



**METRO STATE
UNIVERSITY**

A member of Minnesota State

POWZZ

2024 Alumna of the Year

Nancy Uden '88

**Champion for
Metro State**



FALL 2024
Volume 17 No. 1



STALKING

Photography
Peng Moua '24



Photo by Andy King

Office Hours

WITH GINNY ARTHUR //////////////////////////////////////

Dear Alumni,

I am writing to you in September, during the first week of the fall semester. The students returning to our campus are bringing extraordinary energy, making us all feel peppier. It's especially exciting because there are 623 more students than last year. The North Star Promise scholarship program provided an average of \$2,035 to more than 1,000 new and returning Metro State students. We are grateful to legislators for their commitment to assuring all Minnesotans have access to our life-changing educational programs. Whether they are new students excited to start a journey or students with just a few credits left, their optimism inspires me and the rest of our Metro State community as we look forward to the coming academic year.

As president of Metro State, I am particularly proud of our long history of civic engagement and community advocacy. Year after year, we lead our fellow Minnesota State Colleges and Universities in the percentage of students who vote. Recently, we were recognized for the efforts of our Metro State Votes campaign with the 2024 Highly Established Action Plan (HEAP) Seal by the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge; this designation is awarded to colleges and universities that have robust action plans to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement by promoting civic learning, political engagement, and college student voter participation. This year, these efforts were led by Ashley Lopez, our community engagement coordinator and 2023 Master of Advocacy and Political Leadership graduate.

In January, we will welcome Metro State and Minneapolis College students to a renovated Management Education Center. The state-of-the-art

learning spaces will provide students with access to a one-stop shop for learning and community collaboration. I believe that this co-location of the Minneapolis College's School of Business and Economics and Metro State's College of Business and Management will provide a seamless transfer for students as they move through their careers from two-year to baccalaureate to master's level degrees. While 80% of students who begin at a community college say they plan to get a bachelor's degree, only about 16% manage to complete their goal. In collaboration with our partners at Minneapolis College, we aspire to change that narrative.

While we are optimistic about the future, we have also suffered a loss this year. Nancy Uden '88, our 2024 Alumna of the Year, died in mid-July. As you will read in this issue of *buzz* magazine, Nancy was a passionate advocate for students and believed that alumni had a role in creating opportunities as volunteers and future employers. She was a woman of great vision and boundless energy and will be missed by many in our community.

By the time you read this in December, we will be knocking on winter's door. I hope the end of the calendar year finds you and your loved ones well and safe. I hope you find inspiration and optimism in the new year and I look forward to seeing you at an alumni gathering or volunteer opportunity soon.

Sincerely,

Virginia Arthur

Virginia "Ginny" Arthur, JD
President

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Photo by Jeff Achen



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Alumni,

I am humbled to write to you as the new president of the Metro State Alumni Board. We have not had a chance to meet before now, so I would like to use this opportunity to introduce myself, tell you a bit about what the alumni board is working on, and then ask for your engagement.

I am a relatively recent Metro State graduate, earning my degree in individualized studies focusing on cross-cultural religious leadership studies in the summer of 2021. While I was a student, I served on the Student Veteran and Military Association, which connected student veterans to educational and professional opportunities. I have served in the Minnesota Air National Guard since 2006, in a variety of positions and currently in Human Resources. I entered into service on the alumni board at the encouragement of my friend and mentor, Brigadier General (Retired), Sandy Best '88. General Best was rotating off the board after serving for six years, and she enthusiastically encouraged me to stay connected to Metro State.

I didn't quite know what to expect when I joined the board; I have served in several volunteer roles for other organizations, but like many students at Metro State, my path to earning a degree had been long and full of stops and starts. I hadn't had the time to think about what my relationship with Metro State would be after graduation. However, I had another excellent role model in the board president, Nancy Uden, who helped me understand that even as a recent graduate, I had skills and expertise that could make a difference at the university.

As the board president, I am very interested in helping to create self-sustaining pathways where volunteers can contribute to a thriving Metro State community. This year, the board will develop a strategic plan to support the university goals but with an alumni spin. Alumni have an important role to play in helping Metro State remove barriers to accessing education and propelling the social mobility of our alumni. I look forward to working with my fellow board members to embrace our role as a strategic partner, bringing our unique lived perspective as alumni to the challenge.

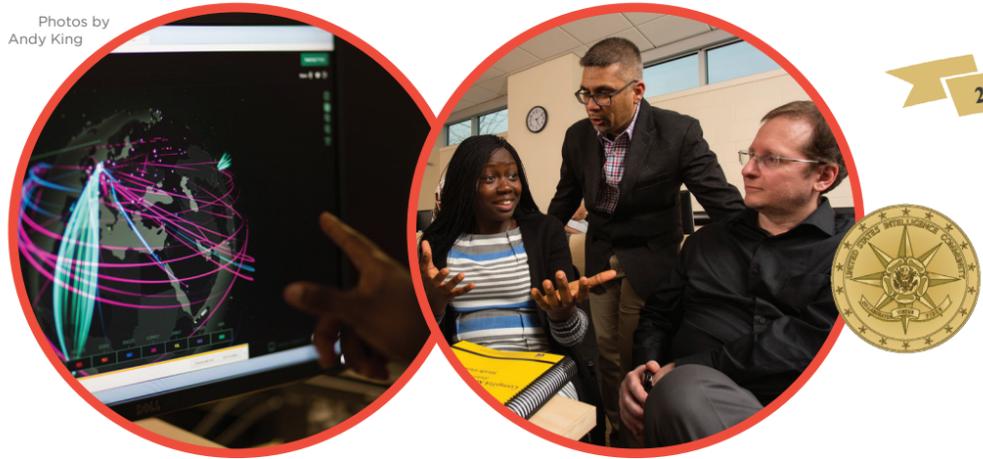
My journey to being an active volunteer at Metro State has been shaped by two influential role models who challenged me to get out of my comfort zone and think about how I could serve the university. My ask is that you begin to contemplate the actions you can take over the next year. As students, we had the benefit of the university as a resource. I challenge you to think about how you can become that resource that will help us strengthen our community.

I look forward to seeing you at a volunteer opportunity or gathering in the near future!

Respectfully,

Ryan Ringwelski '21

Photos by
Andy King



20 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE



Intelligence Community
**Centers for
Academic
Excellence**

Diversity. Knowledge. Excellence.

Metro State receives grant to create Intelligence Community Center for Academic Excellence

Metro State University has been chosen as one of six recipients of nationwide grants from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) to establish Minnesota's and the Upper Midwest's first-ever Intelligence Community Center for Academic Excellence (IC CAE). Metro State's center, to be named the NorthStar Intelligence Community Center for Academic Excellence (NorthStar IC CAE), will serve not only Minnesota but the broader Upper Midwest region as a provider of enhanced programs in intelligence studies, hands-on internships, and partnerships with intelligence agencies, empowering students with the skills and experience necessary to succeed in national security careers.

Dr. Faisal Kaleem, professor of computer science and cybersecurity, director of graduate studies in cyber operations, and executive director of MN Cyber, says, "This incredible achievement brings a unique opportunity to Metro State University, our students, faculty, and the entire Upper Midwest region. Historically, much of the work in the U.S. Intelligence Community has been concentrated in the east, west, and southern regions of the country. With the establishment of this NorthStar IC Center, we are

helping to change that, providing new pathways for research, education, and workforce development in intelligence right here in Minnesota."

NorthStar IC CAE is positioned to build on Minnesota's diverse and growing talent base in cybersecurity, ensuring the Upper Midwest becomes a pivotal player in advancing the mission of the Intelligence Community. Notes Dr. Kaleem, "The creation of this center is a huge leap forward in ensuring greater diversity, inclusion, and regional representation in national security fields. It's not just an investment in education but also an investment in the future of national security."

The IC CAE program is designed to develop a cadre of qualified intelligence professionals to carry out America's long-term national security initiatives by creating a competitive, knowledgeable, and diverse workforce. Schools, such as Metro State, that are selected as grant recipients are known as IC CAE Program Schools, with students participating in IC CAE Program School-funded curricula and programs that provide the opportunity to work towards becoming part of the IC talent pool of choice.

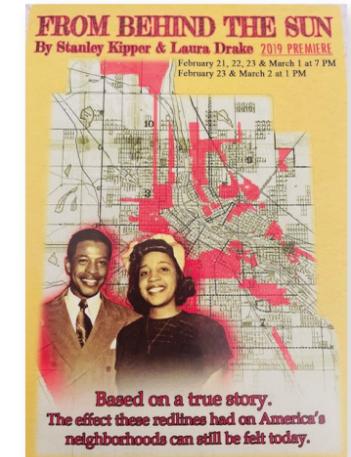
Metro State recognized for civic engagement

Metro State University has been awarded the 2024 Highly Established Action Plan (HEAP) Seal by the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge (ALL IN), recognizing the best campuses in the country for building and fostering nonpartisan civic engagement.

ALL IN works with more than 1,000 colleges and universities to empower them to achieve excellence in nonpartisan student democratic engagement. The ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge envisions a more engaged and inclusive democracy. Through institutional engagement, direct student engagement, and fostering a national higher education network, ALL IN strives for an electorate that mirrors our country's makeup and in which college students are democratically engaged on an ongoing basis, during and between elections, and not just at the polls. We believe a strong, vibrant, and more representative American democracy will result from the greater inclusion of informed college student voters. For more information about ALL IN, visit allinchallenge.org.

ALL IN recognized the 192 colleges and universities that have earned the Highly Established Action Plan Seal of Recognition. ALL IN developed this seal of recognition for higher education institutions with solid action plans to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement by promoting civic learning, political engagement, and college student voter participation. The strength of the action plan is determined by reviewing campus action plans with the Strengthening American Democracy Action Planning Rubric.

Metro State Votes gets students, faculty, and staff—along with East Side Saint Paul residents—ready for elections! The campaign hosts a series of events to educate, engage, and empower the Metro State community as change agents during each election year.



Play with Metro State roots produced at the History Theatre

Behind the Sun was produced by the History Theatre in Saint Paul this fall. The play by Stanley Kipper and Laura Drake has its roots in Metro State's Theater Program and Theater Underground. The playwrights worked with Metro faculty Gail Smogard, Jonathan Beller, and Brian Grandison, to further develop the unproduced script before it went into rehearsal at the Metro State/MCTC-shared Whitney Fine Arts Center stage in 2019.

The show is based on the experience of playwright Stanley Kipper's family trying to purchase a home outside of their redlined neighborhood in 1956. The scheme that Stanley's father put into place and their experience as a Black family integrating into an all-white neighborhood played to standing-room-only audiences during its initial run in February and March 2019.



Photo by Jeff Achen

Photo by Andy Berndt

Left: Nancy and Jim Uden at the President's Reception 2023
Right: Nancy Uden and Ron Edlund at the 2024 Rise to Shine Breakfast

“Nancy had an unmatched energy, and her dedication to Metro State’s mission was truly infectious. She didn’t just lead but truly empowered everyone around her.”

—Amanda Wong '17

the university’s development staff to establish a childcare stipend fund for students who were also parents. She really believed in the power of Metro State to change lives, and she wanted to expand our capacity to help students.” This effort remains a shining example of Uden’s drive to empower Metro State students to pursue their educational paths. “She was passionate about helping students with children navigate their time at Metro,” says Hansen. “Her personal experience as a single parent informed so much of her work. She knew the power of a Metro State degree to change lives and was committed to expanding the university’s capacity to support students.”

Another initiative close to Uden’s heart was the Alumni Professional Development Fund, which she helped launch alongside fellow board member Tom Krueger '17. “She had the idea that some of our students need something just a little extra after graduation to help them launch their careers be it a certification or professional association membership,” says Hansen. “She helped fundraise for the effort and develop the criteria. We made our first awards last fall, and it was really exciting. We will make additional awards this year and will keep it active as long as we have the funds.”

Nancy’s dedication to Metro State extended far beyond her formal responsibilities. She often met with students, offering guidance, mentorship, and

encouragement. She regularly attended campus events, cheering on graduates at commencement ceremonies, writing congratulatory notes to Outstanding Students, and even making personal phone calls to encourage students to register for classes. Her belief in the potential of each student was contagious, and she inspired many to pursue their goals with determination and optimism.

A legacy of influence and empowerment

One of Uden’s greatest strengths was her ability to empower others. She led with enthusiasm, energy, and a deep sense of purpose, and she made everyone around her feel like they could accomplish anything. “During the pandemic, when engagement was at its lowest,” says Wong, “Nancy’s resilience and optimism kept us all connected and moving forward. She had this incredible way of making you feel like you could accomplish anything. Nancy didn’t just believe in the work we were doing; she believed in each of us, and that belief made all the difference.”

Uden’s impact extended well beyond Metro State. Her influence reached across the community, touching the lives of countless individuals, and she sought to advocate for others even while dealing with her own challenges. As Hansen notes, “When Nancy was diagnosed with a brain tumor it was a pretty big shock to all of us. We stayed in touch, and she continued to be a resource. Last winter

when we had an overwhelming number of students sign up for the Winter Gift Giving program, she was the first call I made to help out. I was not a bit surprised last spring when I saw her profile in the *Star Tribune* advocating for the right to control the end of her life. I was at our annual breakfast at the capitol when I saw the article. I can’t imagine being any prouder of being an alum and being associated with a person who was willing to advocate for their convictions than I was on that day. She was advocacy in action.”

Diagnosed with glioblastoma, a terminal brain cancer, Uden used the final chapter of her life to fight for the rights of others facing similar diagnoses. According to a July 27 *Minnesota Star Tribune* obituary by Reid Forgrave, “Uden became the most powerful voice for medical aid in dying legislation in Minnesota last winter, testifying to Capitol committees, doing interviews and press conferences with 36 electrodes attached to her scalp, part of a medical device she hoped could add months, even years, to her life.”

Despite her best efforts, including long sessions at the Minnesota State Capitol with legislators, the legislation Uden advocated for did not pass in time for her to benefit from it, though her family continues to fight for this cause, hoping her story will inspire change.

In Uden’s honor, the Alumni Board unanimously selected her as Alumna of the Year, a testament to the profound impact she made during her lifetime. “It is a little unusual to have someone who so recently completed their term on the board be nominated,” says Hansen. “Board members usually like to give a little time and space between board service and that honor, but it was unanimous. They really wanted to make the award while she was still able to appreciate it.” Hansen was able to deliver the news in person. “In the early summer, when she went into full time hospice at home, I was very fortunate to be among several members of the Metro State community to go to her home to see her. I asked the folks in our Marketing Department to create a mockup of the cover of the magazine and I framed it and brought it out to her. She was



Pres. Ginny Arthur, Nancy Uden, Jim Uden and Dr. Rassule Hadidi, Dean of the College of Business and Management in February 2024

very proud. I will always be grateful to have had that moment with her.”

A legacy that lives on

Nancy Uden’s life was one of service, resilience, and unwavering dedication to the communities she cherished. Her contributions to Metro State University as an alumna, leader, and advocate are immeasurable, and her influence will be felt for years to come. From her tireless work on the Alumni Board to her advocacy for students and alumni, Nancy left an indelible mark on everyone she encountered.

As we celebrate Uden’s life and legacy, we are reminded of the power of one person to make a difference. She was not only a champion for Metro State but also a champion for the power of potential—one who believed every individual’s ability to develop and worked tirelessly to ensure that others had the opportunity to succeed. Her memory will forever inspire those who knew her, and her legacy will continue to guide the mission of Metro State University: empowering students to achieve their goals and make a difference in their own communities. In this way, Nancy Uden’s spirit lives on, forever a part of the Metro State family.

If you would like to make a gift to the Alumni Professional Development Fund in honor of Nancy’s vision of our alumni community supporting recent graduates, visit metrostate.edu/give/give-now.

The Metro Fund—inspiring confidence



A few weeks ago, while walking to my office from the parking ramp, I spotted someone on campus looking closely at our campus map. After asking if I could help them find where they wanted to go, I asked what brought them to campus. They shared they were finally ready to enroll to get the bachelor's degree they had wanted to pursue for more than ten years. As we walked together to Founders Hall, they shared they were both anxious and nervous about returning to school. Thanks to the generous support of alumni and friends of Metro State, I could reassure them that Metro State is committed to maintaining those support systems and a welcoming community to empower them in their educational journey.

Because of you and the Metro Fund, Metro State offers rich and meaningful experiences on campus that create community and a sense of belonging to campus.

Because of you and the Metro Fund, we partner with our colleagues to provide meaningful career readiness initiatives that prepare our students for the ever-changing work environment.

Because of you and the Metro Fund, we have created a university that believes in the power of education—an education for students from all walks of life—and meets the needs of an ever-changing, diverse community of learners.

Gifts to the Metro Fund play a critical role in the communities we serve and give students confidence in their decision to return to school. Your generosity supports outreach programs, partnerships, and initiatives that address societal inequities and contribute to the overall well-being of our communities. Our students depend on your support, and I invite you to join our community of donors by making a gift today.

Sincerely,

Will Ruckel
Director of Annual Giving and Stewardship

Sponsor success at Rise to Shine 2025

Last year's inaugural Rise to Shine event helped to raise nearly \$60,000, funding scholarship awards for 39 deserving students at Metro State University! These students represent a variety of majors and backgrounds; each with their own story of perseverance, accomplishment, goals for the future, and a shared sense of gratitude for the support that made their scholarship possible.

The next Rise to Shine will be held on Thursday, April 24, 2025. We anticipate more than 150 business and community leaders will join us, and sponsors of this event will receive strategic, customized recognitions and benefits to create invaluable impressions and uplift the visibility of a partnership like this.

If you are interested in learning more about sponsorship packages available for the 2025 Rise to Shine



event, please contact Chris Nelson, Corporate and Foundation Relations director via email (christine.nelson@metrostate.edu) or phone 651.793.1804.

By Joshua Windham

College of Individualized Studies

Lutunji Abram '07, Minneapolis, celebrated two years owning her business, Lutunji's Palate Bakery & Café.

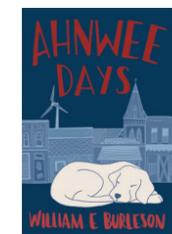


Kate Barr '82, Saint Paul, recently retired as president and CEO of Propel. Kate has led nonprofits in various capacities for more than 23 years.



Debbie Beck '98, Saint Paul, founded Free Book Buggie, a nonprofit that travels to community events, school

celebrations, and neighborhood gatherings. The focus is to welcome kids to come inside and hope they leave with as many books as they want, all free of charge.



William Burleson '02, Minneapolis, has a new novel coming out on October 1, 2024. The novel, *Ahnwee Days*, takes place in western Minnesota, in the fictional town of Ahnwee. It's a satire, but also highlights the struggles that lie within small towns. The book is available for purchase online at www.williamburleson.com and in stores.

Note: All towns are in Minnesota unless otherwise noted



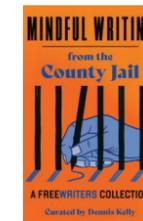
Nancy Erbe '81, Long Beach, California, recently received her fifth Fulbright Award and will spend time in

India focusing on access to justice and experiential learning.



Tameka Jones '14, Saint Paul, founder and CEO of Lip Esteem, was recently chosen by the Minnesota Vikings to provide lipstick for the

Minnesota Vikings Cheerleaders during the upcoming football season.



Dennis Kelly '75, Saint Paul, just released a book of micro-stories called, "Mindful Writing from the County Jail," a collection of stories written by men and

women being held in county jails. The book allows the reader to become a compassionate witness into the lives of jailed individuals and come away with an understanding of the humanity and hope in each story. The book is available on Amazon and at www.denniskellywriter.com.



J.C. McWilliams '92, Wildwood, Missouri, was recently promoted to senior vice president and chief managed

care officer for BJC Health System, the largest health system in the state of Missouri.

Vickie Walker '15, Chicago, Illinois, is the vice president of Supply Chain and Operations at Cubii. In addition, Walker is the COO and founder of OpExec Group, LLC.

College of Sciences

Asad Aliweyd '09, Eden Prairie, has been included in Marquis Who's Who. Dr. Aliweyd is honored for his work in the field of economic development and his passion for including other immigrants in his work with the New American Development Center.

Jodin Morey '15, Syracuse, New York, recently wrote an article for Mathematical Association of America's Math Values blog. Morey shared about his experiences as an older graduate student.

College of Nursing and Health Sciences

Brett Anderson '14, Saint Paul, is a 40 under 40 honoree in Twin Cities Business Journal. Anderson is a senior vice president, chief ecosystem and operations officer at Ecumen.

Heather Overland '21, Barnum, was recently hired at Aspirus St. Luke's Hospital Anesthesia, as an advanced practice registered nurse.

College of Business Management



Sarah Aronovici '09, Ormond Beach, Florida, was recently hired as Marvin's new vice president of information technology and operations. With

more than two decades of systems planning, strategy, and leadership experience, Aronovici will provide overall strategic and operational leadership for Marvin's data, advanced analytics, and emerging technology solutions.



Samuel Edmunds '02, Burnsville, recently took office as the president of the Minnesota State Bar Association. Edmunds, a partner at Seiben

Edmunds Miller, was also named the Attorney of the Year by *Minnesota Lawyer* in 2018 and 2020. One notable effort contributing to this recognition was the Peacetime Emergency Free Expungement Program, launched by Sieben and Edmunds, to help laid-off workers with previous criminal convictions improve their job prospects during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Angela L'Esperance '14, Hopkins, was honored in Twin Cities Business Journal as a 40 under 40. L'Esperance is the owner and founder of Ms. Jane Accounting, an all-female firm specializing in cannabis accounting.

College of Liberal Arts

Brielle Bredsten '13, Carlton, is an award-winning professional writer, photographer, and editor based in rural Minnesota. Over the past decade, Bredsten has contributed more than 1,000 articles, feature stories, nonprofit press releases, photographs, and columns. She is currently a business reporter for the *Duluth News Tribune*.

Tracy Byrd '14, Minneapolis, was named Minnesota teacher of the Year 2024. Byrd teaches English at Washburn High School in Minneapolis.

Dawn Holmquist '18, LeRoy, recently supported the staged reading of *SECRETS* written by **Deneal Trueblood** '20. Holmquist and Trueblood are both Metro State graduates, and *SECRETS* was written during their studies there.

Erik Suchy '21, North Saint Paul, is the new staff writer at *Press Publications* in White Bear Lake.

Deneal Trueblood '20, Minneapolis, wrote the play *SECRETS*, which was recently staged in LeRoy, Minnesota. *SECRETS* won Metro State's playwriting contest. The play will be staged with support from Humanities 101 LLC.

College of Community Studies and Public Affairs

Luther Krueger '05, Minneapolis, was recently featured on *The Great Simplification* podcast with Nate Hagens, which explores the systems science underpinning the human predicament. Krueger discussed the ins and outs of solar cooking, and the impact it can have on the environment and our everyday lives.

Nicole Miller '04, Wyoming, was recently hired as the new city administrator for Lake Elmo. Most recently, Miller served as assistant city manager in St. Anthony.

Ploua Yang '18, Saint Paul, is currently the legislative aid to Saint Paul Council Member Nelsie Yang. Previously, Yang was a program manager for the Coalition of Asian American Leaders, and she also spent four years in the office of Gov. Tim Walz and Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan, as a policy manager and senior public engagement liaison.

Starting a business? Getting a promotion? Retiring? Share your big news with us, and you may see yourself in *buzz* magazine. Email your news item and a photograph of yourself to alumni.relations@metrostate.edu.

Dr. Susan Rydell, named emerita faculty

Dr. Susan Rydell, a foundational figure at Metro State University, retired in the summer of 2024; her 53-year career spanned the time from the university's beginnings as Minnesota Metropolitan State College to the present. Her career as an instructor began with guiding students in developing degree plans before formal courses. Dr. Rydell's time as an instructor for what is now the Individualized Studies BA has been a constant through those years while also taking on administrative roles as needed, including founding dean of the Minneapolis campus in 1974, coordinating faculty development as associate dean of learning resources in the 1970s and 1980s, and interim dean of what was at the time called First College (now College of Individualized Studies).

In describing the early days of Metro State, Dr. Rydell says, "In December 1971 at Metro State, there were only a handful of faculty and staff, a few desks, a typewriter, and no



Dr. Susan Rydell

money. Admission requirements and forms, degree requirements, and a curriculum were among the things that needed to be developed for the admission of the first 50 students in February 1972."

Over her notable career at Metro State, Dr. Rydell has left a lasting impression on students, now

alumni, who benefitted from her commitment to student-centered learning. Her dedication to Metro State and willingness to go above and beyond leave a powerful legacy.



Congratulations to Metro State University's Spring 2024 Emeriti honorees. The following individuals have demonstrated continued dedication to Metro State and a willingness to go above and beyond. They leave powerful legacies of service and selflessness.

- David Bahn**—Professor Emeritus
- Nadine Haley**—Professor Emerita
- Beverly Hill**—Professor Emerita
- David O'Hara**—Professor Emeritus
- Carol Reid**—Professor Emerita
- Susan Rydell**—Professor Emerita
- Lupe Sanchez**—Staff Emerita

In Memoriam

- Dianne Chirpich** '79, Plymouth
- Donald Eubanks** '97, Roseville
- David Fallon** '92, Alexandria
- George Fortmeyer** '77, Shoreview
- Kathryn Francy-Payton** '76, Mahtomedi
- Ronald Graham** '76, Watkins

- Terry Hake** '90, Minneapolis
- Audrey Haller** '90, Stillwater
- Thomas Harmon** '84, Minneapolis
- Miriam Jaberg** '77, New Brighton
- Kathryn Meyer** '84, Saint Paul
- Lois Schoenrock** '80, Hot Spring, Arkansas

- Perry Silverman** '96, Minnetonka
- Linda Steen** '80, Forest Lake
- Donald Stenger** '08, Burnsville
- Dean Strehlo** '08, Eden Prairie
- Richard Tornquist** '83, Willmar
- Nancy Uden** '88, Corcoran

Small acts change lives

Matt Moe '12, vice president of the Metro State Alumni Board, pauses to reflect when asked if he is a “Why” or a “Why Not” person. Considering the question, Moe replies, “I am a ‘Why’ person. I like to ask a lot of questions. If you have a strong ‘Why,’ you can accomplish anything.” Before an alumni board meeting on a rainy Tuesday, he reflected on his “Why” for being an involved alum at Metro State University.

How did you learn about Metro State?

I learned about Metro State through a family connection. I started at St. Cloud State but wanted to be in the Twin Cities. I thought I would have to transfer to the U of M or St. Thomas. My dad was an adjunct faculty member at Hennepin Tech, and he suggested Metro State might be a good opportunity for me. I looked into it, and the smooth transfer process appealed to me.

Is there a particular class or faculty member that stands out to you?

I appreciated the faculty in my business classes. I am an auditory learner, and the faculty’s responsiveness to many different learning styles made a difference. I also appreciated the faculty members who were working in their fields and who were able to relate what we were learning to real-world job experiences.

How did Metro State shape your career?

At Metro State, I learned how to learn. It provided me with a base of knowledge, and I learned about the programs and, subsequently, careers that would fit me. I started with accounting but realized that finance was a better fit as I progressed. Finance is the foundation. Metro State gave me my start; I wouldn’t be where I am today without Metro State.



Matt Moe

Photo by Jeff Achen

Why did you decide to become involved with alumni and foundation boards?

Nancy Uden reached out to me on LinkedIn. She was very proud to be an alum and suggested that serving on the board would be a way for me to give back. Metro State is a hidden gem, and people must know about it locally and nationally.

What inspires you to give philanthropically to Metro State?

I was adopted and raised to believe that if you have been blessed, be a blessing. I know that there is always someone worse off, and I understand that even something I may consider a small act can be life-changing for someone else. I hope to make a student’s life easier or impact someone’s future success. I want to help give students a leg up and inspire them to do the same in the future.

Metro State values at work: Naserian Makeseni '22

Metro State alumni make a difference in our community locally and around the world. Naserian Makeseni '22 was drawn to Metro State because of the university’s values. As an international student studying during the COVID-19 pandemic, she received a grant through the Metro State University Foundation to help her manage expenses while earning her MBA. She possesses a deep sense of responsibility and a passion for giving back to her community, leading her to co-found Pastoralists, Women, and Youth Development Organization (PAWYO) in her home country of Tanzania, working to alleviate poverty and uplift communities through sustainable sheep and cattle farming.

Tell us about PAWYO.

I currently serve as the executive director. Our mission is to alleviate poverty and uplift pastoralist communities, women, and youth by promoting sustainable pastoralism and climate-smart livestock practices.

Last year, I led a group discussion with the indigenous pastoralist community in the Simanjiro District. We identified climate change as a major challenge, contributing to the loss of cattle, increased poverty, hunger, and food insecurity. An elder from the community explained that many pastoralists believe the impacts of climate change will pass quickly, unaware of the long-term sustainability issues. While some have implemented adaptation strategies like rotational grazing and selling healthier cattle to combat water scarcity, there is limited knowledge about the root causes of climate change.

Livestock is the primary livelihood for more than 80% of Simanjiro’s population, with nearly 95% relying on their animals for sustenance. However, these pastoralists are vulnerable to the devastating effects of climate change. PAWYO is committed to supporting these communities through climate-smart livestock practices, sustainable land use, and promoting entrepreneurship among women and youth.



Naserian Makeseni '22 and a community of women in the Simanjiro District, Tanzania

How did your education at Metro State prepare you for the work you’re doing in the community now?

Metro State was one of the most nurturing and supportive institutions I have ever attended, and I will always be profoundly grateful for my time there. The faculty, staff, and classmates were instrumental in my success. In 2020, during a challenging period when I was far from home in Tanzania, their support was a beacon of hope. Their kindness and understanding helped me overcome those difficulties.

The knowledge and skills I gained from Metro State’s esteemed faculty are invaluable. The business and management courses I took directly inform my current role as executive director. I am committed to practicing inclusivity, equity, and anti-racism—values deeply instilled in me at Metro State. For this, I will always remain grateful.

How can alumni learn more about your organization and ways to support your work?

You can contact info@pawyo.or.tz. We are still working to develop our website pawyo.or.tz.



From the Director

KRISTINE HANSEN '07

Over the last several months, I have been talking with Metro State alumni and colleagues about what it means for our alumni to be active participants in the university's life. We have discussed the benefits to students, the health and future of the university, and the alumni themselves. These are challenging conversations that often lead to more questions than they answer.

Over time, we have come to call this alumni involvement "engagement." We have settled on four pathways to engagement that fit together like a puzzle: attending events, taking action based on communication, volunteering, and philanthropy. The commonality of all of these measures is that they involve some degree of action on your part as an alum. The Alumni Board of Directors is an active partner in this work, and over the next year, we will be working to create pathways and solicit your input on how each of these puzzle pieces can fit with your life.

I frequently hear from alumni that they are interested in helping students, but sometimes, the pathways are unclear, or their time is limited. Last spring, we launched our first Alumni Week of Service and followed it up with a second this fall. We have been

pleased with the results and will host another week of service from March 24 to 28. Mark your calendars and watch for details in the upcoming issue of the alumni e-newsletter. This winter, you will also find a refreshed alumni volunteer webpage—metrostate.edu/alumni/volunteer—a hub for all our core opportunities. Look for it to roll out in early January 2025.

In this issue of *buzz* magazine, we celebrate the life and commitment of Nancy Uden, our alumna of the year. I was fortunate to count Nancy as a volunteer partner, friend, and occasional mentor. Nancy's work on the alumni board lit a spark for many at Metro. Her example inspires and challenges those who work to engage alumni and lift the university.

As the alumni director, I look forward to helping you find the right fit in the engagement puzzle, and I welcome your feedback.

Stay Well,

Kristine Hansen '07
Director of Alumni Relations

Get Involved

There are many ways to stay connected to Metro State after graduation. The Alumni Association hosts events and lifelong learning opportunities, sends regular e-newsletters to keep you up to date on university news and activities, and sponsors volunteer opportunities to create meaningful ways to engage with students and your fellow alumni!

Find volunteer opportunities at metrostate.edu/alumni/volunteer.

Follow us on social media:
[Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#)

Subscribe to the alumni e-newsletter by visiting metrostate.edu/alumni.



Volunteers in the student community garden during the week of service.



President Arthur and Rep. Jess Hanson '24 at the 2024 Breakfast at the Capitol.



Alumni enjoying an evening out at the St. Paul Saints game.



Alumni volunteers at the 2024 Breakfast at the Capitol.



Week of Service volunteers serving lunch at Union Gospel Mission in Saint Paul.

Follow the Metro State Alumni Association on Facebook. facebook.com/MetroStateAlumni/

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