Minnesota Alliance for Nursing Education (MANE) and was selected as the President's Outstanding Undergraduate Student award recipient for the university's College of Nursing and Health Sciences.

Hlaing currently works as a TRIO tutor and a direct support professional. After graduation, she plans to take the board exam and work as a nurse and continue her journey to become a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA).

"Nursing faculty really appreciate her inquisitive nature, her perseverance, and her desire to do her best in the classroom, in labs, and in clinicals," Carol Reid, Hlaing's advisor, said. "As her advisor, I have been impressed with her organization skills and her professional demeanor whenever we meet."



Back: Arthur John Carlson, Misha Jameson, Jana Gegen, Paula Konczal. Front: Jordan Berg, Tsion Mekonnen, Caylin Crawford, Thazin Hlaing, Abdurahman A. Umer, Gail Miller, Susan Ann Gust. Not pictured: Vanessa Smith.

Misha Jameson graduated with a master of science in technical communication and was selected as the President's Outstanding Graduate Student Award recipient for the university's College of Liberal Arts.

Jameson believed the tremendous support of her many professors helped her with overcoming her challenges. "They taught me more than how to write or problem solve. They helped me to think and broadened my mind, to connect disparate ideas and situations," she says. Jameson appreciated the challenges of "learning the art of compromise and group work. It is an absolutely crucial soft skill for the modern workplace that I picked up in the master's program and use every day."

Jameson's academic advisor, Victoria Sadler said, "The faculty who worked together to nominate Misha agree that she deserves this recognition not only because she is intelligent, well-prepared for classes, and an excellent communicator, but also because she 'pays it forward.' That is, she places tremendous value on her education and volunteers her time to advocate for Metropolitan State, and she mentors others as they consider earning college degrees and as they look for opportunities to grow as professional communicators. Misha is the type of student from whom her professors learn, and she enhances our program!"

Paula Konczal, the President's Outstanding Undergraduate Student from the College of Management, graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in business administration

"I loved the flexibility that Metropolitan State gave me. I loved how learning online helped me learn how to work virtually with employees that worked from home or overseas," Konczal said. "The message boards, chat rooms, workgroups, and other online forums expanded my ability to work and guide a virtual team. Metropolitan State's online degree program strengthened my self-discipline, time management skills, and responsibility while sharpening my organizational skills."

Gail Miller graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in social science with a focus in political science and was chosen as the President's Outstanding Undergraduate Student award recipient for the university's College of Liberal Arts.

"I am most grateful for the support and encouragement of the Social Science department, and especially the guidance, direction, and encouragement of my advisor. The whole department has been a big factor in helping me see that I am capable of much more than I thought I was," Miller says.

Advisor Kathleen Cole, associate professor of social science, said, "Gail has consistently demonstrated that she cares about

learning and that she uses what she learns in classes to better understand herself in relation to the social world. She has also taken advantage of every opportunity the social science major makes available for students. Gail has completed meaningful internships in important public offices. She has completed multiple independent studies on advanced topics in social science. She has done exemplary course work and submitted her work to a statewide undergraduate research competition—and won! As a department, we are so proud of the work she has done, and we can't wait to see what she does after graduation."

Vanessa Smith graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in urban education and was chosen Outstanding Undergraduate Student for the university's School of Urban Education.

Smith attended Augsburg University and Minneapolis Community and Technical College before enrolling at Metropolitan State University. She works with Minneapolis Public Schools at Anishinabe Academy. She is also very active in the Native American community.

"Vanessa's commitment to urban students/youth, schools, communities, and families is clear to me on many levels. Her hours of service and culturally specific knowledge indicate a purpose with a focus," explains Dr. Yvonne RB-Banks, Smith's advisor and nominator. "She is always professional in her demeanor, responsible in her actions and guided in her next steps."

Abdurahman Umer graduated with a master's degree in business administration and management information systems and was selected as the President's Outstanding Graduate Student Award recipient for the university's College of Management.

Umer was born in Ethiopia and now lives in Woodbury, Minn. In his free time, he enjoys traveling the world, watching news and sports, and learning different languages and cultures. At Metropolitan State, Umer was active in student life. He joined the Metro Analytics Club and will continue to be an alumnus member of the club. In community service, Umer has volunteered for organizations such as the Minnesota Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance (OECA), and the Islamic Society of Woodbury-East Metro. Umer also earned graduate certificates in project management and business analytics. Eventually, he plans to continue his studies and earn a PhD.

"Abdurahman was a leader in class discussions and case analysis," said Erik Westgard, a community faculty member and one of Umer's nominators.

All awardees are members of the April 2019 graduating class.

Big Questions

Arthur Alexander III '00

By Emily Seddon

Arthur "Art" Alexander III '00 is the CFO of the Minnesota Lottery. Originally from Philadelphia, where he went to junior high school with actor Kevin Bacon, he's lived in the Twin Cities for 39 years. He shared why he thinks Metropolitan State University is so special, and why he's inspired to support Metro State and current students as an alumnus.

How did you first find out about Metro State?

There was a guy I worked with at Control Data in Bloomington. He was a couple years younger than me and he was talking about going to graduate school. I was also thinking about graduate school at the time. He said to me, "Hey, I think this summer I'm going to enroll in a couple classes at Metro." And I thought, "Oh, well maybe I'll look into that." I enrolled in the same two classes he did. Back then, in the 1980s, you could enroll in two classes and not matriculate yet.

Did you continue to take classes together?

His name is Dave Abrams '95. We started out like that—since you're going, I think I'll go to. He was actually from Philadelphia, too. He finished way before I did. Then he went on to be the head of Diversity and Inclusion for the United States Tennis Association in New York.

How did your Metro State journey continue?

I finished phase one of the Master of Management and Administration (MMA) in two years, and I wasn't really serious about continuing. I stopped and got some other jobs. Dave had finished and moved on. One day I was talking with my mother and she said, "You know, I'd really like you to finish your master's degree before I die." So, then I got serious and went back. By that time, they were offering an MBA. I started in '84 so it was a long time stopping and going before I graduated in 2000.

Aside from making your mother happy, what was important about your Metro State education?

At the time, when Metro State was just starting up, it was on the cutting edge of having classes for adult learners and giving you credit for your working knowledge. That's what interested me about Metro State.

The teachers really challenged you. It wasn't all textbook stuff. It was dealing with real live problems at the time.

Working on group projects was fun. A lot of people were in the same age group I was—late 20s and early 30s. We were all trying to advance our careers.

How did your Metro State experience shape your career?

There was one professor, she was the finance director at the Land O' Lakes headquarters, I had her for class and she got me to be a finance tutor for a couple days a week downtown. They had classes at the old bank at Seventh and Hennepin. Metro State used to have classes in that seven-story building right there across from the State Theatre. I taught there. That was many moons ago. It was the '90s. I met people from different companies like Honeywell and 3M.

Are you and Dave still in touch?

Every now and then we text. He's retired now, living in Orlando, Fla.

Last year, you were named CFO of the Year by Twin Cities Business Magazine. What did that mean to you?

You have ups and downs in your career. After so long, it's nice to get recognition. The Minnesota Lottery is a great place to work. I have a phenomenal team. Most people don't realize that we transfer \$5 million to \$7 million in lottery proceeds a month to the state for environmental programs and the general fund. It's such a rewarding part of my job.

When you take off your CFO hat, how do you like to spend your time?

I like to listen to jazz. I enjoy going out to nice restaurants to eat. I work out. In general, I try to relax and enjoy life. Being in the Twin Cities for 39 years, I've made a lot of friends who have become like family.

What advice do you have for your fellow alumni?

Whatever your passion is, follow that. Follow your dream. Try to stay focused. Make sure you have good people around you to help shape what you're trying to do in life. You can't do this stuff on your own.

Thank you for your time and your support of Metro State.

This interview was edited for clarity and length.

Community

By Emily Seddon

The Metro State Model

When Metropolitan State first started offering classes in 1971, the professors were not ivory tower academics. They were leaders in their fields, professors of practice that brought critical working knowledge to the development of Metropolitan State's academic program.

Today, nearly 50 years later, Metro State has more than 180 resident and 700 community faculty that bring broad experiences from academia and the community to curriculum development and teaching. The perspectives of faculty of color, however, are still underrepresented.

Serving Our Students

At the start of the fall semester more than 28 percent of Metro State's resident faculty and 20 percent of the community faculty are American Indian or faculty of color. While Metro State's faculty are the most racially diverse group among the four-year Minnesota State universities, we still have work to do. "Faculty are the heart and soul of the curriculum," said Metro State Provost Amy Gort, "without intentionally including faculty of color in class and curriculum development, we are not providing our student the best education possible."



Faculty of Color Mentorship Program Committee members Sumiko Otsubo, Yvonne RB-Banks, Derrick Crim '97, Nantawan Lewis, Michael Wilson, Jigang Liu
Not pictured: Brian Goodroad '92, Dawn Wing, Daniel Woldeab '01

In addition to curriculum development, retaining and recruiting new faculty of color at Metro State will have a real personal benefit for all our students. Fifty percent of Metro State students are students of color, and there is a positive correlation between the number of faculty of color and persistence rates of students of color (Benitez et al., *Liberal Education*, Spring 2017). “Our diverse classrooms provide the best learning opportunity, especially when you consider the global workforce our students graduate into,” said Provost Gort.

Recruiting and Retaining Faculty of Color

Metro State faculty shared challenges they, and colleagues from other predominately white organizations, face in forums sponsored by the Inter-Faculty Organization (IFO) and Metro State’s Equity and Inclusion Council. These included: feelings of isolation, tokenism, bias about their ability and expertise, and an extra burden of service because of their background. These conversations helped raise the visibility of the unique needs of faculty of color.

In 2018, Metro State established a Faculty of Color Mentorship Program (FOCMP). It was designed to address campus climate, institutional values, policies and procedures, and recruitment and retention efforts by providing “structural support to faculty of color at all levels of career development, from onboarding to post-tenure, with specific attention to address their unmet needs through multi-faceted and cross-race/ethnicity mentoring.”

Only a handful of universities around the United States have mentoring programs designed specifically for faculty of color, and they tend to be large private research institutions. Metro State faculty designed a mentoring program that focuses on how to successfully contribute to the university’s mission and be of service to our students—a program that would have helped them be successful and have a smoother process to tenure and promotion as faculty of color. To date, Metro State’s FOCMP is the first and the only one in the Minnesota State college and university system.

Professor Nantawan Lewis, who was instrumental in establishing the FOCMP and currently serves as its program coordinator said, “The FOCMP grew out of the struggle for tenure and promotion. It is our effort to level and broaden the playing field, and to increase the university’s capacity to serve communities of color and diverse communities. It’s also

a waste for the university to bring someone in to teach for a couple of years, and for them, then, to leave because they don’t have the support they need to be successful. The mentoring program provides structural support to faculty of color and underrepresented faculty. It’s not ad hoc; it’s institutionalized.”

As the university grows, the FOCMP will also help recruit new faculty of color. Dr. Myron Anderson, vice president of Inclusive Excellence at the University of Texas, San Antonio, drove home the point that the best way to recruit faculty of color is to create the environment to retain the ones already teaching when he presented at Metro State in February.

To a standing-room-only crowd at the spring Keeping our Faculty VIII conference, Professor Lewis and her fellow FOCMP committee member, Assistant Professor Derrick Crim, presented how Metro State is working to retain faculty of color. The secret is in the FOCMP’s governing principles:

- Self-empowerment; we come together to support, serve, and connect.
- Self-determination; we determine who we are and what we become.
- Self-governance; we select committee members from each college and school and appoint our program coordinator.

Minnesota State’s Big Goals

While mentoring programs exist throughout the Minnesota State college and university system, Metro State’s FOCMP is the only one to focus explicitly on race and ethnicity. The FOCMP is especially important as the Minnesota State system undertakes a big challenge, to close the educational equity gaps at all the state colleges and universities by 2030.

Clyde Pickett, chief diversity officer for Minnesota State, said, “The support for attracting and retaining diverse faculty is a critical component in the goal to close equity gaps and to promote and advance a strategic equity and inclusion agenda. The faculty of color mentoring program at Metropolitan State is a blueprint on how to engage and provide connection to diverse faculty.”

When asked what’s next, members of Metro State’s FOCMP Committee shared excitement for seeing other Minnesota State schools start similar programs. They also noted that the work at Metro State is far from over. In addition to continuing to develop the FOCMP, committee members expressed hope that similar programs could be formed to support community faculty and staff of color.

Out and About

This spring and summer alumni came together for social and networking activities. From Bloomington to Menomonie, Wis. when Metro State alumni get together it is always a good time.

Metro in your Neighborhood—Woodbury



Enock Mongaa '15, Emily Seddon, Eh Ta Zar '16, Mallory Mitchell, Victoria Trinh '16, Steve Campos '17, Sandy Best '88, Rita Dibble, Jason Hudgens '16

Metro in your Neighborhood—Bloomington



Emily Seddon, Johnathon McClellan '18, Kirsten Johnson '10

Metro in your Neighborhood—Menomonie



Maureen Raskin '88, Ginny Arthur '17, Sten Hubinette '04, Kristine Hansen '07

Metro State on the River



Charles Tedder, Mary Jo Clauson, Tameka Jones '14, Mike Clauson '13



Georgia Anderson '79, Marcia Anderson '77



Raquel Wallin, George Wallin '82

Metropolitan State Alumni Volunteer Celebration



Boern Vang '18, Lisa Vang



Ginny Arthur '17, Michael O'Connor '92, Ron Edlund '04

News and Notes

Note: All towns are in Minnesota unless otherwise noted.

Michael Blackstone '86, Phoenix, Ariz., has combined 30+ years of experience as an executive coach with cognitive neuroscience to develop a personal growth model that he calls *The Total Personal Transformation Project*. The model incorporates mental, emotional, and spiritual transformations.



Rachel Erkkila '06, Ankeny, Iowa, took over the position of associate provost at Des Moines Area Community College Boone Campus in July. In her new role at the college, she will support faculty in their mission to support students. Previously, Erkkila served as the director of enrollment service for the college.

Andrew Hallberg '14, New Prague, was welcomed by the New Prague City Council as their newest police officer. Hallberg, a longtime resident, has also served as a part-time officer and a school resource officer in Waterville, Minn.

Brooke Harle '14, Hibbing, joined the family practice providers at Fairview Range as a family nurse practitioner. Harle is Board Certified and a member of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners. Harle is a Hibbing native and will be seeing patients of all ages, including pediatrics.

Mindy Johnson '92, Toluca Lake, Calif., received the 2019 Academy Film Scholar Award for her writing and research on women in animation. Johnson is the first woman to receive the award for her work in the field of animation. Her new book *Pencils, Pens & Brushes* was released in August 2019 by Disney Press.

Francois Kiemde '12, Saint Paul, was featured in the *Pioneer Press* after assuming ownership of PJ's Bakery. Kiemde and his wife Melissa Borgman-Kiemde purchased the bakery in 2017. Kiemde answered questions about changes and upgrades to the menu. Kiemde plans to expand and produce a French version of King Cake in time for Mardi Gras 2020.

Barb Kobe '99, Minneapolis, received an award for her work *The Healing Doll Way: A Guided Process Creating Art Dolls for Self-Discovery, Awareness, and Transformation* from the Independent Book Publishing

Professionals Group. Kobe's book is a winner in the Body, Mind, and Spirit category and a finalist in the Best Overall Design Non-Fiction category in the 2019 Next Generation Indie Book Awards.



LeAnne Larson '18, Cambridge, has been promoted to director of branch services at Affinity Plus Federal Credit Union. In her new position, Larson advocates for Affinity Plus members throughout the state of Minnesota and leads the direction of the Cambridge branch, providing strategic direction for the Roseville, Duluth, and New Hope branches.

Connie Lounsbury '92, Monticello, has published her eighth book entitled *Fatal Flaws, Based on a True Story*. This historical fiction is set in the 1920s and features a woman fighting to take care of herself and her children alone. Lounsbury is a public speaker and an author of eight books and 34 short stories.



Lisa Lounsbury '11, Golden Valley, was recently featured on the American Art Therapy Association website. Lounsbury has a private practice, Art Lab RX, LLC. The company emphasizes that "everyone is welcome" and offers services in Spanish and English. Lounsbury has expanded and created the mobile art therapy studio, a portable version of the numerous services she provides.

Nancy Lyons '96, Minneapolis, was appointed to the Minnesota Governor's Blue Ribbon Council on Information Technology. She is one of six individuals to serve on the council. Their goal is to provide advice on how to update and maintain the state's IT systems and to ensure Minnesota residents and businesses interacting with the state receive the best possible service.

Bryan Newman '15, Woodbury, has written a book entitled *You Should Know: Your Personal Guidebook for Adulthood*. Newman's book prepares students for real-world situations including budgeting, renting an apartment, dating 101, kindness, shopping, the stock market, and more. This book is available for purchase on Amazon.com.

Jennifer Pennington '08, Saint Paul, community faculty member and co-founder of Can Can Wonderland, was recognized by the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* as a 2019 Women in Business honoree. Jennifer co-founded the first arts organization to become a public benefit corporation. Can Can Wonderland has been recognized regionally as an innovative and outstanding entertainment venue.

Evan Price '04, Los Angeles, Calif., produced his first episode of television. Price co-wrote an episode of *Empire*, the television drama starring Taraji P. Henson and Terrence Howard, which premiered on the Fox Network. Price received a promotion to staff writer for season six of *Empire*.



Mona Rath '10, Saint Paul, was hired as a program administrator at the Minnesota Learning Health System Mentored Career Development Program for the University of Minnesota School of Public Health.

Michael D. Scott '00, Cannon Falls, was recognized by the Eagan Rotary as the 2019 Firefighter of the Year. Scott was recognized for transforming Eagan's fire department by implementing a core group of full-time, paid firefighters, efficiently located fire stations, and equipment that protects the health and safety of the firefighters.

Nicole Sindelar '13, Farmington, has opened an event center and golf course in Hastings. She attributes part of her success to her education; "Metropolitan State has played a huge role in my confidence, empathy, and professionalism."

Patricia Voje '13, Saint Paul, was recently featured in the *Hudson Star Observer*. Voje has been exhibited and nationally recognized for her *alla prima* style of painting. In addition to her studio work, Voje is also a Plein air artist with her work illustrating the pages of *Great Animal Escape Stories* 2016. Voje's work is represented by Wantoot Gallery, Mineral Point, Wis., and Blue Awning Gallery, Port Washington, Wis.

Orion Wright '02, Fort Myers, Fla., joined the law firm Banker Lopez Gasser at the firm's Fort Myers office. He will join the firm's general trial practice group.

Kathy Wuorinen '04, Saint Paul, retired in February from the Saint Paul Police Department after thirty years of service. She held a variety of positions at the police department including police officer, sergeant, and commander. Wuorinen was serving as assistant chief at the time of her retirement. During her tenure on the police force, she also served as interim chief following the retirement of Chief Tom Smith '98 in April 2016.

May Xiong '05, Brooklyn Center, was recognized by *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* as a 2019 Women in Business honoree. Xiong is the vice president of Employment Readiness at Project for Pride in Living (PPL). As vice president of Employment Readiness, she provides strategic direction and leadership in employment training, financial literacy, and education for an organization that promotes self-reliance for individuals and families.

The AARP and Pollen named three Metropolitan State alumni to the fourth annual 50 over 50 list of inspiring leaders in Minnesota. The list honors Minnesotans who are making a difference across disciplines and reinventing what it means to be over fifty.



Harry Hartigan '91, Minneapolis, founded Boomer Town at Twin Cities Pride, an area of the festival dedicated to making a welcoming space that connects baby boomers to senior resources and other members of the LGBTQ community. Hartigan also volunteers for Little Brothers-Friends of the Elderly and PrimeTimers, a social organization for older gay or bisexual men. He was ordained as a priest of the St. Theresa's Parish, Catholic Apostolic Church in North America's in 2018, and ministers to the homebound elderly in South Minneapolis.

Tené Wells '92, Columbia Heights, is an innovator and social entrepreneur. Over her career, she has served nonprofits including WomanVenture, Way to Grow, and the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families. She has served as a member and past president of the Metropolitan State Alumni Board. She is a past Bush Foundation Fellow and, in addition to her degree from Metropolitan State, earned a Masters of Public Administration degree from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.



Elaine Wynne '76, Golden Valley, a psychologist and advocate for veterans' health, works to help veterans and military service members recover after returning home. Wynne founded the Veterans Resilience Project, an organization focused on raising awareness and the delivery of care for our troops. She has researched Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), which effectively reduced the symptoms of PTSD in the 100 percent of the veterans participating in the study.

In Memoriam

Allen D. Becker '75, '89, Scottsdale Ariz.

Gerson Jonathan Bello Molina '18, New Brighton

Marvin C. Brunsell '77, Somerset, Wis.

Adriane Erika Clark '12, West St. Paul

Debra "Debbie" K. Iverson '11, Minneapolis

Iyiola Ofakunrin '12, Cottage Grove

Joseph Fligelman "Jeff" Levy, retired Metro State faculty member

Katherine M. Schuller '75, Duluth

Sally Rice '92, Plymouth

Shuaib Osman '16, Minneapolis

We want to hear from you.

Send your news to alumni.relations@metrostate.edu

Faculty

University Scholar—James Densley

By Matthew Spillum '06

Metropolitan State University's Professor James Densley, the university's first designated University Scholar, has been quite busy in recent years.

Two books, around 40 peer-reviewed articles, and more than 50 book chapters, essays, and popularly-published works are a firm print and online foundation topped by many media appearances and a 2019 TEDx talk at Hamline University. Since 2010, Professor Densley has been busy indeed, but he could have been busy researching his primary subject matter during any time period, as his focus is violence.

Professor Densley's work revolves around three main threads surrounding that central focus: gangs and gang violence, mass public shootings, and crisis intervention training for police officers. Professor Densley sees his multi-topical study of violence as particularly timely. "The research on gangs never really goes away, since it is a sort of intractable problem. The work on mass shootings; that's never out of the headlines, because we keep having these shootings occur. More recently, I've been working to develop a kind of crisis intervention training for police officers, in terms of how they respond to people with mental health issues, which has been really rewarding work, hand in hand with law enforcement agencies to identify problems in their data and their communities, and then trying to tailor a solution accordingly."

Professor Densley came to this field of study through a combination of family influence and his experiences in other lines of work. "My sister, back in England, is a homicide investigator, and my dad was a volunteer police officer for about 25 years, so I guess I kind of grew up around this stuff. But the main turning point for me was teaching special education in the New York City public school system from 2005 to 2007. These were kids that were on the periphery of gangs, worried about their personal safety, had friends and relatives who might be involved in gangs and criminal activity. A lot of the challenges they faced in school weren't to do with school, they were to do with everything that was going on outside."

Metropolitan State's position as a law enforcement training school, through the Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Center located on the campus of Hennepin Technical College, makes it a particularly good fit for Professor Densley, who has also found Metro State's students to be a benefit for instructors. "What's fantastic about Metropolitan State students is that they are bringing with them into the classroom their wealth of experience. We work with a very diverse population of students, and you can say that about many different measures: race, ethnicity, age, life experience, socio-economic status. It makes for such dynamic conversations in the classroom."

As the number of public mass shootings continues to rise, Professor Densley is well aware that his academic and professional opportunities will continue apace. However, the purpose of such work as the National Institute of Justice-funded study of mass public shooters in the United States is not merely to track and quantify these events, but to amass data in aid of finding possible solutions. As Professor Densley and fellow primary investigator Dr. Jillian Peterson note in an editorial from the Aug. 4 *Los Angeles Times*, "Our data show that mass shooters have much in common. Instead of merely rehearsing for the inevitable, we need to use that data to drive effective prevention strategies." To learn more about Professor Densley's work, visit www.jamesdensley.com.

A University Scholar is selected at the discretion of the university president to recognize faculty members for outstanding service, teaching, or scholarship in three successive years. In making the award, the president may consider the faculty member's number and quality of publications, coverage in local or national media, unsolicited recognition by service or professional organizations, or recommendations by supervisors.



Arts at Metropolitan State

a logarithmic transfer of the rate of information in a particular message of language

Walker James

Psychedelic Norway, he called his book,
and I did not understand why,
but he was our teacher,
and sometimes we respected him,
but mostly I wanted him to like me
because I had two fathers
who wanted me to like them.

John was a curly-haired satyr who did not play the flute,
or a wooden bodhisattva who,
over the course of many centuries,
became overgrown with moss.

His sweaters were always slightly too large for his frame,
rolled up to his elbows like a dishwasher,
although I don't recall seeing him smoke a cigarette.
We watched one scene from *Eraserhead*,
then talked about childbirth and toddlers.

Everybody was fighting,
so he made us listen to a song by Jack White.

He had this quiet way of speaking,
from the skin beneath his lower lip,
like a rabbit moving from bush to bush in the moonlight,
off the side of a road, at the end of a backyard, near a pale blue pond.

His hands were like dish-rags,
folded together in his lap, his corduroy.
I always want to write about how men's knuckles look,
but I cannot really recall his...
Were they like helmets? Were they like pearls?
Were they like witch noses? Were they long and flat?

I just remember him sitting cross-legged in the plastic black school chair,
telling us to meditate, count, breath, and incite,
then darting out of the room
while our eyes were closed.

I don't remember what he smelled like.
Wool and rain, maybe, or a
poem he wrote about a moving blue flame.

He found me once
under a crumbling staircase,
near the old science building that was, two years later,
destroyed.

He told me to write about the shape of fathers
and make lists that are true.

(Or maybe I said those things,
and he simply spoke the air.
Or maybe he never said anything,
but simply cast the right reflections.
Maybe all he actually said was,
“Be honest.”)

I think I eventually followed his advice.

Bandit

Heather Bear

This photograph is a dedication to Heather's veteran father
who loved photography and cars.



Aging Grace

Ivy Gervais '15

Hearing the ticking tock go and grow longer,
oldening ears lose to quieting, slower years.

Opening their eyes,
to past face,
new wrinkles,
dry cracks on lips
that had found new meanings to words from their full lives.

Familiar far more shaky warm arms holding still your heart,
flooded mind to memories of meeting, moving, mischief,
romance;
reasons why you were here.

Small Town Goodbye

Ben Houtkooper

Ben's more than 20-year long career as a military journalist has taken him to dozens of countries as he helps to tell the stories of those serving in the military.



Haute Dish is the Metropolitan State literary magazine dedicated to showcasing the artistic talent of Metropolitan State students, alumni, faculty, and staff. The poetry and art on the Arts@Metro section are excerpted from past issues of *Haute Dish*.

Alumni are encouraged to submit poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, memoir/personal essay, photography, studio art or digital storytelling for publication.

For more information, visit the *Haute Dish* website, <http://hautedish.metrostate.edu/>.

Theater at Metro

KISS

by Guillermo Calderón

7 p.m., Nov. 14, 15, 16 and 22; 1 p.m. shows on Nov. 16 and 23, Whitney Fine Art Center Theater, 1424 Yale Place, Minneapolis.

In the heart of the Syrian conflict, two couples meet for their weekly soap opera viewing party, but that standing double date quickly turns to a strange soap opera of its own. Scandal, secrets, and a mysterious visitor enter the scene, leaving us to wonder: What is fact and what is fiction?

Audience members are encouraged to bring a non-perishable food item to donate to the MC Resource Center Food Pantry for free admission.

Gordon Parks Gallery Exhibition Schedule

Swinging the Compass

(sculptural exhibition featuring the works of Danny Saathoff)
Oct. 28–Dec. 5, 2019

When Mists Lift, the Many See

(paintings and textiles by Native artist Chholing Taha, guest curator John Schuerman)
Feb. 3–27, 2020

Student Salon 2020

(artwork by graduating Studio Arts majors)
March 30–April 16, 2020

Gallery Hours:

Nov.–June, Monday–Thursday 11 a.m.–7 p.m.
Metropolitan State University Library and Learning Center
645 East Seventh Street, Saint Paul, MN, 55106

From the Director



"Metropolitan State University changed my life."

I frequently hear this statement when I meet with alumni. I smile and nod in agreement. Metro State changed my life too, or rather, it gave me the tools I needed to improve my own experience: confidence, practical knowledge, and of course a degree. I never expected to be able to complete my degree at forty years old, and I certainly did not expect that graduating from Metro State would launch me on to a trajectory that would result in becoming its director of alumni relations.

I now understand that when I walked across the stage to accept the medallion signifying my graduation, I joined a community. I didn't expect to feel part of something larger than personal achievement, but I did. Graduating from a university founded with the needs of the student as its most central imperative is a point of pride.

Metro State alumni change our world for the better. In this issue of the magazine, you can read about the School of Urban Education where faculty prepare teachers to go into the community and tackle one of the most vexing problems we face—the achievement gap. You will also read about alumni like Alan Lessick '88. Alan has worked as an advocate for housing, HIV/AIDS and social justice, and chose to financially support students at Metro State by giving to the LGBTQ and Allies Scholarship fund.

Our mission and tradition of making the world a better place are worth celebrating. Soon, our university will reach its fiftieth anniversary of being founded. As we start the planning process for this momentous occasion, we are holding a series of events that we are calling "50 Conversations". Over the course of the next twelve months, President Arthur will have conversations with alumni and friends, to inspire our planning process. We want you to feel a sense of ownership in our celebration.

We are recruiting volunteers to share ideas, host gatherings of alumni, and help us plan for our most significant milestone to date. Look for postings on social media, notices in the newsletter and invitations in your inbox as we call on you to help us celebrate Metro State at fifty.

Kristine Hansen '07
Alumni Relations Director

Stay Connected

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



Follow us on Facebook:
Metropolitan State University Alumni Relations



Connect with us on LinkedIn:
Metropolitan State U Alumni Relations



Follow us on Twitter:
MetroStateAlumniMN @MetroAlum_MN

Calendar

Opening Nov. 14, KISS, a Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis College Theater and Metro Theater Underground co-production, MC Whitney Theater, 1424 Yale Place, Minneapolis. Nov. 14, 15, 16 and 22 at 7 p.m. (with additional 1 p.m. matinees on Nov. 16 and 23). Audience members are encouraged to bring a non-perishable food item to donate to the MC Resource Center Food Pantry for free admission.

Now through Dec. 5 *Swinging the Compass*, a sculptural exhibition featuring the work of Danny Saathoff. Saint Paul Campus, Gordon Parks Gallery. Gallery hours are Monday–Thursday, 11 a.m.–7 p.m.

Every Third Tuesday Game Night at the Library, Library and Learning Center Lounge, 4–7 p.m. Whether you want to try out a new video game system or show off your gaming skills, Metropolitan State University invites you to join us the third Tuesday of each month. Snacks and music provided. Game Night at the Library is sponsored by Metropolitan State Library and Information Services and the Saint Paul Public Library.

Dec. 14 *Metropolitan State University 105th Commencement Ceremony Exercise*, Minneapolis Convention Center, 1301 Second Avenue South, Minneapolis.

Dec. 23 Make your year-end gift for 2019. The Metropolitan State University Foundation Board of Trustees will contribute an additional \$50 for every alumni gift received before Dec. 31, 2019. Make an online gift any time at www.metrostate.edu/give/give-now.

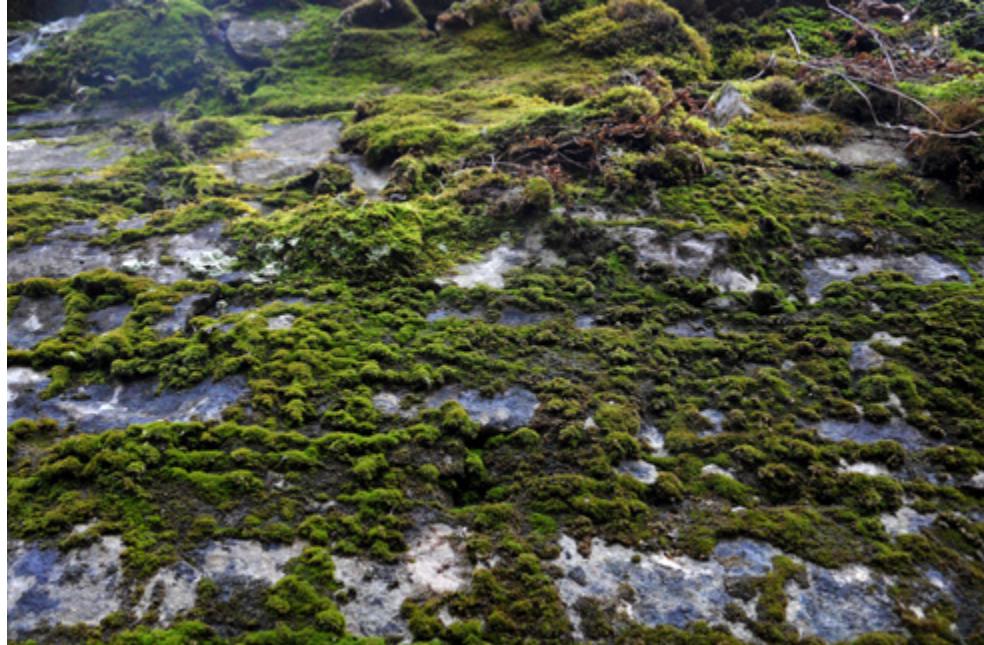
Jan. 16 *50 Conversations About the 50th Anniversary*, 5–7 p.m. Watch for more information in the alumni e-newsletter.

Feb. 3 *When the Mists Lift, the Many See*, paintings and textiles by Native artist Chholing Taha, Guest curator, Joun Schuerman. Saint Paul Campus, Gordon Parks Gallery. Gallery hours are Monday–Thursday, 11 a.m.–7 p.m.

Feb. 13 *50 Conversations About the 50th Anniversary*, 5–7 p.m. Watch for more information in the alumni e-newsletter.

March 18 *50 Conversations About the 50th Anniversary*, 5–7 p.m. Watch for more information in the alumni e-newsletter.

For more information about events, sign up for the alumni e-newsletter by emailing alumni.relations@metrostate.edu.



Natura
Ivy Gervais '15



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

700 East Seventh Street
Saint Paul, Minnesota
55106-5000



MINNESOTA STATE

Metropolitan State University,
A member of Minnesota State



untitled
Dawn Cramer '19
sculptural paper work