Stay in Touch…

The MSU College of Arts & Letters is committed to growing and celebrating our strong alumni community and encourages all graduates to stay connected with their alma mater.

Here are a few ways to do just that:

Share Your News
Started a new job? Traveled somewhere exciting? Received an award or recognition? We want to know! Contact us at alumni@cal.msu.edu and be sure to include your graduation year and degree information.

Stay Connected
Visit the College’s website and social media: cal.msu.edu

Join Our Alumni Association
Your annual or lifetime MSUAA membership supports student scholarships, awards for outstanding faculty and students, and College events! By becoming a member, you will instantly be connected to a wonderful network of College of Arts & Letters alumni!

Stay involved—join today! Visit alumni.msu.edu for membership information.

Become a College Alumni Board Member
The College of Arts & Letters Alumni Association Board of Directors enhances support and promotion of the College, as well as faculty, current and future students, and friends. The Alumni Board provides advisory leadership on behalf of our alumni. As a group, the Alumni Board convenes a minimum of three times per year to discuss alumni activities; College Alumni Association membership growth; development of initiatives and funding support for student groups, scholarships, and programs; as well as sponsorship of important academic programs, workshops, and guest speakers that enhance the College of Arts & Letters student experience.

If you are interested in serving on the College Alumni Association Board of Directors or know someone who would be a great addition to the board, download the application from cal.msu.edu/alumni and return it with a current resume.

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LETTER FROM THE DEAN
Welcome to Our 2016 MUSES Magazine

LETTER FROM ADVANCEMENT
Thank you all for best fundraising year ever!

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN
Fundraising Breaks All Records

CITIZEN SCHOLARS PROGRAM LAUNCHES

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MSU LEADS MULTI-UNIVERSITY LANGUAGE-LEARNING EFFORT

MEDIA ARTS COLLABORATIVE
TRANSFORMING STUDENT EXPERIENCES

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES ABOUND
IN STAGE DOOR PRODUCTION

NEW SCENE SHOP BRINGS THEATRE TO LIFE

AAHD MARKS FIRST YEAR MANAGING (SCENE) METROSPACE GALLERY

NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR DISCUSSES WRITING WITH STUDENTS
Emily St. John Mandel

EXPLORING ISLAMOPHOBIA

CONJECTER
Students Design App to Connect Spartans

USING THEATRE TO HELP KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS Ryan Duda

PROVIDING CRITICAL SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TRANSITIONS

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Welcome to Our 2016 MUSES Magazine!

In reflecting on my first year as Dean of the College of Arts & Letters, I am struck by the incredible positive impact a Michigan State University education rooted in the liberal arts endeavor can have on the world we share. From the engaged research our faculty undertake to enable interdisciplinary responses to global challenges, to the experiential learning opportunities that shape our students into the citizen leaders of tomorrow, the liberal arts education we advance in the College of Arts & Letters has never been more vibrant or essential.

Like the Red Cedar River runs through campus, the liberal arts endeavor runs through everything we do at Michigan State University. It empowers students to communicate with eloquence, embrace diversity with grace, perceive globally with imagination, and respond to complexity with nuance. This, in turn, enriches the world we share by engaging communities in ways that enable them to excel while helping provide a richer, more fulfilling human experience.

These virtues of a liberal arts education animate our efforts to establish the College of Arts & Letters as an international leader in the arts and humanities. These efforts are grounded in three core priorities: to recruit and retain the very best, most diverse, and creative faculty; to educate the innovative faculty of tomorrow through world-class graduate programs; and to cultivate the next generation of citizen leaders by providing transformative educational experiences for our undergraduates that will prepare them for meaningful careers.

I am pleased to report that we have made important progress on each of these priorities this year. We have just completed a record-breaking year of fundraising, led by gifts for three endowed faculty positions that will enable us to attract extraordinary faculty to the College.

We’ve invested significant resources into a signature graduate student recruitment program that has enabled us to recruit the very best of a new generation of teachers and scholars who will inspire our students and address pressing challenges through innovative, engaged scholarship.

The newly proposed MSU Center for Interdisciplinarity will enhance graduate education across the University by advancing interdisciplinary research and pedagogy in multiple fields of study—from natural and social science to engineering and agriculture, from education to the arts and humanities.

We also introduced two new programs aimed at cultivating and enriching student and faculty experiential learning.

The Citizen Scholars program challenges students who wish to participate in the program to achieve a high level of academic excellence, rewards them for their achievement with financial support, and then encourages additional activities such as internships, study abroad or undergraduate research that will position them to be citizen leaders for the 21st century. Launched to begin in fall 2016, this program is already very popular with incoming students. The impact that support can have for this program will be dramatic and immediate for our students.

The Media Arts Collaborative (MAC) is designed to provide a coordinated way to facilitate collaborative projects across colleges that enrich the undergraduate learning experience and provide faculty and students opportunities to work together on innovative media arts projects.

For more information, read the articles about Citizen Scholars on page 6 and on the Media Arts Collaborative on page 12.

As you thumb through this issue of MUSES, I hope you will take time to read about the people and programs that the College supports as well as those who, in turn, support us. From research, teaching, and scholarship to internships, study abroad, and post-graduation success, these are the stories of our faculty, students, alumni, and staff.

Each reflects the College’s inclusive culture of academic excellence that remains rooted in the power of varied viewpoints and diverse backgrounds. By cultivating the capacities to think critically, imagine creatively, and respond ethically, we engage the world’s most challenging social, cultural, and ethical questions in order to create a more just and better world.

Still, as we all know, maintaining and expanding our reach and influence is an expensive proposition. But, with your help, we will realize the challenging goals we’ve set for ourselves.

With new investment, we can sustain excellence and leverage opportunities that inspire the next generation of thinkers and leaders, enhance the arts, and support leading research.

With warm regards,

Christopher P. Long
Dean of the College of Arts & Letters
Greetings from East Lansing! With the Empower Extraordinary Campaign heading into the final two years, the College of Arts & Letters is proud to announce that we are more than 75% of the way toward our $20 million goal. This is possible entirely because of the commitment of our alumni and friends who are dedicated to the mission of the College and Michigan State University.

A major priority of the Empower Extraordinary Campaign is endowed chairs. The ability of the University to hire, recruit, and retain the very best faculty has a lasting impact on our undergraduate students, graduate students, and the life of the institution long-term. The College of Arts & Letters is very pleased to have two new endowed chairs to date.

We especially want to recognize the William and Audrey Farber family and Michael (BA History 1966) and Elaine Serling for their generosity in funding the William and Audrey Farber Family Chair in Holocaust Studies and European Jewish History. We are pleased to welcome Professor Amy Simon, who was appointed to this new position (See story, page 99).

In addition, we are most appreciative of Henry O. Timnick (BA Business 1955, MA Business 1958) for his gift to fund the Timnick Chair in the Humanities held by Associate Professor Kyle Powys Whyte in the Department of Philosophy.

As we move into the final phases of the Empower Extraordinary Campaign, we have three key priorities: endowed faculty positions, graduate student support, and enriching the undergraduate experience through initiatives such as the Citizen Scholars Program and the Media Arts Collaborative.

We look forward to working with alumni and friends who are committed to supporting our students and faculty through these initiatives.

Here in Linton Hall, we are delighted to welcome two new team members to the Development and Alumni Relations Office. Marcia LeVigne joined us in July 2016 as Assistant Director of Development. A 2012 James Madison graduate, Marcia came to the College from the Michigan House Democratic Fund. Burinda Clark began work in December 2015 as Development Assistant. Burinda, who also is an MSU graduate, joined us from the College of Human Medicine Advancement team.

Also last fall, College of Arts & Letters alumna Martha Mayhood Mertz (BA Women’s Studies and Psychology 2001) received the College of Arts & Letters Distinguished Alumni Award as well as the 2015 MSU Alumni Association Distinguished Alumni Award.

Thank you all for best fundraising year ever!

Due to various members’ terms ending, we have seven new members of the College of Arts & Letters Alumni Board of Directors and a new President, Kate M. Sonka (BA Spanish 2005) of Lansing, Michigan. We greatly appreciate our Alumni Board of Directors members – past and present – for their support and promotion of the College, its faculty, current and future students, and friends. A list of Alumni Board members and officers is on page 89.

I would be remiss if I didn’t also thank our wonderful and dedicated campaign volunteers. Your dedication to, and support of, the College of Arts & Letters through the Empower Extraordinary Campaign supports our students and faculty, strengthens the entire MSU community, and helps ensure the College’s continued strength and leadership in higher education.

In closing, I hope you will join me in helping MSU advance the common good with uncommon will as we empower students and faculty to achieve their life dreams.

Sincerely,

Bridget L. Paff, Senior Director
Development and Alumni Relations
Thanks to the generosity of alumni and friends, Michigan State University’s College of Arts & Letters surpassed its $10 million Empower Extraordinary Capital Campaign goal a little over a year after the public phase of the campaign kicked off.

“This early success was made possible by our generous donors,” said College of Arts & Letters Dean Christopher P. Long. “It offers us a tremendous opportunity to strengthen a culture of philanthropy that will move the College from a position of national prominence to one of international leadership.”

Looking to build upon this momentum, the College of Arts & Letters doubled its goal to $20 million for the final phase of the campaign, which runs through 2018.

To enable the College to reach this new goal, three core fundraising priorities were identified:

• endowed faculty positions
• graduate fellowships
• enriching the undergraduate experience

“At the heart of this new campaign goal is an investment in people,” Long said. “Attracting, retaining, and cultivating talent will enable us to elevate the education we provide to the next generation of engaged and conscientious citizen leaders.”

A key initiative within the undergraduate experience priority is the Citizen Scholars program, which is designed to prepare the next generation of diverse, high-achieving, and engaged citizen leaders. Students in the program will be challenged to perform at a higher level academically while gaining experience in experiential learning environments. They will receive financial assistance to use on study abroad, internships, undergraduate research, or other approved educational experiences.

Several major gifts were instrumental to the College of Arts & Letters reaching its initial campaign goal. They include:

• **Henry O. Timnick** (BA Business ’55, MA Business ’58) gifted $2 million to endow the Timnick Chair in the Humanities

• **William and Audrey Farber Family Foundation** gifted $1.5 million to endow the William and Audrey Farber Family Chair in Holocaust Studies and European Jewish History

• **Michael (BA History ’66, JD College of Law ’70) and Elaine Serling** gifted $500,000 toward the endowment for the Chair in Holocaust Studies and European Jewish History

• **Sam (University Distinguished Professor Emeritus) and Mary Austin** gifted $300,000 as lead donors among a group of retired faculty who contributed $750,000 to build a new campus home for MSU’s Summer Circle Theatre

The College of Arts & Letters would like to thank the key campaign volunteers for their support and dedication in the capital campaign effort. They include:

• **Kathleen Flanagan** (BA English ’73)

• **Bill (BA History ’71) and Pamela Lowe**

• **Michael Serling** (BA History ’66, JD College of Law ’70)

• **Sara (BA English ’62) and David Taft** (PhD Chemistry ’63)

MSU’s $1.5 billion Empower Extraordinary Capital Campaign, officially announced in October 2014, will enable the University to significantly increase its endowment and make substantial new strategic investments on campus and around the world.
**EMPOWER EXTRAORDINARY**
THE CAMPAIGN for MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

$15,761,167
RAISED TO DATE FOR CAMPAIGN

From July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2016
OVERALL GOAL: $20,000,000

**A FORCE FOR CREATIVITY, DISCOVERY, AND LEARNING**
$9,417,463
of $8,500,000 Goal

**AN ENGINE OF OPPORTUNITY**
$3,367,104
of $8,000,000 Goal

**A GLOBAL PROBLEM SOLVER**
$342,413
of $3,000,000 Goal

**A VIBRANT COMMUNITY**
$2,634,187
of $500,000 Goal

SUPPORT IS COMING FROM

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<th>Total Donors</th>
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Designed to prepare the next generation of diverse, high-achieving, and engaged citizen leaders who are able to meet the challenges of the 21st century, this unique scholarly program empowers students to embrace difference, deliberate publicly, think critically, and work collaboratively with local, national, and global organizations to create positive change.

“The Citizen Scholars program is designed to put an arts and humanities education into practice in a world in dire need of creative, visionary, and thoughtful citizen leaders,” said Christopher P. Long, Dean of the College of Arts & Letters. “The program empowers students to bring their education and their best selves to the wider world in order to transform it for the better.”

The program has three fundamental dimensions: Aspiration, Reward, and High Expectations.

**Aspiration**
Any student with at least one major in the College of Arts & Letters is invited to aspire to be a Citizen Scholar and perform their way into the program.

“We ask students to commit themselves to hard work, to aspire to reach beyond what they can currently grasp, and to embrace the kinds of experiences that will enable them to become better people capable of creating a more just and responsible world,” Long said.

Starting as freshmen, students who aspire to be Citizen Scholars take a first-year sequence of courses that emphasize excellent writing and an integrative approach to arts and humanities as engaged with the challenges the world faces.

Through the Citizen Scholars program, students are expected to integrate ethical leadership and civic responsibility into their undergraduate experience.

**Reward**
Students who demonstrate sustained academic excellence over two semesters are admitted as Citizen Scholars and awarded $5,000 of enrichment funding to be used for study abroad or study away, undergraduate research, internships, or other enrichment opportunities. Citizen Scholars also are given priority status for paid undergraduate research opportunities as well as priority access to internships.

“We spoke with employers, alumni, and faculty about what they look for in effective graduates,” Long said. “In the process, it became clear that we need to provide our students with internship opportunities, study abroad experiences, and creative outlets through research and other activities that enable them to identify new solutions to intractable problems and to see the power of a liberal arts education when it is put into practice in the real world.”

**Helping Students Succeed**
Designed to bring out the best in students, the standards of the program are high.

Support structures have been put in place to enable students to understand the high expectations of the program as well as how to achieve them. The program also has a dedicated director, advisor, career consultant, and peer mentors, all of whom are committed to ensuring student success.

Associate Professor of English Sandra Logan was named the inaugural Director of the Citizen Scholars program and started in this new position on July 1.

Part of the program requires students become part of the Arts & Letters alumni network.

“One of the things we work with them on is understanding the power of networking,” Long said. “We want them to begin to think about how their lives are connected to and enriched by the broader arts and humanities community so they understand the transformative possibilities that open when the values of an arts and humanities education are put into practice to make a difference in the world.”

The College of Arts & Letters’ Citizen Scholars program, which kicked off this fall with more than 90 students enrolled, is at the center of a strategic initiative to enrich the undergraduate experience, diversify the student body, and ensure the retention and academic success of students within the College.
MSU’s Department of Art, Art History, and Design (AAHD) rolled out a new Graphic Design undergraduate major during the spring 2016 term.

“This new major provides students with the advanced technical knowledge, artistic control, and professional expertise to create meaningful communicative designs reflective of their individual artistic styles, their beliefs, and their world view,” said College of Arts & Letters Dean Christopher P. Long. “Graphic design informs so many aspects of our lives that it is critical to give students a broad appreciation of its basic principles and a deep understanding of its capacity to shape relationships and convey meaning.”

The new major offers students more intensive upper-level development in the graphic design discipline and more clearly establishes a link to the profession and its career opportunities.

“Our curriculum is a sequence of learning objectives that addresses all the current needs for a professional degree in graphic design,” said Chris Corneal, AAHD Chair and Associate Professor of Graphic Design.

Beginning with enduring design foundations, the Graphic Design coursework progresses toward complexity in the upper-level classes. Form, typography, packaging, motion, interactive web, environmental systems, and identity systems all are included.

“The Graphic Design major reinforces the importance of visual communication as an area of study and practice,” said Assistant Professor Rebecca Tegtmeyer, co-coordinator of the program. “It acknowledges its role in society as a vital force in facilitating change, creating awareness, and influencing progress in how people view information as passive to active participants.”

Each year, Graphic Design students display their best work for critique and comment by faculty, friends, and visitors during Design Day.
Students Laud New Major
In the short time the new Graphic Design major and minor have been offered, the program has grown to more than 60 students majoring in Graphic Design and more than 220 minors. As word continues to spread about the exciting developments in these new programs, expectations are that enrollment will continue to increase over the next few years.

“As an aspiring graphic design professional, it’s important that I come out of school with a BFA in Graphic Design, because today’s employers expect it,” said senior Professional Writing major Will Mianecki, who recently added a second major in Graphic Design. The program strives to challenge students to think about and practice design from all levels, from components of form to systems of community, and establishes a workable skill set.

“As someone who wants to be a graphic designer, I feel the advantages of the major are that you’re more specialized,” Graphic Design junior Lindsay Poll said. “You’re learning more about graphic design, working more on it, and doing more of what you will be doing after you graduate.”

Faculty: A Strength of the Program
A major strength of the Graphic Design program is its dedicated faculty, including Corneal, Tegtmeyer, Associate Professor Kelly Salchow MacArthur, who is a co-coordinator of the program, and two recently hired tenure-system faculty, Assistant Professors Zach Kaiser and Ben Van Dyke, who are helping ramp up the program’s interactive and new media design areas.

All five faculty members stress that the addition of the major is both in response to continuing gains in prominence and respect for the role of design in business, as well as a move to affirm the rigor and professionalism of MSU’s Graphic Design curriculum.

“We are leaders in facilitating change in meaningful ways,” Tegtmeyer said. “As a result, businesses value and hire graphic designers, a fact borne out by recent job figures and expanding industry roles and titles.”

Job Market Needs for Graphic Designers
Upon graduation, Graphic Design majors have many career opportunities from which to choose.

Graphic designers are needed for identity systems; way-finding and environmental signage; exhibitions; website design; software; mobile and user interfaces; film and broadcast television graphics and titles; typeface design; packaging; poster design; corporate brand development; retail design and more.

“Graduates of the program generally enter the field as entry-level graphic designers and move up the ladder at a reasonable pace to become creative directors and art directors,” said Associate Professor Kelly Salchow MacArthur, co-coordinator of the program. “Positions exist in large and small design firms; advertising, marketing, and public relations agencies; production companies; publishing companies; and in-house corporate and organizational design offices.”

The skill sets and design areas taught at MSU are becoming more and more important to businesses, corporations, and organizations as designers are increasingly paving the way in creative innovation.

“Today’s graduates are expected to have a working knowledge of both print and interactive design, as well as have professional experience before they graduate,” Salchow MacArthur said. “Our graduates are increasingly being called upon to work on multiple simultaneous projects and lead teams having wide-ranging roles in the execution of large design strategies.”

The College’s Graphic Design alumni go on to work at major agencies such as Leo Burnett, MRM/McCann, Campbell Ewald, and top companies such as Quicken Loans, Team Detroit, General Motors, Ford Motor Company, Shift Digital, Domino’s, and TechSmith Corporation. Common job titles include Graphic Designer, Art Director, Creative Director, User Experience Designer, Media Manager, Web Designer, Marketing Specialist, Mobile Designer, Packaging Designer, Creative Producer, and Communications Coordinator.

Graphic Design students in Kelly Salchow MacArthur’s 3-D Design class work in teams on design projects.
Michigan State University will use a three-year, $1.2 million grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to lead a multi-university research project to improve the teaching of less commonly taught languages (LCTLs). Faculty from MSU’s Center for Language Teaching Advancement (CeLTA), housed in the College of Arts & Letters, will direct the initiative on behalf of the Big Ten Academic Alliance (formerly the Committee on Institutional Cooperation).

“Less commonly taught languages are becoming increasingly important in a global economy,” said University Distinguished Professor Susan Gass, Co-director of CeLTA and Director of MSU’s Second Language Studies Program. “By working collaboratively with institutions in the Big Ten Academic Alliance, MSU will be in a position to use its many strengths in language teaching and learning to further the general mission of creating world-class language programs.”

The project builds upon CourseShare, developed by the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), to provide LCTL access to Big Ten Academic Alliance institutions.

Throughout the next three years, the consortium hopes to develop templates for the online teaching of LCTLs, which will be shared among Big Ten Academic Alliance institutions, so more students nationwide will achieve high proficiency in these languages.

At the universities, most funding for language instruction has gone toward more commonly taught languages, Gass said. So LCTL research and instruction have encountered difficulties, such as lack of human and financial resources.

CourseShare has addressed some of those challenges, but the new partnership will more effectively coordinate offerings to reflect best practices in language teaching, she said.

“The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant further recognizes MSU as an international leader in language research and pedagogy,” said Christopher P. Long, Dean of the College of Arts & Letters, who is principal investigator of the grant. “The expertise the Big Ten Academic Alliance brings to the study of language acquisition is unparalleled. We at MSU are thrilled to help facilitate collaboration among such a talented group of scholars and institutions.”

The partnership will focus on both instruction research and language research. By the end of the first year, the consortium hopes all members of the working group will be familiar with best practices in assessment and curriculum development.

Collectively, Big Ten Academic Alliance institutions offer an average of 30 LCTLs. In addition, seven of the 16 federally funded Language Resource Centers are housed at Big Ten Academic Alliance institutions.

MSU offers 29 LCTLs, including Vietnamese, Persian, Sanskrit, and Bengali.

“We are excited about MSU’s leadership of this effort,” said Barbara Allen, Executive Director of the Big Ten Academic Alliance. “This grant will add a couple of new dimensions to CourseShare, including integrating various modes of instruction and teaching a number of languages in a sustainable fashion. Through these efforts by MSU, we can continue to build language programs that will be available to every campus throughout the Big Ten.”
A newly energized commitment to robust collaboration is taking place between MSU’s College of Arts & Letters, College of Communication Arts and Sciences, and College of Music. It’s called the Media Arts Collaborative (MAC).

Dedicated to creative endeavors in integrated media arts, the MAC is a coordinated effort to promote collaborative projects that cut across disciplines to enrich the undergraduate learning experience.
“The Media Arts Collaborative is a joint effort to facilitate student projects by providing our faculty with resources to support transformative student activities in the media arts at Michigan State,” said Christopher P. Long, Dean of the College of Arts & Letters. “The MAC is designed to model the capacity for collaboration that is a hallmark of integrative media arts projects. Their ability to work effectively together gives our students a competitive advantage.”

The MAC serves as a platform for students and faculty from the three colleges to experiment with synergistic media arts, to foster innovative collaborations, and to offer experiential learning opportunities for students.

“Go talk to our alumni, they say the most important thing is a range of skills and a variety of techniques and media. This collaboration is a perfect platform to provide that breadth – a broad sweep of experiences across different platforms,” said Prabu David, Dean of the College or Communication Arts and Sciences. “It’s true experiential learning at its best.”

The Media Arts Collaborative works to create a more coherent arts and culture experience for students at Michigan State University.

“We have pockets of expertise across campus,” David said. “The Media Arts Collaborative consolidates these areas to create a richer experience for our students as well as our faculty.”

Embracing the notion that together the three colleges can offer students more than by working in silos, Jim Forger, Dean of the College of Music, said “The College of Music is delighted to participate with this interdisciplinary approach where faculty interaction across colleges will lead to new learning, creative, and research outcomes.”

One Media Arts Collaborative initiative that shows how the three colleges can work together to enhance learning opportunities for students is the Theatre 2 Film project. A collaboration between the Department of Theatre, Media Sandbox, and College of Music, Theatre 2 Film has students write and develop an original play that is adapted for the big screen. What results is a full-length feature film, created entirely by students, that is shown at the Traverse City Film Festival.

“It’s a great example of how all three colleges can combine to create a transformative experience for our students,” Long said.

Theatre 2 Film teaches students all kinds of skills, including project design, project management, technical production, acting, storytelling, and writing. In addition, students learn how to work across disciplines, how to compromise, and how to create innovative work – skills they will need to transition to successful careers.

“The opportunity for six graduate composers to work on a film project together with student directors and producers in a compressed and real-time scenario provides a true professional experience,” Forger said.

Drawing on the success of the Theatre 2 Film project, the three colleges continue to explore ways to work together to create more opportunities for students to participate in the full range of the media arts creative process, from theory to practice and from planning to implementation.

Other areas of collaboration that currently exist between the College of Arts & Letters and College of Communication Arts and Sciences include two filmmaking minors in Fiction Filmmaking and Documentary Production and the Artist in Residence program, which this year brings Emmy award-winning actor Timothy Busfield to campus to co-teach courses that emphasize acting and fiction film production.

Another emerging dimension of the Media Arts Collaborative is a shared goal to build a tighter network of alumni from the three colleges in film and media arts industries to support students as they transition from MSU to careers in film, acting, performance, music, and the media arts.

“It’s really important for our students to integrate into a network of relationships with our alums from all three colleges,” Long said, “so they graduate into a community of supportive people who know the businesses they’re entering and who can put them in touch with other people who might give them access to a competitive position or further their development as professionals.”

Significant investment for the Media Arts Collaborative initiative also has been made by way of cluster hires in digital arts, film, and production. Together, the three colleges recently have hired more than 15 faculty in the media arts, many with joint appointments across colleges.

“The Media Arts Collaborative,” Long said, “is transforming how we educate students here at Michigan State University.”
Educational Experiences Abound in STAGE DOOR PRODUCTION

The educational experience students receive as part of the cast and crew of an MSU Department of Theatre production often reaches beyond the stage and can involve many other departments, as was the case in the department’s recent production of Stage Door.

“If you have ever wondered what makes academic theatre different than any other form of theatre, this was a great example of the academic side,” said Associate Professor of Acting Rob Roznowski, the play’s director. “It was an educational experience for all involved, including me.”

Roznowski, an award-winning actor, author, director, educator, and playwright, said the cooperative collaboration that went into the production of the play between the College of Arts & Letters departments and other MSU colleges and centers was incredible.

Set in New York City in the late 1930s, Stage Door tells the story of several would-be actresses who live together in a boarding house. To set the situation of the female characters within a larger context, Lisa Fine, then Co-Director of the MSU Center for Gender in Global Context (GenCen) and Professor of History, held a class for the cast that was devoted to discussing the historical background related to women and women’s issues during the 1930s. Fine also participated in a talk-back at the end of one of the performances.

Utilizing 1930s-style wardrobe and makeup techniques, Stage Door’s actresses had glamour photos, reminiscent of the era, taken by Professor of Photography Peter Glendinning.

Cast members were assigned actors from the 1930s to research for inspiration. Roznowski said it was exciting to see contemporary college students present on the work of top character actors such as Beulah Bondi, Percy Kilbride, and others.

Professor of Photography Peter Glendinning, whose mother lived in the Rehearsal Club, the inspirational locale for the play, worked with the student female actors to recreate glamour photos reminiscent of the time. Using Glendinning’s photos, students in College of Communication Arts and Sciences Assistant Professor Henry Brimmer’s Advertising class created mock Broadway and Hollywood posters of the 1930s.

Karen Kangas-Preston, Senior Academic Specialist and Instructor of Costume Design and Technology in the Department of Theatre, trained the actresses on makeup and lined up gorgeous evening gowns to wear.

Other collaborators included Alison Dobbins, Associate Professor of Integrated Performance Media Design, Department of Theatre, who created and projected neon images of women onto the stage, adding striking elements to the set design, and Eric Boerman, Sound Designer and MSU senior Theatre major, who carefully selected music from the time period and matched a song to each of the play’s characters. The songs were recorded to play during the show.

“Each of these elements expanded our understanding,” Roznowski said, “so that for all involved, Stage Door proved to be an exceptional educational experience.”
NEW SCENE SHOP BRINGS THEATRE TO LIFE
Michigan State University’s newest building is not one many people will get to view from the inside. But what is being created there could transport them to a different time and place.

The 9,370-square-foot facility is the new home for the Department of Theatre’s scene shop (formally named the Performing Arts Teaching Laboratory), where all the sets for the department’s theatre productions and the College of Music Opera program performances are built.

This state-of-the-art scene shop, which opened in January, pushes both the quality of performances as well as the learning experiences for students to a whole new level.

“With a scene shop that is 9,000 square feet, that really puts us on the map to be a national leader in theatre production,” said Christopher P. Long, Dean of the College of Arts & Letters. “This state-of-the-art student laboratory for theater production and design will make a transformative difference for the learning experiences of our students as they think about set design.”

The mere size of the building sets it apart and makes for a unique learning environment. It also allows for two shows to be worked on at the same time, which couldn’t be done before.

“This is a spectacular space to construct the scenery for our shows,” said Kirk Domer, Chair of the Department of Theatre. “The fact that we have a scene shop this large is unique within our peer institutions because the new building is larger than our largest theatre. But the greatest part about the facility, square footage aside, is its 22-foot clearance, which is very important so we can actually construct scenery as part of the learning process without the stress of opening night. The fact that we can assemble it fully here takes out the guess work.”

Along with the new space, there are new equipment, technology, and tools to work with, including a full welding area with fume hoods for the gases that are put off, a CNC (computerized numerical control) router that can do complex cuts in a fraction of the time it would take by hand while also allowing for more complex designs, an expansive woodworking area, and a full-size paint studio with state-of-the-art fume hood for painting full-scale scenery.
“There’s a lot more to this space, more tools, more training on different tools,” said Melissa Hunter, a recent Theatre Design graduate. “There’s just a lot more space to build and we have such great technology. The experience I have received here will be such a great transfer to my future career.”

Domer credits the University, College of Arts & Letters, and Department of Theatre donors with helping to make the new scene shop a reality.

“The fact that we have some of the latest and greatest tools is a testament to the funding mechanisms put in place,” Domer said. “We received funding from the University, the College of Arts & Letters, and our own Department of Theatre donors, so we are able to teach the latest and greatest technologies to our students.”

Because the new facility is located in its own stand-alone building, students have an added learning experience of moving the sets. “Scene shops are usually located adjacent to your theatre. So you build the scenery, you move it across the hallway, and it’s there,” Domer said. “We’re in a completely different building. In fact, we perform in three different buildings on campus, so our students also learn about touring productions. They know how to build, how to tear it apart, and put it back together again as part of the educational process.”

For more than 75 years, there has been a scene shop on Michigan State University’s campus. The first one was in the basement of the MSU Auditorium in a non-ventilated space with one exit door and about a quarter of the size of the theatres they were constructing sets for, so they had to build modular scenery to load into the facility and then make it bigger. The second scene shop was in the old state police post on campus, which was twice as big as the Auditorium basement, but still was not quite as wide, as deep, or as tall as the largest theatre.

The old state police post recently was torn down to build new housing on campus, which prompted the new scene shop facility to be built. “Our new laboratory was constructed in approximately 12 weeks, and the MSU Infrastructure Planning and Facilities did a fantastic job,” Domer said. “I couldn’t be happier.”

“With a scene shop that is 9,000 square feet, that really puts us on the map to be a national leader in theatre production.”

(Above) The scene shop’s new CNC (computerized numerical control) router can do complex cuts in a fraction of the time it would take by hand.
Last year, the city of East Lansing and Michigan State University joined forces to program and operate the urban art gallery at 110 Charles Street. An operating agreement with the city gives the Department of Art, Art History, and Design independent control over the gallery for a five-year trial period that began in September 2015.

“Our priority is community engagement,” said Christopher P. Long, Dean of the College of Arts & Letters. “This space allows MSU to step across Grand River Avenue to connect with the local community in creative new ways that enrich the work of our faculty and students and the cultural life of the city.”

Through free public exhibitions, programs, performances, and events, the gallery offers hands-on experiences in the arts and professional development opportunities for MSU students and faculty and the greater East Lansing community.

“(SCENE) Metrospace provides an environment to challenge our ways of thinking about the visual and performing arts as well as explore opportunities for community partnerships,” said Chris Corneal, Chair of the Department of Art, Art History, and Design.

After the agreement with the city was signed and renovations to the space were made, AAHD held a reopening celebration on Sept. 18, 2015, which also marked the renovated gallery’s first exhibition, *Place in Proximity*, where visual artists 18 years old or older living in Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, or Ohio were invited to submit entries.

“The idea made sense to us as a way to launch the space,” Corneal said. “We wanted it to be an open show – start regional, and then build to national.”

In its first year of operation under the AAHD, the 1,500-square-foot alternative art space has hosted six different themed exhibitions, running six weeks each and featuring work by contemporary artists, including the most recent exhibition by Nathaniel Foley, Instructor at Defiance College, Tiffin University, and Owens Community College, whose sculptures focus on the aviation process, materials, and language.

The Department of Art, Art History, and Design looks forward to its second year managing the space and is always accepting proposals for exhibitions, performances, installations, and special programming.

“We’re only limited by the ideas and proposals we get,” Corneal said. “We’re open to anything anyone can propose.”

(SCENE) Metrospace was founded in May 2004 by the City of East Lansing in response to the “Cool Cities” initiative of former Governor Jennifer Granholm.
“(SCENE) Metropace provides an environment to challenge our ways of thinking about the visual and performing arts as well as explore opportunities for community partnerships.”
As part of the College of Arts & Letters three-year sponsorship of the Great Michigan Read, Canadian author Emily St. John Mandel met and answered questions and discussed her latest book, *Station Eleven*, with English majors and Creative Writing students, all of whom had read her book.

Topics raised by students and faculty during the St. John Mandel discussion included the author’s writing process, where her ideas come from, and how she develops a story.

“When I first visited the Michigan lakeshore on a book tour in 2010, I liked it so much that I decided I wanted to set my next book there,” St. John Mandel said. “I was delighted to learn *Station Eleven* was selected as a Great Michigan Read.”

The Michigan Humanities Council’s Great Michigan Read is a biennial statewide literary program focusing on humanities themes. A statewide panel of teachers, librarians, community leaders, and book lovers select a book every two years. *Station Eleven* was the chosen title for the program’s fifth round, which ran August 2015 through May 2016.

*Station Eleven* was on the *New York Times* best-seller list for eight weeks and was one of the best-reviewed books in 2014. It was a 2014 National Book Award Finalist for Fiction. The novel’s film and TV rights have been acquired by producer Scott Steindorff, whose work includes *The Lincoln Lawyer* and *Chef*.

*Station Eleven* also won the 2015 Arthur C. Clarke Award and was named “One of the Best Books of the Year” by *The Washington Post, San Francisco Chronicle, Chicago Tribune, Time* magazine, *Entertainment Weekly, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Minnesota Public Radio, The Huffington Post*, and *BuzzFeed*. 

“**When I first visited the Michigan lakeshore on a book tour in 2010, I liked it so much that I decided I wanted to set my next book there.**”
Mohammad Khalil, Director of MSU’s Muslim Studies program and Associate Professor of Religious Studies, is an East Lansing native. That’s according to Mohammad Khalil, Director of Michigan State University’s Muslim Studies program and Associate Professor of Religious Studies, who taught a new class, “Islam, Radicalism, and Islamophobia,” in the spring.

It’s easy to suffer from an overload of misinformation when reading about ISIS attacks and Donald Trump’s proposed temporary ban on Muslims entering the United States, he said. After doing research on bin Laden for a book, Khalil was inspired to clear up the confusion with his one-credit course, which was open to all undergraduates, regardless of major.

“I want to problematize the way we view the world,” Khalil said. “I want us to be a little bit frustrated because the issues aren’t so neat and the world is more complicated than the media suggest. As long as students are aware of some of the nuances that exist when talking about Islam and Muslims, the course has succeeded.”

The curriculum aimed to provide students with knowledge of the religion of Islam and the core beliefs and practices that have defined Muslim communities. It also addressed contemporary Muslim radicalism and the responses of Muslim scholars and activists and contemporary Western anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim discourses and sentiments.

“The unknown can cause fear and mistrust and the best way to tackle that lack of understanding is to pursue learning from experts in those unfamiliar areas,” said Alicia Peters, a junior majoring in Chinese and Global Studies in the Arts and Humanities. “Understanding the issues surrounding radical Muslim terrorists is not just important for this area of study, but also for realizing those on our side include more than 1 billion Muslims.”

The Islam, Radicalism, and Islamophobia class filled quickly without much advertising. Khalil was especially proud of the diversity of the students in the class, most of whom were non-Muslim and represented a variety of ethnicities, cultures, and majors.

MSU’s College of Arts & Letters will continue to explore additional courses designed to foster important public discourse and address societal and cultural concerns. Last March, the College introduced a one-credit class open to all majors, “After the Dream: Social Unrest, Hashtag Activism and Inequality in Contemporary America,” which was inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement.

“By addressing issues that affect all members of the MSU community and by providing students the space and materials to examine important aspects of our contemporary world, we hope to promote engaged citizenship,” said Tacuma Peters, Assistant Professor of English, who taught the class.
A College of Arts & Letters student and alumna are the driving force behind a new mobile application that connects individuals within a community. The app is being praised as the winner of local and statewide business model competitions.

Professional Writing senior Zoe Zappitell and alumna Brittney Urich, who graduated last December with a BA in Professional Writing, first developed their unique, events-based app, called Conecter, for the MSU community to connect students with each other and with events around campus.

Launched in March at MSU, the free app creates safe, fun connections and serves as a one-stop shop for events. It allows MSU students to interact with one another, making it easier to find people with similar interests, to get involved with new groups, and to connect socially.

“Since launch, we have made major headway with gaining groups, colleges, and students onboard. We are seeing hundreds of events being created and many new relationships formed,” Zappitell said. “Brittney and I are extremely pleased to see the positive impact our mobile application is making on people’s college experience.”

Conecter is the only college-specific social app that creates a safe, platonic, on-the-go place for students to meet. Only those with an msu.edu email address can access the MSU platform. Conecter also is the only mobile app that connects to multiple campus groups, allowing students to follow organizations and get notifications about upcoming events and meetings.

When using the app, students first introduce themselves and state where they like to eat, how they like to exercise, what classes they are taking, their interests, etc. The information is placed in an algorithm to create a more personalized experience for each user. The app then gives students access to real-time events that suit each user’s interests and allows them to create and publicize their own events.

An Idea Becomes Reality

The idea for Conecter first began in January 2015 when Zappitell texted Urich that she wanted to make an app to help improve the lives of college students.

After brainstorming the problems faced by MSU students, Zappitell and Urich focused on the issue of finding friends while staying safe. The two applied and were accepted into
the College of Arts & Letters’ Pathways to Entrepreneurship initiative. They also were accepted at the 2015 Techweek Chicago’s Launch Competition where they pitched their idea to hundreds of attendees.

“We returned to campus from Chicago with a larger, more substantial network as well as an increased drive due to all the positive responses,” Urich said.

To help get their idea off the ground, the Conecter co-founders sought funding and received their first financial backing from the College of Arts & Letters.

“The College of Arts & Letters were the first people who believed in us,” Urich said. “They gave us $6,000 to help build the app and have been with us every step of the way.”

Conecter also received $2,000 from Spartan Innovations, a $1,000 grant from MSU Federal Credit Union, and $500 from Pathways to Entrepreneurship.

With initial funding in place, and after registering as an LLC in the state of Michigan, Zappitell and Urich partnered with Venturit, a development firm in East Lansing, to begin development on the app in September 2015. Six months later, a Conecter launch party was held at the MSU Innovation Center on March 18.

Expanding Their Product

The Conecter co-founders are now looking to expand the app for use at other universities and to enterprises and megachurches. This past spring, Conecter was accepted into the inaugural cohort of MSU’s Conquer Accelerator program, a 10-week program designed to help grow businesses and which acts as a final launching platform for startups.

“MSU’s Conquer Accelerator has been a phenomenal experience because it gives us the ability to be surrounded by innovative entrepreneurs as we develop a strategy to grow Conecter on campus,” Zappitell said. “Additionally, there has been a focus on sales during the program, which has lead us to partnering with various entities on campus.”

Awards and Recognition

The Conecter team won first place in the undergraduate division as well as the People’s Choice award at the MSU Broad College of Business Model Competition in February, taking home a total of $6,000 in cash prizes.

The app also won first place in the undergraduate category at the GreenLight Business Model Competition in March and received $3,000. Open to all Michigan residents, the competition brought together entrepreneurs and small business supporters from all over the state.

The Conecter co-founders continue to spread the word and seek supporters for their app. They hosted a lab at TEDxMSU in March, participated in Techweek Detroit in May, and returned to Techweek Chicago in June.

For more information, see the Conecter website at conecterapp.com.
Coming to Michigan State University, **Ryan Duda** didn’t know what to expect. After auditioning for the Theatre program and finding his passion there, he knew he had come to the right place. Now a junior Theatre major with Arts and Cultural Management and Musical Theatre minors, he is not only making strides in his classes but delving into extracurriculars that make a positive impact on the community.

“One of the things I wanted to get into as a Theatre major was educational outreach,” Duda said. “I spoke with my advisor, Dionne O’Dell, and she told me about a program called Fourth Wall that is relatively new at the University.”

A performing arts program based in Jackson, Michigan, the Fourth Wall Theatre Company empowers people with special needs or seniors looking for fun to break through the fourth wall and start a new adventure.

Duda first volunteered with Fourth Wall Theatre Company’s East Lansing performing arts program for students with intellectual disabilities during his freshman year and was hired as a formal instructor in 2015.

“Ryan is not only a really talented actor and a great student, he is also an exceptional human being,” said O’Dell, Director of the Arts and Cultural Management program. “His passion that he demonstrates through the residency program with the Fourth Wall students is really inspiring to watch.”

Working with Fourth Wall, Duda teaches aspects of performing arts to students with intellectual disabilities, while creating a safe environment for students to learn and to be able to comfortably express themselves. In this capacity, he develops scripts for theatrical productions, helps students understand and perform the script for their showcase, and communicates students’ progress with their parents and guardians.

He also ensures clear, safe communication between other instructors, volunteers, students, and parents, and acts as the stage manager for final showcases.

“The students learn so much about the art form, and they’re developing socially, and it’s wonderful for Ryan too, because he’s able to see at the ground level how practicing his artistry and his passion can really change people’s lives,” O’Dell said.

In addition to his studies and involvement in Fourth Wall, Duda is a Research Assistant in the College of Arts & Letters. He works closely with professors who teach performing arts as an additional language about American culture to students learning English. Duda gathers research on previous studies in the field, sets up research plans, conducts research, and organizes and presents data to theatre and other professionals.

After graduation, Duda hopes to continue his acting somewhere that is involved with educational outreach.

“Since I had the opportunity to develop my passion with theatre, I want other people to have that opportunity too,” he said. “It’s just an amazing thing to be able to help people who truly need it.”
We were thrilled to get the grant and believe the ELC Mentor Program perfectly reflects the grant’s name and purpose,” Cohen said. “It’s a one-year grant, so we’re concentrating on ways to best represent the benefits and demonstrate the program’s value.”

The International Student Mentorship Program helps international students at MSU’s English Language Center adapt to American university life and succeed in their academic programs. The program matches provisionally admitted international students in advanced language study in the English Language Center with two mentors – one domestic student and one international student who has completed the university language requirement. Together, the three students complete a series of assigned tasks designed to help facilitate social, cultural, and academic adjustment and integration.

“Having peer mentors, especially fellow international students who have been in their shoes, is more motivating to provisionally admitted international students than the advice of their teachers or advisors alone,” said Cohen, adding that the program has been “wildly successful.”

ELC students report understanding university expectations and requirements better and enjoy making connections with people outside the English Language Center. Mentors develop cross-cultural competencies and leadership skills and get to know people they never would have met.”

The program attempts to match students who share interests and have the same or similar academic majors. Student mentors must have a record of academic success and involvement in university life as well as strong communication and leadership skills.

“For both ELC students and mentors, the program runs one semester, but we stress to mentors that, ideally, they should establish a relationship beyond the program,” Cohen said. “The ones that do are often the most successful groupings in tackling motivation and isolation issues.”

Now in its third year, the International Student Mentorship Program, created and run by English Language Center (ELC) Instructor Alissa Cohen, was awarded a Continuing Inclusive Excellence Grant (CIEG) by MSU. The 2015-16 grant marks the first time the Mentorship Program has received CIEG support.

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English Language Center Instructor Alissa Cohen (standing at right) and student mentors meet regularly to discuss what’s working and explore possible solutions to any issues.
The Mentor-Mentee Relationship

MSU senior Economics major Yufeng Zhang has been an ESL International student mentor for three semesters. From Xiamen, a port city on China’s southeast coast, Zhang first heard about the program via e-mail. “The email requested students with experience taking the ESL class to consider being a mentor to assist new freshmen better adapt to life here,” Zhang said. “Having taken the ESL class, I know there is confusion and difficulty taking it, as well as with life here. I also knew I would have appreciated it if someone could have helped me my freshman year. I decided to do it, and thought it would also be a good way to make new friends.”

Domestic mentor Sierra Owen, who is dual enrolled as an undergraduate Marketing senior and a first-year grad student pursuing her master’s in Market Research, said, “I’d gone on two short study abroad programs last summer, one to Scotland and one to Ireland. I spoke the language and found it difficult. Everything was really different, and there was so much I didn’t know. I couldn’t imagine doing that on top of having a language barrier and being a full-time student. I was only on study abroad for a couple of weeks taking classes. They’ll be here for years. So, I’m glad MSU has a program like this.”

When fall term 2015 began, Zhang and Owen were assigned to mentor Supply Chain major Taerim Kim, an international student from Cheongju, Korea, the capital and largest city of North Chungcheong Province. “I had been a high school foreign exchange student in California and went back to Korea and graduated there,” Kim said. “Then I came to MSU. My first semester, I had to take the ESL course and thought it would be a great experience before getting into ‘real’ college life. I signed up and met my two mentors.”

The three do weekly projects, such as finding a club that’s of interest to Kim or going to an MSU student resource center to learn what’s available. The mentor program also helps Kim practice and learn English, as the women must text and speak solely in English. “Yufeng and Sierra have both been here awhile, so they are sort of the MSU experts,” Kim said. “They really help me, and not just as mentor and mentee, we meet and hang out with each other as friends. Sometimes, we’ll talk about what it’s like being an international student and how others regard us. So there’s cultural communications, too.”

Zhang and Owen agree that required weekly group mentor meetings are very helpful. They learn what other mentors are experiencing and the difficulties they have. They become aware of issues they may not have noticed as well as ways to solve various problems. Kim said the same is true for weekly essays that mentees must write and share in class. Essay subjects cover activities mentees do with their mentors, where they went, what they learned, and more. She said it’s also a good check and balance to make sure mentors and mentees engage in the program.
FASHION SHOW MELDS AVANT-GARDE DESIGN WITH ART
The 2016 Apparel and Textile Design (ATD) Fashion Show, a culmination of creative explorations ranging from classic to avant-garde, featured 68 creative designs of 31 emerging designers as well as the work of makeup artists, hairstylists, and models.

ATD faculty directors were assisted by senior- and junior-class student directors.

“Our student directors’ involvement extends into nearly every element of the show, providing significant professional development opportunities,” Winge said.

Senior Directors included Cari Marcotullio and Sean Smith, and Junior Directors were Alixzandra Jyawook, Michael Lemus, Jess Burkhardt, Emma Theis, Tabitha Breaugh, Calley Jastow, and Emily Semroc. ATD alumna Niki Sullivan was the show’s choreographer, and ATD alumnae Ludim Navarro and Rachel Bonneau were in charge of photography.
Student Researchers Study Styrofoam-Eating Mealworms

Undergraduate students Lindsay Mensch, Matthew Huber, and Kirsten West comprised an MSU interdisciplinary team exploring the ability of mealworms to decompose Styrofoam. The team was invited to present its research at the 2016 Clinton Global Initiative University.
An MSU undergraduate team, which includes sophomore English major Lindsay Mensch, has built a system on campus to explore the ability of mealworms to decompose polystyrene (Styrofoam) and to find useful applications for the organic waste produced as a result.

Their work is based on research out of Stanford University, published in fall 2015 in *Environmental Science and Technology*, that found mealworms can eat Styrofoam and turn it into compost that can be safely used on soil. Long considered to be non-biodegradable, this discovery may just hold the key to solving the Styrofoam pollution problem around the world.

Besides Mensch, MSU’s three-person undergraduate team includes Kirsten West, sophomore Packaging major, and Matthew Huber, sophomore Environmental Studies and Sustainability major. The team received a $3,200 grant from the Residential Initiative on the Study of the Environment (RISE) for their work.

“My grant team and I created our own mealworm-Styrofoam decomposition system here on campus,” Mensch said. “We are experimenting with large-scale and long-term feasibility of these systems while working to educate our peers and others about mealworms as well as the dangers of Styrofoam.”

The team’s ultimate goal is to reduce the amount of polystyrene waste produced on campus and to divert the rest from landfills by utilizing the natural powers of mealworms. They are also educating the MSU community about the harmful human and environmental effects of Styrofoam waste.

“Decreasing the amount of toxins in the environment is vital for the health of all life on our planet,” Mensch said. “There are lots of bans on Styrofoam in California and other places. Besides our mealworms research on getting rid of the waste, we’d like to work on preventing Styrofoam from even being used.”

The MSU team was selected to attend and present their research at the 2016 Clinton Global Initiative University (CGI U) annual meeting at UC Berkeley in April. Launched in 2007 by former President Bill Clinton to engage the next generation of leaders on college campuses around the world, the 2016 CGI U brought together more than 1,200 students to make a concrete difference in the initiative’s five focus areas: education, environment and climate change, peace and human rights, poverty alleviation, and public health.

“Displaying our research was a high point,” Mensch said. “People were amazed that something so simple as mealworms eating Styrofoam could potentially have such a huge, positive effect.”

This past summer, Mensch interned at the Kellogg Biology Station, MSU’s largest off-campus education complex, located on Gull Lake in Hickory Corners, Michigan, just northeast of Kalamazoo. She’s now back on campus and is continuing her mealworms research with her team.

The team plans to hold outreach and engagement workshops throughout the 2016-17 academic year to educate about Styrofoam waste and reduction.

“We’ve talked about expanding our focus,” Mensch said. “Besides campus use, there are a lot of fast food and other restaurants around campus that use Styrofoam. If we could push even further into Lansing as a whole, the impact could be much greater.”
With ample opportunities for international study and engagement, College of Arts & Letters students studied all over the world this past year. Whether traveling to China, Europe, Africa, or South America, these study abroad students crossed disciplines and time zones to expand their worldviews and to engage in the local culture through outreach and research efforts.
Traveling abroad expands your knowledge and takes you out of your comfort zone,” said Kristen Gmerek, Global Studies and Professional Writing major, who did a study abroad in western Kenya where she also worked in an orphanage and a local library. “It goes beyond the classroom where you’re applying real-life experiences. It’s a crucial investment in college.”

As the national leader in study abroad participation among public universities for the past six years, Michigan State University has one of the largest study abroad catalogs in the country and is a top producer of global citizens who are prepared to make a difference in communities near and far.

The College of Arts & Letters is a leader of study abroad at Michigan State University with 80 study abroad programs in 40 different countries and more than 50% of our students engaging in international education.

This is all made possible due, in part, to the hard work of a large number of dedicated faculty who invest time and energy to share their passion for international education with our students. MSU’s international partners also are key to student success.

“Studying abroad provides so much valuable insight in the world and in your life that I can’t think of how you could get that any other way than going abroad,” said Jake Mell, Spanish major, who did a 12-week program in Peru and worked in a donation-funded school for students who also work to help support their families. “Ever since my study abroad trip, I’ve had no issues having Spanish conversations with anyone I can find.”

As MSU expands its international reach, the College of Arts & Letters and Office of Study Abroad are committed to helping the University remain a “world-grant” institution by offering study abroad programs focused on quality, diversity, and accessibility.
Clockwise from above: Tanzania, Ireland, Germany, China, South Africa.

Facing page, clockwise from top: France, Spain, India, Puerto Rico, China.
Christopher Murphy is a role model for international and language education and where those experiences can lead you. He speaks five languages (English, French, Mandarin, Portuguese, and Spanish) and has visited nearly 20 different countries during his travels and for study abroad. And now, having earned a BA in Chinese with a minor in French from Michigan State University, Murphy is continuing his education overseas as a Yenching Scholar.
The recent graduate received the highly competitive Yenching Scholarship to pursue his master’s degree in International Relations and Public Policy at the Yenching Academy of Peking University in China. On August 31, he traveled to China, where he will study for an entire year, with plans to return to the United States after completing his master’s degree.

“I was really nervous during the interview for the Yenching Scholarship because I was competing against the world’s greatest and most clever students,” Murphy said. “Never in my wildest dreams did I think little ol’ me from Monroe, Michigan, someone who was once too shy to even speak to people, would ever be able to score a spot in the second cohort of one of the world’s most competitive scholarships.”

As a Yenching Scholar, all Murphy’s tuition and fees are waived, and he is provided accommodations, a stipend, and round-trip airfare. Out of 3,000 applicants worldwide, only 150 were chosen for this prestigious award.

This isn’t the first time Murphy has received a national scholarship for yearlong study abroad. In 2014, he was awarded the Boren Scholarship, which is dedicated to funding students studying languages critical to U.S. national security. The Boren Scholarship allowed Murphy to travel to China for the entire 2014-2015 academic year for intensive study in Chinese language and culture at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, China.

In addition, Murphy received the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, William Davidson Award, and two MSU Study Abroad scholarships, which allowed him to study in Harbin, China, during the summer of 2014.

“These scholarships are the main reason why I’ve been able to acquire this education,” said Murphy, adding that “an investment in me is an investment in the future of America.”

Truly passionate about international education, when asked why someone should study abroad, Murphy answered, “Who wouldn’t want to open their mind to different ways of thinking, different possibilities, learning a different language? Studying abroad prepares you for independence; the independence of leaving your family and everything you know. These are essential tools for life.”

For Murphy, it was the study abroad programs, diversity of the campus, and the language studies that drew him to Michigan State University. With MSU being one of the top study abroad universities in the nation, he felt right at home.

“When you study abroad and learn a different language, you learn a different way of thinking, a different way of communicating with people,” he said. “I want to introduce the world to the importance of learning different cultures and different languages.”

After graduation in May, Murphy originally planned to join the Peace Corps and travel to Mozambique, Africa, but when he received word of the Yenching Scholarship, he chose to postpone the Peace Corps by two years.

“As a Boren Scholar, I have a one-year service requirement to fulfill in the federal government. I decided to supplement this requirement by joining the Peace Corps, just in case I wasn’t accepted into Yenching Academy,” Murphy said. “After my studies are completed at Peking University, I will pursue my original plan of traveling to Mozambique to serve in the Peace Corps as a high school English professor for two years.”

Teaching languages abroad is something Murphy has experience with. When he traveled to China as a Boren Scholar, he taught English as a second language, and this past spring break, he taught high school Spanish at Sacred Heart in San Ignacio, Belize.

With a particular interest in international diplomacy, Murphy hopes to one day become a diplomat representing America and building bridges abroad.
Following Kelly Mackie’s freshman year at Michigan State University, the former pre-professional classical ballet dancer felt a creative void that had once been filled by dance and classical music. Looking to fill this void, she turned to MSU’s College of Arts & Letters to stretch her artistic skills in a whole new direction.

An Honors College student, Mackie discovered within the Department of Art, Art History, and Design that she had a passion for graphic design. “When I found graphic design, I felt like this is my thing. This is my calling. This is what I was meant to do,” she said.

This past May, Mackie graduated with a BFA in Graphic Design and a BA in Hospitality Business, and began a new job as a Junior Digital Art Director for Hudson Rouge on the Lincoln Motor Company account. “This is my dream job,” she said. “I had a goal after graduation to gain more experience in digital design, advertising, and user experience, and that is now what I do on a daily basis. I am grateful every day. I work with an amazing team of award-winning creatives on one of the most iconic brands in the automotive industry.”

**Choosing MSU**

Mackie’s future wasn’t always so clear. Before coming to MSU, she was training 40-50 hours a week as a classical ballet dancer at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. “There was a lot of tremendous opportunity there, but when I got to my senior year of high school, my heart just wasn’t in it for the long haul,” she said. “Still I would not trade that experience for the world. It totally shaped me as a person, but I know it wasn’t right for me.”

Hanging up her ballet slippers, she chose to come to MSU and took a lot of business classes her freshman year. “I was really struggling, not academically, but in my heart,” Mackie said. “I didn’t have a creative outlet. I wasn’t hearing classical music every day any more. I just felt like a huge part of me had been torn away.”
Finding Her Passion

To fill that void, Mackie started taking art and graphic design classes. “It was just for fun at first, but then I started to notice that people were paying attention to my work and teachers were telling me that I should enter things into shows, and that was all I was thinking about,” Mackie said.

Her sophomore year, she took Graphic Design II with former Adjunct Instructor Barbara Hranilovich, who told her, “I am watching you struggle against this. You want so badly to be a graphic designer, but you are not letting yourself. Stop kidding yourself, you are meant to be an artist. If you fight this, you are going to regret not devoting yourself to your passion.”

That was Mackie’s first wake-up call. The second came after she interviewed for an internship during her junior year. “I was told that my ideas are strong, but the way I was developing them was just not as mature as they should be,” Mackie said. “That crushed my dreams a little bit, but at the same time, it was the final push I needed. When that happened, I told myself I had 365 days to step up my game, to better build out my ideas, to have more time to network, and to get more work experience. Looking back on it, I am so thankful they were honest with me. They basically saved my career.”

This past year, Mackie worked hard in all of her classes. She won a Silver ADDY Award for her “Top 100” project she completed in her Interactive Web Design class and was among the top three in the MSUFCU mural competition. She’s done project collaborations with professors and served as President of the local MSU chapter of AIGA (American Institute of Graphic Arts).

Looking Ahead to the Future

Some day Mackie would like to use both her MSU degrees by owning and managing her own design firm. “In the long run, my dream is to have a design firm,” Mackie said. “I think it would be awesome to own my own business and make amazing work with amazing people.”

She also recently learned that her hand-cut paper illustration series, Color Caverns, was selected for display at the Michigan House of Representative’s Anderson House Office Building in Lansing, Michigan, as part of the 2016-2017 Art in the House Program. Sponsored by the President’s Council for State Universities in Michigan, a special unveiling of this artwork will take place on Wednesday, Oct. 19.
During his time at MSU, Karty, who graduated in May with a BA in Arabic and a BS in Crop and Soil Sciences, worked on soil science research while at the same time practiced his Arabic skills.

The recent graduate is now living in Cairo, Egypt, and working as an intern for the Research Institute for a Sustainable Environment (RISE), a research center that does agricultural extension work and tackles environmental problems in Egypt. The year-long internship, which is part of the Presidential Internship Program at The American University in Cairo, began in August.

“I have been training to do this for a long time,” Karty said. “The opportunities I’ve had at MSU have placed me in this position. And because of the classes and the great professors I’ve had, I’m able to speak Arabic very well, which allowed me to jump in head first.”

Karty first saw his two majors come together in Professor Alvin Smucker’s Soil Biophysics Lab at MSU, where he worked for the past year and a half doing research on sandy soils with a focus on improving water retention and irrigation efficiency. While working in the lab, Karty had the opportunity to practice his Arabic skills, having worked with a researcher from Syria as well as an Iraqi soil scientist, whom the lab hosted for a month.

“That job essentially jump-started my career. Not only did I work in sandy soils, but I also got to practice my Arabic. It’s kind of crazy that I was able to do all these things at MSU. I feel really fortunate,” Karty said. “And now I have a Crop and Soil Sciences degree and Arabic and can use them both at once. There are lots of possibilities.”

Karty was first drawn to MSU by its Arabic program. “Michigan State University is one of the top schools in the nation for Arabic,” he said. “I came here knowing I wanted to study Arabic; it is something I always wanted to do.

“With all the Muslim nations around the world, being able to understand and speak Arabic is extremely important. We need Americans who are able to understand Arabic-speaking people and their culture, especially in this day and age when there is so much hatred toward Muslims and Arab people. By being able to understand and show a commitment to Arab people, we can bridge the gap between the cultures and increase understanding among us.”

And the best way to understand another culture, Karty says, is to learn the language, something he has committed himself to.

“Knowing another language is so rewarding. It’s one of the things I love most about my life right now,” he said. “There are many cognitive advantages to learning a language, and it makes you more well rounded. I have been able to enrich my life and meet lots of people who I never would have been able to speak to before. I also am a little quicker on my feet because I have studied this language.”

When Karty first came to MSU, he was part of the Arabic flagship program and studied Arabic his freshman year. He then applied what he learned by traveling to Morocco for an intensive summer Arabic program where he spoke only Arabic the entire time he was abroad.

“You don’t think about how tiring it’s going to be trying to constantly translate things in your head or trying to express yourself,” he said. “But that was part of the learning process, and my Arabic skills drastically improved. I think that serves me still today.”

Eventually, Karty would like to go to graduate school to study agronomics or soil sciences. “I don’t think I will be able to make a big difference in the world unless I have more education, so that is definitely in my future,” he said. “But before I do that, I need to speak some Arabic first.”
“The opportunities I’ve had at MSU have placed me in this position. And because of the classes and the great professors I’ve had, I’m able to speak Arabic very well, which allowed me to jump in head first.”

— Tyler Karty
Recent graduate Allison Tumas was one of two Michigan State University students awarded a Boren Scholarship in 2016 to study languages abroad.

Boren Scholarships provide up to $20,000 to U.S. undergraduate students studying in areas of the world that are critical to U.S. national security interests. This year, there were 165 awards nationwide from a pool of 820 applicants. And, since 1991, there have been only 36 Boren award recipients from Michigan State University.

“I have a passion for building cultural bridges, which has led me to pursue opportunities that increase my own global awareness,” said Tumas, who graduated from MSU in May with a BA in Arabic and a BA in Media and Information. “I feel honored to be a Boren scholar, and I am extremely grateful for the assistance in furthering my education and academic experiences abroad.

“After attending a Boren Convocation with other scholars and alumni, I realized how many networking, career, and academic opportunities this award provides, and I was in awe of the accomplishments of the Boren alumni. I hope to take advantage of these opportunities and continually work towards accomplishing my academic and career goals while living up to the Boren reputation of becoming an extraordinary global professional.”

Tumas is using her Boren scholarship to study Arabic in Morocco, where she spent this past summer and will remain for the 2016-17 academic year. She is studying with the Arabic Flagship Program in Meknes, Morocco, which is part of the Language Flagship Program, a national program that provides language learning tools and study abroad opportunities for students studying languages that pertain to national security and economic competitiveness.

This is the second time Tumas is studying in Meknes. She first studied in the Moroccan city during the summer of 2015 in an intensive Flagship Arabic language program, the same program she is in now. However, now she is studying with the program for an entire year, the capstone year.

As part of the program, this past summer Tumas took classes in three different Arabic dialects: Modern Standard Arabic, Moroccan Colloquial Arabic, and Egyptian Colloquial Arabic. Throughout the fall and spring semesters, she will attend classes at the University of Moulay Ismail while also working as an intern with a local orphanage to improve her cultural awareness and her ability to speak the Moroccan dialect.

Tumas first joined the Language Flagship Program when she began studying Arabic her sophomore year at MSU. At the end of her sophomore year, she attended the Arabic Summer Intensive program at the University of Texas at Austin in the summer of 2014.

“Studying the Arabic language has allowed me to participate in multiple study abroad and intensive language programs,” Tumas said. “It also has pushed me to pursue research in Islamic studies and Middle Eastern and North African studies.”

Last year at MSU, Tumas worked as an Undergraduate Research Assistant for both Mohammad Khalil, Director of MSU’s Muslim Studies Program and Associate Professor of Religious Studies, and Salah Hassan, Associate Professor of English, where she helped organize a conference called “Global Halal,” which had speakers from different universities across the United States present on topics related to the idea of “halal” in Islam. With Khalil, she also researched historical communities of Muslims in the Midwest region.

“I hope to use my education to pursue career opportunities in public service that pertain to national security,” Tumas said.

Originally from Taylor, Michigan, Tumas hopes to some day be a counterintelligence threat analyst.
An internship in Washington, D.C., gave recent graduate Zeria Cummings a taste of what the capital city has to offer. Now she has returned to work for City Year, an organization that partners with public schools in high-poverty communities to help increase graduation rates and to bridge the gap between the support students need and what their schools actually provide. City Year is a highly selective organization, with only 2,700 participants chosen worldwide.

As part of the City Year team, Cummings is mentoring and tutoring students and serves as an additional resource for them within the schools.

“I wanted to work for City Year because I wanted to do something productive and meaningful,” she said. “The work I’m doing is challenging, but so rewarding.”

Before joining City Year, Cummings, who graduated in May with a BA in Humanities—Pre-Law, interned in summer 2015 with the Center for American Progress in Washington, D.C., an independent, nonpartisan policy institute dedicated to improving the lives of all Americans. Cummings worked in their development department where she researched prospective donors, drafted briefings for donor events, and updated donor files.

“I thoroughly enjoyed it,” she said. “I got to learn about the different issue areas that I could be involved with and that made me think about what I wanted to do after I graduate.”

Her goal is to eventually have a career in law dealing with issues of women’s rights, poverty, and community development.

When Cummings first came to MSU, she was a Political Science—Pre-Law major, but later changed to Humanities—Pre-Law.

“I changed my major because I wanted a more holistic view on the world, and I wanted more of a humanitarian aspect to my studies,” she said. “I also got to choose from a plethora of different classes. I got to take a lot of classes in global studies and sociology in addition to pre-law courses.”

Cummings said her favorite classes were the Global Studies courses.

“The Global Studies program is really small itself, so you know everyone in it, and it’s also super engaging and there’s a lot of different readings that you do,” she said.

However, some of her most educational experiences came outside the classroom. Besides her internship, Cummings was an Intercultural Aide for the Office of Cultural and Academic Transitions, Public Relations Director for TEDxMSU, a Tour Guide for the Residence Education and Housing Services Outreach Office, and a member of the Multi-Racial Unity Living Experience (MRULE).

As an Intercultural Aide, she helped create a space of community within the residence halls and worked to bridge the gap between domestic and international students. Then, as the TEDxMSU Public Relations Director, she oversaw all the social media and worked to promote the event.

“I attended the first TEDxMSU in 2015, and I knew it was something I wanted to be a part of,” Cummings said. “I had never done anything with public relations before, but I wanted to be in a role within the board of directors because I wanted to share that passion that I have for TED and all that it accomplishes.

“Aside from learning what public relations is, I definitely got a feel for what actual passion is. Being able to put all of my time and energy into something and see a final product and be extremely happy with it is something I didn’t think I was ever going to feel. I think that is something people should try to strive for. You may never find it in your first couple years. It took me to my fourth year to find what passion actually feels like.”
Two Department of Art, Art History, and Design students have their artwork permanently displayed in downtown East Lansing as the winners of the MSUFCU (Michigan State University Federal Credit Union) mural competition.

Malarie French, Graphic Design and Packaging double major, and Will Mianecki, Graphic Design and Professional Writing double major, created the winning design, which was painted by MFA graduate student Sam Bennett and overseen by faculty sponsor Kelly Salchow MacArthur.

Unveiled at a special ceremony April 26, the outdoor mural can be found on the north exterior wall of the new MSUFCU location in downtown East Lansing.

“The most exciting part about the MSUFCU mural commission was the opportunity to create work on a large scale that has the potential to be viewed by so many people,” Mianecki said.

The mural was designed for passersby to connect with the local communities surrounding Michigan State University, East Lansing, and Lansing.

“The essence of the mural is community,” French said. “Not just the Michigan State University community, but the East Lansing and Lansing community as well.”

The design includes a topographical map to showcase physical connectivity and community as well as images of Michigan State University and the Capitol.

“When we were brainstorming themes that would be appropriate for the space, we kept coming back to the importance of community and the value of connection,” Mianecki said. “We thought that the concept would be relevant and important to potential viewers and MSUFCU.”

The selected mural was completed off site and installed on the building exterior. Overall, the process took about two months to complete. One for drafting sketches and making revisions, and another for painting and installation.

“This project furthers the College’s ongoing partnerships and connections with MSUFCU,” said Christopher P. Long, Dean of the College of Arts & Letters. “At the same time, it speaks to the centrality of the arts in the East Lansing community and is a vivid reminder of how art enriches the city in creative new ways.”

The MSUFCU mural competition was open to all undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in Department of Art, Art History, and Design courses, with the top three proposals receiving a monetary prize.
At MSU, I have the freedom to sit in two colleges and have committees that work across disciplines,” she said. “There are so many different options for me that I can continue to explore. That, hands down, shows I picked the right place.”

Laursen, who received a BS in Biological Sciences from Biola University in La Mirada, California, and an MS in Environment Resources and Forestry from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said she chose to come to MSU for its land grant mission and because she wanted to study at a university that was “interested in doing work that would immediately benefit people.”

“If you’re looking for humble and brilliant people who are doing amazing and excellent work, and who are really committed to a growth mindset, that’s what you’ll find at MSU,” she said.

Laursen’s studies at Michigan State University allow her to consider both how people ought to reason and how they actually do. She is particularly interested in tools that enhance interdisciplinary sense making, an emerging field that blends theories of knowing with theories of thinking.

Her first public philosophy project, “Making Sense of Sense Making,” consists of a weekly blog that shows what she’s learning about sense making, using a 3D ball, and invites readers to share what they know about it, too.

For her dissertation, she is evaluating which kinds of sense-making tools are most effective in which interdisciplinary situations. Sense-making tools include concept mapping software, dialogue processes, online discussion platforms, and visualization techniques, among others.

Throughout her studies and career, Laursen says she also has gotten in the habit of asking really big questions, questions about human existence and how we know what we know, and that her heart’s work is in mutual human and environmental flourishing.

“Students’ Interdisciplinary Studies Combine Philosophy & Community Sustainability

After practicing as an interdisciplinary environmental scholar and teacher for 10 years, Bethany Laursen switched fields to study theories of interdisciplinarity itself, which led her to Michigan State University where she is pursuing both an MA in Philosophy and a PhD in Community Sustainability.

“The nexus between philosophy and complex environmental issues is how do we create shared understanding,” she said. “That’s not new for this philosophy department; that’s why I looked here. They pride themselves on being an engaged philosophy department. Many are doing social justice work; and some are doing those things in combination with environmental philosophy.”

Currently, Laursen is working with Professors of Philosophy Michael O’Rourke, Director of the Toolbox Dialogue Project, and Paul Thompson, WK Kellogg Chair in Agricultural Food and Community Ethics, to break down the perceived and sometimes real barrier between lay folks and the “ivory tower” to be more transparent and show people how the process of science actually works.
In order to bring a better understanding to this language, Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures PhD candidate Shenika Hankerson is working to dispel some of the misconceptions associated with AAL.

Focusing on the sociocultural, historical, and political dimensions of AAL, Hankerson’s research explores the intersections among race, class, language, writing, and equity, particularly as these relate to urban African American adolescents and young adults.

“My research focuses on the theoretical and pedagogical dimensions of a more humanizing education for African American students who use features of AAL to communicate,” Hankerson said. “What I really focus on is how urban African American students use language within oral and written contexts and how educators can affirm and build upon these contexts.”

Hankerson, who has taught postsecondary writing for more than 10 years, says her research was inspired by her own teaching experience. She noticed a significant amount of urban African American students coming into the classroom with “almost this baggage,” saying things like “My writing is bad,” or “I really don’t like writing.” Hankerson added that these were narratives the students were often told (and learned) as they were coming through the primary and secondary school system.

“I noticed their writing wasn’t bad at all,” Hankerson said. “There were just characteristics of their linguistic background, which is AAL, present in their writing. Once the students learned what they were doing wasn’t wrong or bad, they were more comfortable with engaging in the writing process.

“These are things we have to keep talking about and working with, so these students can feel more confident about their writing. And, also, so teachers are aware of some of the linguistic moves that urban African American students and other linguistically diverse students may make in writing.”

Hankerson adds that it’s important for us to look at different ethnic and cultural practices and build more robust contexts for sensitivity, inclusivity, diversity, and respect around these practices.

“There’s a diverse world out there,” she said, “and we have to learn how to interact and engage with different cultures, different races, different ethnic groups. It’s really important for us to consider these things and keep talking about them.”

Hankerson’s research has been supported by several grants and awards, including the Early Career Educator of Color Leadership Award from the National Council of Teachers of English and the Scholars for the Dream Award from the Conference on College Composition and Communication.

Her research findings have been published in peer-reviewed journals, including MSU’s Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP) Science Today Bulletin, and presented at national and international conferences.
MFA Exhibition Presented at Broad Art Museum

The Department of Art, Art History, and Design MFA candidates presented their creative thesis research April 22-May 15 at Michigan State University’s Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum.

The creative research of Rachel Allen, Samuel Bennett, Rebekah Blesing, David Johnson, C. Harold Perkins, Bruce Stepan, Adam Taylor, and Joe Wilkinson stood as evidence of their achievements and promise. Guest juror Lynne Warren, Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, awarded the annual Master of Fine Arts Prize to Wilkinson for his piece, The Road from Jena.

The 2016 Master of Fine Arts Exhibition marked the culmination of a three-year degree program emphasizing extensive creative exploration under the supervision of a faculty guidance committee.

Congratulations to all the 2016 MFA candidates!
At age 29, **Alejandro (Alex) Osorio-Hernandez** is already an accomplished international graduate student and traveler. But then, with a BA, two MAs — one each from universities on two different continents — and scholarly research interests covering medieval travel writing, Spanish travelers to the Holy Land, and medieval monasticism, it sort of goes with the territory.

Currently an MSU PhD student and teacher in the Department of Romance and Classical Studies, Osorio-Hernandez grew up in Malcocinado, Spain, a small town of fewer than 500 people located 80 miles north of Seville.

“In high school, I applied to eight colleges and was accepted by five, including the very famous University of Salamanca,” he said. “There, I earned a BA in English Language and Literature and an MA in TESOL (Teaching English as a Second Language). I also studied History and English language, learned to speak Persian, and lived two months in Iran.”

By the time Osorio-Hernandez graduated, the world recession had driven Spain’s unemployment levels above 25 percent. And while undergraduate education is quite affordable in Spain, graduate school is expensive. A former high school teacher suggested he apply to graduate school in the United States.

Two years later, he earned his second MA in Spanish Literature from the University of Mississippi, and then applied to Michigan State University, in large part due to the outstanding reputation of its Department of Romance and Classical Studies. He began the PhD program in Hispanic Cultural Studies at MSU in August 2014. His main research interests are Medieval and Golden Age Literature of Spain.

“MSU is the largest university I’ve attended, and there are many foreign students here,” he said. “It may seem, at first, that you’re on your own, but you just need to make the effort to engage with faculty and other students.”

As for the future, Osorio-Hernandez would like to teach at a university, but says high school would be fine, too. He will take his comprehensive exams this fall, and will defend his dissertation in two years.

“I’ve been doing well in my coursework, so I feel I’ll definitely be ready,” he said.

He added that he loves to travel whenever and wherever he can and has already been to 38 countries and several U.S. states including California, Nevada, Colorado, Wyoming, and the Grand Canyon in Arizona.

“Whether my love of travel sparked my research interests in medieval travel writing and Spanish travelers to the Holy Land, or the other way around,” he said, “I’m truly glad my journey has taken me to MSU.”
PhD Candidate Awarded Excellence-in-Teaching Citation

Jennifer Royston, a PhD student in the Department of English specializing in Renaissance Literature and Early Modern Visual Culture, was awarded an MSU Excellence-in-Teaching Citation.

“Aside from my research, my passion lies in teaching,” Royston said, “and some of the most rewarding moments come from interactions with my students.”

At MSU, Royston has taught WRA 150: Evolution of American Thought; IAH 202 (online): European Interactions with the Rest of the World Since 1492; IAH 207: Michigan Literature; and IAH 207: Dangerous Art.

She currently is researching the relationship between visual design and art in early modern drama, masques, and prose. She has presented papers on the use of portraiture in Shakespeare’s works and papers that explore the aesthetic significance of early modern husbandry manuals.

MSU awards up to six Excellence-in-Teaching Citations annually to outstanding graduate teaching assistants who have distinguished themselves by the dedication and skill they show in meeting their classroom responsibilities. Award recipients received a $1,000 stipend and were recognized at the annual Awards Convocation February 9.

Alumni Award for Undergraduate Excellence

The Alumni Award for Undergraduate Excellence is given annually to a graduating senior from the College of Arts & Letters who has demonstrated outstanding academic success and community involvement at Michigan State University.

- Katlyn Lindstrom, senior, English with a concentration in Creative Writing – Lansing, Michigan

Alumni Endowed Student Book Scholarship and the Robert L. Fiore Student Book Scholarship

These scholarships, funded by the College of Arts & Letters Alumni Association, reward deserving Arts & Letters students for achieving excellence in their academic studies at Michigan State University by assisting with the cost of books and other required classroom materials.

- Rachel Nanzer, junior, Professional Writing – Gowen, Michigan
- Erin Prim, senior, English – Farmington Hills, Michigan
- Stephanie Saba, senior, Arabic – Warren, Michigan
- Karah Smith, junior, English – DeWitt, Michigan

College of Arts & Letters Community Partner Award

The College of Arts & Letters Community Partner Award recognizes a student’s community contributions at the local, state, national, and/or world levels. This includes participation and/or leadership and significant involvement as is reflected in one or more community engagement activities.

- Kiana Elkins, sophomore, Global Studies in the Arts & Humanities – Flint, Michigan

Alumni Association Student Awards 2016

Left: Stephanie Saba and Rachel Nanzer. Right: Katlyn Lindstrom
Student Awards

Varg-Sullivan Endowed Graduate Award in the Arts & Letters
The College of Arts & Letters offers two Varg-Sullivan Awards to graduate students each year for outstanding achievement in the arts or letters. Paul Varg and Richard Sullivan were the first two deans of the College.
• Claudia Berrios-Campos, pursuing PhD in Hispanic Cultural Studies – Lima, Peru
• Rebekah Blesing, pursuing MFA in Sculpture – Niles, Michigan

Outstanding Senior Achievement Award
Awarded to a graduating senior in the College of Arts & Letters for academic excellence, service and leadership, commitment to personal and professional development, and commitment to cross-cultural sensitivity and diversity.
• Kyle Latack, senior, Spanish – Canton, Michigan

College of Arts & Letters Endowed Scholarship
Awarded to outstanding juniors in the arts or letters.
• Jacob Blythe, junior, German Studies – Trenton, Michigan

Marian Lee Aylesworth Award in the College of Arts & Letters
Marian Lee Aylesworth graduated from the College of Science and Arts at Michigan State College in 1952. This award is made to students who demonstrate the capacity and motivation to achieve educational and professional goals and the initiative to seek opportunities to further their progress.
• Rebecca Ryder, sophomore, English – Cape Coral, Florida

John W. Eadie Scholarship in Arts & Letters for International Education
Awarded to a student who has most effectively and productively integrated international experiences and studies into his/her program and career goals.
• Jack Weyhrich, junior, French – Wadsworth, Illinois

Audrey and John Leslie Endowed Scholarship in Arts & Letters
This scholarship is intended to encourage students who demonstrate the capacity, motivation, and initiative to achieve their educational and professional goals.
• Lindsay Mensch, sophomore, English with a concentration in Creative Writing – Brighton, Michigan
Edward and Georgia Ryder Scholarship
Awarded to an outstanding undergraduate student with a declared intent to specialize in international relations and leadership, and a proven interest in foreign service or allied fields.

- Stephanie Vettese, junior, Art History and Visual Culture – West Bloomfield, Michigan
- Nicole Koenigsknecht, sophomore, German – Battle Creek, Michigan

American Catholic Thought and Culture Award
This award was established through an endowment in the College of Arts & Letters created by the St. John’s Church and Student Center to enhance academic study of American Catholic thought and culture, past or present.

- Katie Grimes, senior, Professional Writing - Plymouth, Michigan

William Lowe Endowed Scholarship for Undergraduate Study in Ireland
This scholarship is intended to enrich the undergraduate academic experience in unique, life-altering ways by offering students in MSU’s College of Arts & Letters the opportunity to experience study abroad in Ireland.

- Elizabeth Oderkirk, senior, Professional Writing – West Bloomfield, Michigan

Nora Sager Stackhouse Scholarship Award
Nancy B. Stackhouse was a professor of art at Michigan State University for 25 years (1966-89). This scholarship was established in Professor Stackhouse’s granddaughter Nora’s name. Nora died of an incurable condition in December 1995 at the age of 18. It was Nora’s deepest wish to go to college with the help of her grandmother. It is Professor Stackhouse’s hope that the student benefiting from this scholarship will realize his/her goals through this gift.

- Kiana Elkins, sophomore, Global Studies in the Arts & Humanities – Flint, Michigan

Louis Sudler Prize in the Arts
The Louis Sudler Prize in the Arts honors Mr. Sudler’s lifelong commitment to the creative arts and is awarded to graduating seniors who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in an area of the performing and creative arts.

- Sarah Fagerman, senior, Studio Art – Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Anna Goodson, senior, English Literature and Creative Writing – Okemos, Michigan
- Melissa Hunter, senior, Theatre – Sterling Heights, Michigan
Students Domenika Tarazhi and Stephen Nisbet credit the College’s Urban Studio program with positively changing their perceptions of Detroit.
The Urban Studio program gives students from both colleges the opportunity to hone their skills through real-life work experiences that are helpful and productive to local businesses, organizations, and entrepreneurs as well as the communities around them.

“We are bringing our students’ expertise to organizations that otherwise couldn’t access it and we are doing so in a cooperative learning environment,” said Bill Hart-Davidson, Associate Dean for Graduate Education, who helped develop the Urban Studio program. “For the students, the key is that this is an outside-the-classroom learning experience where they can put their knowledge to work and practice it in a setting with real clients doing some meaningful work.”

There are three main components to the Urban Studio program:

**Connect** – MSU will invite Detroit professionals twice a semester to a consulting fair held in Detroit so they may seek the advice and expertise of our students in areas such as design, web development, information architecture, web accessibility, or event planning. At these events, students will set up booths for professionals to stop by and discuss ways the students may help their business. The professionals will leave with some ideas for their organizations while students gain valuable skills practicing their craft and communication skills.

**Engage** – Organizations are invited to explore in more detail the topics covered at the Connect events or to work more closely with the students for longer periods of time on solving a problem. This will give students the opportunity to further practice their craft while helping organizations reach their goals.

**Immerse** – Students will be placed into internships each summer where they live and work in Detroit and experience the city’s diverse culture and history.

“We hope that Connect builds to Engage, Engage builds to Immerse, and Immerse builds to Career,” said Scott Schopieray, Assistant Dean for Technology and Innovation, who is helping lead the Urban Studio program.

The Immerse portion of the program launched this past summer with four students interning at three different Detroit organizations, including the Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit Historical Society, and Quicken Loans. The students received internship credit, a stipend, free housing at Wayne State University, one free meal per day, and were connected to all the other MSU programs and things happening in Detroit during the summer.

“This is a learning experience that goes beyond just the internship itself. It has allowed me to learn more about myself,” said Stephen Nisbet, a senior majoring in English and Professional Writing, who interned with the Detroit Institute of Arts as part of the Urban Studio program.

“Growing up in a small town in mid-Michigan and being able to spend an extended period of time in Detroit has exposed me to how city life works and how a city’s people interact with each other and the city itself. I’m thankful for this opportunity because not only do I have a better idea of what I may want to do after college, I also have a better understanding of where I may like to be.”

As part of the internships, the students took a one-credit, two-week course – Detroit in Context – that covered the history of Detroit. The course was taught by Associate Professor David Sheridan in the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities, who also helped develop the Urban Studio program.

The full Urban Studio program will be available this fall when the Connect and Engage portions of the program begin. Any Detroit business or organization is invited to participate. Prior to the Connect events, training and practice sessions will be held for students who are interested in participating.

The plan is to eventually launch the Urban Studio program in different Michigan cities. The program started in Detroit as part of a broader MSU effort, DETxMSU, an initiative by Michigan State University to offer more experiential learning opportunities in Detroit.

“We really want to form meaningful connections with the people in the city of Detroit,” Hart-Davidson said. “That follows a broader institutional strategy that we should bring to Detroit what we do best, which is engaged teaching and research.”

For more information on the program, see the Urban Studio website at urbanstudio.cal.msu.edu.
“The way Ride for Ride works is every time we sell a charter or tour, some of the money goes to getting kids a free ride for a field trip or other transport need.”

– Daniel Brooks
Ask MSU alumnus Daniel Brooks (BA Philosophy 2004) how he came to be the Chief Operating Officer for the Detroit Bus Company (DBC) and develop a program that offers free transportation for Detroit-area youth, and he will say it was “pure serendipity.”

Brooks had just moved back to Michigan with his wife, MSU alumna Sarah Gold (James Madison College 2004), after earning his master’s degree in Urban Planning from the University of Maryland.

“I didn’t have a job, yet, and knew no one in the area except family,” Brooks said. “So when I heard that a Detroit-area group, Transportation Riders United, had rented a bus to travel to an advocacy meeting in Lansing, it sounded like a good way to meet urban planning people in the area.”

Instead, Brooks ended up talking with the bus driver, Andy Didorosi, Founder and Owner of the DBC, a private company that aims to fill Detroit’s transit gaps. Because DBC was still small, Didorosi was driving the bus.

“We hit it off,” Brooks said, “and a couple months later, Andy called asking, ‘Do you want to make your own job?’ I thought that sounds better than looking for a job!”

Beginning as a volunteer, Brooks helped design and work on company programs from the ground up and soon became Director of Transit Planning. A stint as head of sales followed before he became Chief Operating Officer for the company.

One program Brooks helped develop is the DBC’s Ride for Ride program that launched this past February. The program provides transportation to school or after-school programs for Detroit children in need.

“The way Ride for Ride works is every time we sell a charter or tour, some of the money goes to getting kids a free ride for a field trip or other transport need,” Brooks said. “We keep track of every ticket sold, so every single sale results in a Detroit kid getting a safe ride.”

With there being a tremendous need for safe youth transportation in Detroit, the DBC works closely with youth programs and schools in the city to identify the kids most in need of transportation to build true educational equality across all neighborhoods.

“We say that Ride for Ride is ‘The honest alternative to student school transport,’” Brooks said. “Our motivation is we want to do good, so we’re focused on building the program and growing it as we should, how we should.”

As Brooks and Didorosi work on growing the Detroit Bus Company and building the company’s online presence, they also continue looking for ways to help Detroit’s youth.

“We remain committed to filling transit gaps in Detroit,” Brooks said, “and we never stop looking for ways to serve youth.”
Alumnus Anthony Hatlinger, Garden Production Manager, Central Detroit Christian (CDC).
Combining Horticulture with Religious Studies may seem unusual to some, but for College of Arts & Letters alumnus Anthony Hatinger, it made perfect sense.

Hatinger, who has a BA in Religious Studies with a minor in Horticulture and specialization in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, is the Garden Production Manager for Central Detroit Christian (CDC) and oversees garden production at several of CDC’s for-profit businesses that employ more than 100 people.

His job is giving him the opportunity to put his knowledge from MSU into real-world, community-building experiences.

“I was able to understand cross-cultural ties in organizations and in people. And, I was learning about all these different religions, learning all these different cultures,” he said. “Now, I get to use my education in a different sort of way, to create an urban discipleship.”

As the Garden Production Manager, Hatinger nurtures the area with fresh food products and restoration materials, and the profits made from the sale of these resources are redistributed back into the community.

“We’re teaching ag-tech skills, market skills, sales skills, and weaving a tapestry to attack food access issues on a variety of levels,” he said.

Central Detroit Christian is a faith-based nonprofit organization that serves Detroit communities by pairing education and employment with economic development efforts to reinvigorate local neighborhoods.

As a result of CDC’s work – and Hatinger’s knowledge – Detroit community members are excited about gardening and learning new, stimulating practices.

“The impact this gardening work has had in the neighborhood has a lot of different roots. People want to start their own gardens; they want to start their own composting programs,” Hatinger said. “It’s a spirit of cultivation that’s happening within people.”

One of Hatinger’s main responsibilities is overseeing the CDC Farm and Fishery, an indoor self-sustaining aquaponics center that brings fresh fish and vegetables to a neighborhood severely lacking in fresh foods. The facility is the first and only licensed fish farm in the Detroit area and just one example of how new, innovative ideas are helping to nurture Detroit communities.

“(Detroit) has always been a place of innovation and a place of great challenges,” Hatinger said.

Being in Detroit and getting hands-on experiences working with a misunderstood area has had a big impact on Hatinger, too.

“There’s a lot of spiritual and emotional shifts that Detroit has had on me,” he said. “My experiences here have changed a lot about how I want to live my life and how I want to be a leader for the next generation. It’s been a blessing.”
“No one will ever think it’s a bad thing to have a master’s. You might as well go.”

With this gentle spoken nudge from her then-MSU employee mother, College of Arts & Letters alumna Elysia Borowy-Reeder’s path to professional success in arts administration and education was set in motion.

Taking her mother’s advice to heart after completing her undergraduate degree in Visual Arts from Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, Borowy-Reeder went on to earn not one but two master’s degrees in Art History and Art Education, both from MSU’s Department of Art, Art History, and Design.

“My mother was right,” she said. “When my husband and I moved to Chicago after I graduated from MSU, I knew no one. It was my two master’s degrees from MSU that helped get me in the door and develop connections.”

She now serves as Executive Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD).

“This is a dream job, and I know it,” Borowy-Reeder said. Under her leadership, MOCAD has gone from 18,000-20,000 visitors each year to now more than 100,000 annual visitors.

“We’ve done a lot of education and outreach, and we’re doing much more with artist support and community engagement, too,” she said.

MOCAD also now engages visitors with programs that are more “techno brunch” than gallery walk.

“We change every three months, so we always have a new exhibition or two or three, and tons of music,” Borowy-Reeder said. “I want Detroiter and other visitors to know this is YOUR museum for seeing fresh, new, innovative art that’s topical and relevant.”

As for the artists, Borowy-Reeder notes that it’s important for MOCAD to present fresh new artists who don’t show at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Alumna Elysia Borowy-Reeder, Executive Director, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD).
“What I want to do in this lifetime is work with artists to present their projects. That is what MOCAD does,” Borowy-Reeder said. “We want to give artists a place to show, a place to be with their peers. We want to be a source of inspiration for artists. There’s a lot of amazing talent in Detroit, and we want to put that in the spotlight.”

Also under Borowy-Reeder’s leadership, MOCAD started offering programs for area youth.

“Our outreach to youth is much needed in the community,” she said. “There are a lot of creative kids making art in their basements and garages, and there are so few art programs anymore. We do theatre, writing, and music, too, so it’s not just visual art.”

One MOCAD youth program is the Teen Council, comprising 20 area teens who are paid to develop programming ‘for teens by teens.’

“The Teen Council has been very successful and, last year, all of the kids in the program went on to college,” Borowy-Reeder said. “Many are interested in fields such as industrial design, cartooning, animation, and photography.”

Prior to coming to MOCAD, Borowy-Reeder was the Executive Director of the fledgling Contemporary Art Museum (CAM) in Raleigh, N.C. She also worked for four years for the Milwaukee Art Museum (MAM) and was at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (MCA) for more than seven years.

In April 2013, 13 years after leaving Michigan, the East Lansing native decided to return to head up MOCAD.

“I saw it as an opportunity to come home,” she said. “And everyone I spoke with echoed the same refrain: Detroit offers pure potential.”
ELLEN BRUSS DESIGN

As a high school student in the late ’70s, Ellen Bruss knew the answer to the question her parents, guidance counselor, and others posed: “What are you going to do with the rest of your life?” Her confident reply: “I want to be a graphic designer.”
Today, Bruss (BFA in Studio Art with a concentration in Graphic Design ‘82) is the Creative Director and Owner of her own firm, Ellen Bruss Design (EBD), in Denver, Colorado.

“Guess it worked out,” she said.

But when Bruss graduated from MSU, she said she wasn’t prepared to face the worst economy in decades. She first worked as a window display person at Casual Corner and for a gourmet national foods market.

“I then moved into the rock ‘n’ roll business working for a large concert promoter who had shows from Kansas City to San Francisco,” Bruss said. “We did ads, custom stuff for bands, laminates, and more. That experience was very hardcore; very, very fast paced. That’s what I wasn’t prepared for – the pace. It took some time to adjust to it. Now when we have a job with a tight deadline and a staff member asks me if we can get it done, I just say, ‘Don’t worry about it.’”

As for how Bruss ended up in Denver, that involved an MSU connection.

“Some friends from MSU came to visit me and we were going to Denver, so I went with them,” Bruss said. “I loved the city and the weather and decided to move. It was during the off season from the summer concert series, so I started freelancing for 50- to 100-person design firms.”

One of her freelance clients provided her with office space and another moved to Janus Mutual Funds. Then, with two credit unions and Janus as clients, she picked up MCA Concerts out of Los Angeles.

“When that happened, I decided to hire a full-time graphic designer and a part-time bookkeeper, and start my business,” Bruss said. That was in 1990.

Since then, Ellen Bruss Design has developed three niches: national and local real estate development firms; consumer packaging for firms such as Hammond’s Candies, Target, and Bed Bath & Beyond; and cultural work for the Biennial of the Americas, Denver Art Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, and others. The firm’s work has been published in more than 400 magazines, books, and online blogs.

“Today, we’re a 12-person (and growing) design firm, including me,” Bruss said.

Bruss recently became involved with an MSU female entrepreneurship group and is making plans to come back to campus this fall to speak to MSU Graphic Design students about these points and more.

“Graphic designers need to be accomplished in their area of study. They need to study the principles of design; master the various design programs; be able to build their own website; and promote themselves. And they need to keep current on all of that.”

There were so many different things going on and so many different people doing different things. It was a great experience. My only regret was that I didn’t take advantage of everything I could have, such as study abroad.”

Bruss recommends that students make themselves aware of as many opportunities as possible both in and out of class. And, for students like she was, who don’t know anyone else when they come to MSU, she says it’s important they learn how to get connected with faculty, other students, and alumni; to network with as many people as they can and prepare for the real world after graduation. Internships also are important, said Bruss, who had one with Easter Seals of Lansing and another with the MSU Bookstore.

“Graphic designers need to be accomplished in their area of study,” she said.

“They need to study the principles of design; master the various design programs; be able to build their own website; and promote themselves. And they need to keep current on all of that.”

But they also need life skills – the knowledge of how to function in the world, which is becoming a big thing, Bruss said.

Bruss recently became involved with an MSU female entrepreneurship group and is making plans to come back to campus this fall to speak to MSU Graphic Design students about these points and more.
TOP GUN SCREENWRITER, ALUMNUS
SAYS REWRITING SEPARATES PROS FROM AMATEURS

“First drafts are important, but the real work is done over a series of rewrites. That’s rewrites ‘plural.’”

College of Arts & Letters alumnus Jack Epps and his former screenwriting instructor at MSU, Jim Cash, wrote the screenplays for Top Gun, Legal Eagles, Turner and Hooch, and The Secret of My Success among other hit films.
If there’s one skill separating the professional screenwriter from the amateur, it’s the ability to successfully rewrite. Now, from MSU College of Arts & Letters alumnus Jack Epps Jr. (BA. English ‘72) comes Screenwriting is Rewriting (Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), a comprehensive guide that explores the many layers of rewriting.

“I was first introduced to the benefits of rewriting while an undergraduate at Michigan State,” Epps said. “I was taking a short story class with Professor Virgil Scott, and he kept sending back my story, telling me to rewrite it. As with most writers, I resisted. But I did the work, and over the course of several drafts, the story got appreciably better. I’ve been a rewriter ever since.”

In Screenwriting is Rewriting, Epps provides a practical and tested approach to organizing notes, creating a game plan, and executing a series of focused passes that address story, character, theme, structure, and plot issues. Included are sample notes, game plans, and beat sheets from Epps’ work on films such as Sister Act and Die Hard III, as well as exclusive interviews with Academy Award-winning screenwriters Robert Towne (Chinatown) and Frank Pierson (Dog Day Afternoon), and Academy Award nominee Susannah Grant (Erin Brockovich).

“One motivation to write the book was to get down on paper my theories of screenwriting, developed over a 30-year period as a professional screenwriter,” Epps said. “I didn’t want to let all that experience disappear and wanted to pass on what I’d learned to the next generation of screenwriters.”

An award-winning writer and filmmaker, Epps first became involved in making films as an undergraduate in the College of Arts & Letters. Inspired by a student film festival, he made his first film the following semester.

For nearly 20 years, Epps and his former screenwriting instructor at MSU, Jim Cash (BA English ’70, MA Television and Radio ’72), co-authored numerous successful screenplays. Epps lived and worked in Los Angeles while Cash remained at MSU teaching courses in writing and film history until his death in 1999.

The duo’s first produced screenplay – after penning seven unproduced scripts – was Top Gun, the highest-grossing film and #1 worldwide box office hit of 1986. Within 11 months, the duo produced three screenplays for films in theatres nationwide: Top Gun, Legal Eagles, and The Secret of My Success.

“First drafts are important, but the real work is done over a series of rewrites. That’s rewrites ‘plural,’” Epps said. “And it’s important to understand rewriting is much harder than writing a first draft, but all professional screenwriters are rewriters. It’s an essential part of the job.”

Epps adds that rewriting is challenging and often a messy and confusing process, but it’s important for the writer to organize their rewrite and do a series of strategic-focused passes rather than try to fix everything in one giant rewrite.

“Rewriting is generally overwhelming,” Epps said. “But by breaking it into small parts, you can fix three or four major issues before moving on to new areas. Over a series of passes, the writer will eventually be able to address all their notes and issues, and have a vastly improved screenplay.”

Epps currently serves as Associate Professor and Chair of Writing for Screen & Television and holds the Victoria and Jack Oakie Endowed Chair in Comedy at the University of Southern California’s School for Cinematic Arts.

The recipient of the Michigan State University Spartans in Hollywood Lifetime Achievement Award, Epps was the fall 2008 MSU commencement speaker, at which time he was awarded an honorary doctorate. A 35-year member of the Writer’s Guild of America, Epps also is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
DON’T MISS MSU’S
2016 HOMECOMING WEEK
OCT. 10-15
Parade Watch: 6 p.m., Friday, Oct. 14
Football vs. Northwestern: Saturday, Oct. 15
alumni.msu.edu/programs/homecoming
Stage Manager’s Career Built Upon MSU Network

After graduating in Theatre from Michigan State University in March 1977, Ruth Kramer worked in various Michigan professional theatres from East Lansing to Coldwater and Detroit before moving in February 1978 to New York City, where she’s lived ever since.

Settling into a day job in Manhattan while working theatre positions at night, Kramer later was hired as a stage manager by Pilobolus Dance Theatre and toured with them for the next three years.

“Amazingly, I came right back here to campus with Pilobolus in 1981 and faced the MSU Auditorium space as stage manager,” Kramer recalled during a recent interview on the MSU Auditorium stage. “I still tell students how coming back to play on this stage made for a very satisfying experience.”

Kramer added that her career began with the people she met at MSU.

“My time at MSU gave me that beginning network,” she said. “My entire career branched out from the tree trunk of Michigan State University.”

Her MSU network helped land her first job out of college at Tibbits Summer Theatre in Coldwater, Michigan, where she was a stage manager. Three years later, her MSU and Tibbits contacts helped again in getting her a job at the Virginia Theatre, now the August Wilson Theatre.

Kramer advises students to start building their network of professional contacts as early as possible, keeping in mind that every job could lead to another down the road.

“My career is a perfect example of the crucial importance of networking,” she said. “For instance, I got my Equity card because a director I’d worked with at Tibbits Summer Theatre introduced me to someone who hired me as the stage manager for a 1983 off-Broadway show, From Brooks with Love. Since then, I’ve been all over this beautiful country working as a regional and stock stage manager, living a varied and rich life.”

Kramer returned to MSU’s campus in fall 2015 to be the guest stage manager in the Department of Theatre’s Guest Artists Series. During her recent stay, she had the opportunity to meet and work with students and faculty in the Arts and Cultural Management program.

“That program is teaching students valuable skills, while giving those who may not intend to pursue a career as an artist options to build a career in a discipline they truly love,” she said.

As to what brings Kramer joy and makes her most proud, she says it’s her 18-year association with Pittsburgh Public Theater and her work with Actors’ Equity Association, the labor union representing American actors and stage managers in the theatre.

“I’m very proud and happy to be a highly active member of Actors’ Equity,” she said. “Since 1987-88, I’ve worked on committees learning as much as I can about my profession, and been elected three times to serve on the National Council. It’s highly satisfying for me to work toward the greater good of others. It helps make it great to get up in the morning.”
Three ArtPrize Firsts for Ann and Steve Loveless

College of Arts & Letters alumna Ann Loveless and her husband Steve achieved three firsts in 2015 at the seventh annual ArtPrize® in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Ann is the only artist to win the grand prize two times; Ann and Steve are the first collaborative team to win; and Steve is the first photographer to be awarded the grand prize. The couple’s 5-feet-high by 25-feet-long entry, which won the $200,000 public vote grand prize, was created in a process they call PhotoFiber, a mixed media of photography and textiles. The composition begins on the left as a photographic print and gradually transitions into Ann’s quilted mosaic technique.

Ann says Northwood Awakening represents the awakening of a beautiful Northern Michigan woods after winter just as the leaves pop out on the trees and the trillium are in full blossom. Her 2013 grand prize winning entry, Sleeping Bear Dunes Lakeshore, recently was donated to the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and is now on permanent display at the park’s Phillip A. Hart visitor center in Empire, Michigan.

ArtPrize 2015 public vote grand prize winner, Northwood Awakening, by Steve and Ann Loveless blends photography and textiles.
Ever wonder why some companies struggle while others unleash incredible innovation and growth? Ask College of Arts & Letters alumna Michelle Hayward – she’s been learning first-hand what makes companies successful since she could see over the counter at her parents’ Upper Peninsula grocery store.

Today, Hayward and her business consultancy firm, Bluedog Design, help Fortune 500 companies find clarity and a path forward amidst the complexity of market and organizational change. By applying design-thinking methodologies to complex problems, Bluedog Design illuminates solutions to unlock growth and helps companies remove the barriers to launching new products and services.

Recently, the Chicago firm helped the Blissful Baking Company launch a “new to the world” brand created with the German biscuit company, Bahlsen. Bluedog’s work for the launch, Hayward said, is an example of “holistically positioning and defining a brand’s assets – its story, the personality, the brand identity, and its packaging assets.”

As Bluedog’s Founder and CEO, Hayward drives the culture and talent, and guides the external commitments of the firm.

“We hire talent that jumps out of bed each day with the drive it takes to solve big, ‘hard-pile’ problems,” Hayward said. “It’s the talent that we curate that brings our clients in and that’s the same reason those teams continue to work with Bluedog. I also work on various early stage development strategies and enjoy speaking at universities and business events.”

Hayward earned BA degrees from Michigan State University in German and Political Science.

“I do continue to use my German language as we work closely with multinational companies located in Europe,” she said. “Language also helps me navigate as I shop markets to identify trends in products, packaging, marketing, and branding.”

Hayward completed the Kellogg School of Management’s Chief Marketing Officer program in 2014 and was honored by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) as 2012 Illinois Small Business Person of the Year.

The SBA noted: “Michelle began her business as an innovation, brand strategy, and creative marketing agency. By using unique concepts of ‘viewing things sideways,’ she provides exceptional services solving some of the most difficult brand problems for clients such as Nestlé, General Mills, and 3M, to name a few.”

Hayward recently became re-engaged with MSU, including participating in the MSU Alumni Association’s Spartan Women programs in Chicago. She also is serving a three-year term with MSU’s Marketing Advisory Council and joined MSU’s Conquer Accelerator in 2016, in which she currently mentors MSU student entrepreneurs and Conecter mobile app co-founders Zoe Zappitell and Brittney Urich. (See Conecter story page 24.)

“It’s a joy to work with Zoe and Brittney as they look to dial in their business model and commercialize the Conecter concept,” Hayward said. “I admire their ability to keep their eyes and ears open and flex on the fly.”

Hayward resides in Chicago with her husband, Jeremy Anderson, also an entrepreneur. In recent years, the couple lovingly transformed a turn-of-the-century municipal bathhouse into one of Chicago’s most sought-after ideation and meeting spaces.
The Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages hosted its first-ever alumni reunion April 9.

“The reunion provided alumni with the opportunity to reflect on the value of their language studies here at MSU and to share those thoughts and conclusions with current students, all while learning and having fun in the process,” said Sonja Fritzsche, Chair of the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages.

During the reunion, MSU faculty and students unveiled cutting-edge research and provided an insider’s look into the latest innovative language technology. Participants exchanged ideas on topics such as the European refugee crisis, the importance of languages in Michigan, and the benefits and challenges of studying abroad.
Julia Johnson came to Michigan State University wanting to study Animal Science, but later discovered what she truly wanted to do within the College of Arts & Letters and Department of Religious Studies.

“I realized that studying the humanities is so important for the future of the world,” said Johnson, who graduated in 2015 with a BA in Religious Studies. “I took Intro to Biblical Literature with Dr. Chris Frilingos. He motivated me to pursue the academic study of religion. Without guidance from him and the whole Department of Religious Studies, I wouldn’t be where I am today.”

And where Johnson is at is Yale Divinity School, working on her master’s in Divinity. And, based on her exceptional academic achievement at Michigan State University and her demonstrated leadership ability, she was awarded the title of Marquand Scholar by Yale Divinity School, which comes with a merit-based, full-tuition scholarship as well as a living allowance to pursue her master’s at Yale.

“I was often told that applying to an Ivy League school would be very difficult having a ‘state school’ education,” Johnson said. “But, it hasn’t been. I feel overly prepared, and I owe it all to MSU. I’m proud to say I attended Michigan State University for so many reasons. MSU made me feel like a leader both in and outside of the classroom. I immersed myself in all the opportunities the University had to offer, and I graduated knowing I left my mark.”

Johnson was encouraged to apply to Yale by Gretel Van Wieren, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies.

“As my senior advisor, she helped me explore the intersection between religion and animals,” said Johnson, who is now combining her two areas of interest, religion and animal science, by studying religious animal ethics, specifically surrounding farming, slaughtering, and domestication.

Johnson says her experience visiting MSU’s agricultural farms and slaughterhouse inspired her to explore the relationship between food animals, death, consumption, and faith.

“I am interested in how religion shapes our worldviews, especially regarding the treatment and management of animals, the intimate connection between religion and food, and religious ethics regarding death and the afterlife,” Johnson said.

After she graduates from Yale, Johnson plans to pursue doctoral work in religious ethics as well as training as an animal chaplain.

“I feel called to educate people on the relationship between humans and animals, and how faith plays a large factor influencing our worldviews,” Johnson said. “I’m also in the process of creating an ‘environmental series’ for churches to draw attention to nonhuman creation in Scripture and sacred texts. I hope to generate more empathy for animals and the Earth, ultimately instilling a new Christian environmental ethic to effect compassion for all Earth’s creatures.”

Johnson is the 2015 recipient of the Religious Studies Engaged Scholar Award, which recognizes the Religious Studies undergraduate major at Michigan State University with the highest grade point average. She also received the Nick Rashford and Jake Folio Religious Studies Award, recognizing student excellence in engaged scholarship and community/nonprofit outreach combined with the academic study of religion.

“Michigan State afforded me confidence in my academic studies and within myself,” Johnson said. “Because I know who I am, I can move forward in my professional career, knowing that I have the training of a Spartan to prepare me for anything that lies ahead.”
LENDING A HAND WITH THE REFUGEE CRISIS IN EUROPE
College of Arts & Letters alumna Caron Creighton was so moved by the stories she read on the refugee crisis in Europe she cashed in her vacation time, booked an airplane ticket, and reserved a place to stay on the Greek island of Lesvos.

“I knew I had to go when I read the stories of people fleeing terrorism in their home countries and traveling to Greece just to stay alive,” Creighton said. “I also read about the difficulty volunteers face when attempting to help these refugees, not only in Greece, but throughout Europe.”

One article indicated there were several volunteer groups in Lesvos, but no official organization guiding their efforts.

“The situation in Lesvos is fluid, but one constant is they always need help, both from on-site volunteers and donations,” Creighton said. “Some island residents – just your average people – had volunteered to help, so I thought maybe I could, too.”

Recognized as the greatest migration surge since World War II, in 2015, more than one million refugees and other migrants entered Europe, many through Greece, according to the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees.

More than 57 percent of those refugees first landed on the Greek island of Lesvos, arriving at a rate of 3,300 to 6,200 people daily. This massive refugee influx sorely taxed the resources of the island’s 88,000 residents, resulting in severe limitations on shelter, sanitation, and site management.

“I resolved to use my own funds and vacation time,” Creighton said. “I also started a GoFundMe campaign to raise $1,000 to buy necessities and provide emergency funds for refugees once I was there. It was fully funded before I left, topping out at $1,285 raised in two months from 25 people.”

Creighton used the funds raised in the GoFundMe campaign to help meet refugees’ needs.

“First, I purchased ferry tickets for a family that was stranded on Lesvos without any money,” she said. “Then, a few days later, a friend drove me into town, where I bought about 500 euro worth of shoes and children’s winter coats, plus a few razors, diapers, and leggings.”

Those materials Creighton sorted and stocked upon returning to Moria Camp, and before she left for the day, volunteers had already given away some shoes.

Creighton spent two weeks in Lesvos, and during that time, volunteered in many different areas on the island.

“I wasn’t on the front lines, pulling people off the boats,” she said. “But I did get to meet many people and families, and I think the experience changed me. The world seems so much smaller now. And when I read articles referring to refugees dying or freezing in the cold, it hurts a lot more.”

Creighton also got to use the Arabic skills she learned at MSU during her trip.

“Because I studied Arabic for five years in college, I believed my knowledge of the language would be valuable in helping people feel welcome and comfortable while in the refugee camp. As it turned out, I used Arabic a ton,” she said. “Of course, once I spoke a bit of Arabic, people would think I was totally fluent and begin speaking so fast that it was hard to keep up. But, overall, it was definitely a plus to speak their language.”

Creighton, who works as an Information Developer for IBM in San Francisco, says that when she returned to work, “My manager was very supportive, and my immediate colleagues said they were proud of me for what I’d done. It was a very nice reaction to get.”

As for the immediate future, Creighton plans to apply to law school and journalism grad school at Berkeley this fall.
Assistant Professor of Acting and Movement Christina Traister is one of only four female fight directors in the world certified by the Society of American Fight Directors (SAFD).
Knowing Christina Traister grew up with two stepbrothers – 11 and 13 years older than her, who both wrestled – you realize her career path was probably set in motion as a child.

“The whole tomboy thing, that was me,” Traister said. “I got my first snowmobile at 9 and a motorcycle at 11. In fact, I still own a Harley. Oh, I was a gymnast, too, and Pearl Jam was my go-to soundtrack.”

No wonder the MSU Department of Theatre Assistant Professor of Acting and Movement and Graduate Acting Program Director is now one of only four female fight directors in the world certified by the Society of American Fight Directors (SAFD). Traister also is Head Coordinator for SAFD’s National Stage Combat Workshop.

Stage combat is a broad term covering acts of conflict, danger, and/or violence performed for entertainment – from a slap to the face, to a fall down the stairs, or an epic 15-person battle with swords and axes. True stage combat uses violence to tell a story, as does dance choreography, set design, and costuming.

Traister teaches Stage Combat I and II at MSU. In Stage Combat I, the emphasis is on learning the basics of theatrical unarmed combat, which is the foundation of theory and technique for all the techniques. Stage Combat II focuses on quarterstaff, rapier, and dagger.

At the end of each course, students can take a skills proficiency test, and if they pass, they become SAFD-certified in those specific areas. Students who pass all three weapons earn actor/combatant status with the SAFD, which is a big boost to their resume.

Traister is an SAFD-certified teacher in eight weapons, including unarmed, rapier, and dagger, single sword, smallsword, broadsword, sword and shield, knife, and quarterstaff. She also holds a certification in theatrical firearms training.

In addition to her work at MSU, Traister works with stunt teams around the world, including the stunt team on the set of the History Channel’s Vikings television show.

Still, she says her “day job” remains her first love: acting and teaching for Michigan State University’s Department of Theatre.

“I absolutely love working here,” Traister said. “But, to be honest, I never thought I’d find myself in academia. Theatre, and Shakespeare in particular, was what I most enjoyed.”

However, Kirk Domer, Department of Theatre Chair and Associate Professor of Scene Design, and Rob Roznowski, Associate Professor of Acting, Artistic Director, and Head of Acting and Directing, told Traister she could teach Shakespeare, acting, and fighting.

“It wasn’t long before I realized, ‘I love this!’” Traister said. “We quickly went from zero stage combat courses in the department to curriculum that included Stage Combat I and II.”

In addition, each May, MSU hosts “The Fredricksen Intensive,” a stage combat training intensive with options of 20 hours of training in one weapon, or 10 hours of training in two separate weapons to earn hours toward SAFD skills proficiency tests.

Along the way, Traister also carved out a niche recording audiobooks, including more than 100 titles over the past five years. This led to developing an MSU course on audiobooks, providing students with professional digital demos as a class deliverable and even booking a few students for jobs.

“It gets extremely busy, between my responsibilities as an assistant professor, my research agenda, auditioning, and choreographing,” Traister said.

But whether referring to her stage combat courses, TV and movie work, or Fredericksen Intensive training exercises, Traister’s demeanor projects an air of controlled poise, confidence, and competence, prompting the question from observers and students alike:

“Where do I sign up?”
“I was very surprised to hear that I was elected to this group,” MacDowell said. “It’s not a secret society or anything, but I had no knowledge I was even under consideration. The fact that I was even nominated, let alone voted into this group – a group of my peers – means a tremendous amount to me. It validates my work in women’s materials culture, museum-based work, as well as my fieldwork and public service, especially in Michigan.”

Established in 1960, the Fellows of the American Folklore Society is an honorary body of folklorists whose members have produced a significant number of important articles, books, and other scholarly productions or exhibitions on folklore, and have provided meritorious service to the society and the discipline of folklore studies.

A core faculty member for the past 20 years, MacDowell is part of the group that founded the College of Arts & Letters’ Museum Studies program. She currently serves as the program’s internship coordinator and teaches future museum professionals curatorial, research, exhibition, and civic engagement work as well as field work.

Her research interests include South African quilt history, traditions of patchwork covers in China, quilts and health, the history and meaning of lauhala in Hawaiian culture, and the intersection of ethnography and museums in a digital age. She’s the Director of the Quilt Index, an international digital repository of stories, images, and other data related to quilts and their makers.

“I’m also very involved and invested in digital humanities work, including working with MATRIX (the Center for Digital Humanities and Social Sciences at MSU) for nearly 20 years,” MacDowell said. “I’m particularly interested in the intersection of museums (collections, exhibitions, and education) and digital humanities.”

MacDowell notes that digital repositories of big data can advance scholarship in ways previously not possible. For instance, the Quilt Index enables humanists all over the world to investigate aspects of textile production and trade, art history, migration patterns, women’s studies, health and wellness, and much more.

MacDowell has curated more than 50 research-based interpretive exhibitions and festival programs at Michigan State University and is the Founding Director of the MSU Museum’s Great Lakes Folk Festival, a university-community partnership.

Over the years, MacDowell has served in a number of capacities within the American Folklore Society, including as an elected member of the AFS executive board. She notes that because many of the society’s members come from other fields such as literature and music, knowing they embraced someone whose work is heavily in women’s material culture is very special to her.

“I’ve always felt there is no better home for me than the American Folklore Society, even though a portion of my work is also connected to ethnography and anthropology,” MacDowell said. “In my mind, there’s no greater scholarly home in helping us make sense of life activities.”
Whether old houses, furniture, cars, or even ourselves, the fact is: humans love to restore things. For Gretel Van Wieren, Assistant Professor in the Department of Religious Studies, it begged the question: “Why not the environment?” In response, Van Wieren developed and teaches an IAH (Center for Integrative Studies in Arts and Humanities) seminar course – Human Culture, Ethics, and Nature – an Introduction to Environmental Ethics. It is a multipronged approach to environmental ethics, religion, and restoration of the environment. Coursework blends the philosophical with the scientific and the spiritual with the moral, and focuses on community organizing work to shape concrete practices that restore damaged landscapes.

“Providing a comparative worldview, the seminar introduces the work of modern, spiritual, and ethical writers as well as new coursework in religious studies,” Van Wieren said. Her Environmental Ethics seminar was not Van Wieren’s first direct exposure to the subject. Her 2013 book, Restored to Earth, provided the first comprehensive examination of the religious and ethical dimensions and significance of contemporary restoration practice. This resulted in an ethical framework to advance the field of environmental ethics in a more positive, action-oriented, experience-based direction.

In the book, Van Wieren brings together insights and examples from restoration ecology, environmental ethics, religious studies, and conservation and Christian thought, as well as her own personal experiences in ecological restoration, to propose a new restoration ethic grounded in the concrete, hands-on experience of humans working as partners with the land.

“Dr. Van Wieren’s work exemplifies the land-grant interdisciplinarity that MSU has been encouraging,” said Arthur Versluis, Chair of the Department of Religious Studies. “Her work involves many areas and departments across the University including Agriculture, Forestry, Environmental Philosophy, and others.”

Van Wieren’s Religion and the Environment course is popular among students in the Department of Religious Studies’ Nonprofit Leadership concentration, and provides a viable career track for students, as well as an introduction to her and others’ work. It covers work related to for-profits, too.

Besides class sessions, students learn about and visit a number of course-related entities such as university-wide environmental efforts at Michigan State. They also learn from guest key nonprofit leaders, including those from FoodPLUS|Detroit, a networked innovation coalition established to facilitate and accelerate implementation of innovative food, agriculture, and related resources projects.

“There is a definite difference between students now and when I began teaching at MSU six years ago,” Van Wieren said. “And while those in my environment courses still include a handful of climate change deniers and others who are dismissive of the environmental movement, I’ve seen a positive shift in awareness and support for efforts to restore the environment. In fact, I was very pleased with the students’ final project this term. It was a major research paper, and their presentations were stellar.”
Pue, Director of Digital Humanities and Associate Professor of South Asian Literature and Culture, is the first MSU faculty member to receive a Mellon New Directions Fellowship, which promotes cross-disciplinary research by assisting humanities faculty with training outside their discipline. He is one of 12 faculty members from across the nation to receive the award.

A self-taught programmer, Pue will use the $231,000 award to pursue training in computational mathematics, computer science, and natural language processing.

“My project will address an understudied aspect of one of the most enduring questions in South Asian literary studies – namely the relationship between language and community – through a completely new method,” Pue said.

“That method will contribute to the preservation of cultural forms in the region through the collection of data. It will also help internationalize the field of digital humanities.”

In South Asia, oral recitation of poems plays a central role in everyday life, including political activism and mobilization, he said.

Specifically, Pue will use computational tools to study rhyme, stress, and patterns of repetition, and compare written text and performance. By creating digital texts and performances for Hindi and Urdu, Pue hopes to develop best practices for encoding for linguistics and scholarship librarians. MSU Libraries will preserve the data he creates and collects.

In addition to taking courses, Pue will make two research visits to India and Pakistan and will attend two language conferences.

“Sean could have gone anywhere to pursue his leading-edge digital humanities research into the sounds that distinguish and connect Hindi and Urdu poetry,” said Christopher P. Long, Dean of the College of Arts & Letters. “It is a great testament to MSU’s strengths in computational data science and natural language processing that Sean chose to remain here for the training he needs. This project is part of an emerging strength in culturally engaged digital humanities at MSU, and Mellon’s support of Sean’s work is a telling sign of the quality of the scholarship our faculty is producing.”
That’s the premise of a new language learning game, “Picky Birds,” designed by an interdisciplinary team of students under the supervision of College of Arts & Letters Associate Professor Catherine Ryu.

Inspired by the varying tones of bird species, the Picky Birds app makes the four main Mandarin tones “visible” so learners can sharpen their tone perception simply by playing the game.

“Mandarin Chinese is a tonal language, which means the same word can mean something entirely different depending on the tone used. This is fundamentally different than how we use tonal inflections in English,” said Ryu, who teaches Japanese Literature and Culture in the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages (LGSAL).

For example, in Mandarin, the word “ma” (English sound equivalent) can mean “mother,” “flax,” “horse,” or “to yell,” depending on the tonal inflection used.

Picky Birds teaches users the four main Mandarin tones by helping them associate each tone with a corresponding colored bird. Based on research showing brains are wired to associate high pitches with lighter hues, the birds in the Picky Birds app are yellow for the high even tone, green for the rising tone, blue for the dipping tone, and red for the falling tone.

The app is an outcome of Ryu’s Tone Perception Efficacy Study (ToPES), which she conducted with Aline Godfroid, Assistant Professor of Second Language Studies in LGSAL, and Chin-Hsi Lin, Assistant Professor in the Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Special Education. ToPES investigated two related questions regarding language:

- How do people perceive, process, and retain tones as a sensory perception, especially when the tones in question are not an integral aspect of their own language backgrounds?
- To what extent can people learn to differentiate tones and retain that information?

Ryu holds a U.S. patent for the technology on which the Picky Birds game is based and is working with MSU Technologies to market the app to users. She expects to begin commercialization this fall.

In addition to College of Arts & Letters faculty and students, the Picky Birds team includes Media and Information majors who are specializing in Game Design and Development in the College of Communications Arts and Sciences, and a computer music composer who teaches at Mott Community College in Flint. Ryu hopes to expand the team to include neuroscientists, graphic artists, creative writers, game developers, web developers, mechanical engineers, and social media specialists.

Development of Picky Birds was supported with funding from MSU’s Office of the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies under the Targeted Support Grant for Technology Development program.

Scholars of the Mandarin Chinese language can learn a lot from birds.
Kyle Whyte Awarded for Academic Excellence

Recognized for his academic excellence, Kyle Whyte (right, center), the Timnick Chair in the Humanities in the Department of Philosophy, received the 2015 Bunyan Bryant Award.

The award ceremony highlighted Whyte’s collaborative work with individuals and organizations across Michigan as they work to address the impacts of global warming on the continued existence of cultures, societies, and ways of life.

“I actually looked to Bunyan Bryant early on as a scholar working in the Great Lakes region who set a model of scholarship, engagement, and organizing that I have tried to emulate in my own career,” Whyte said. “Professor Bryant provides a powerful example to so many scholars who are starting out, including many in my generation and beyond.”

Whyte received the award in Detroit as part of the Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice (DWEJ) 20th anniversary celebration at the Adventure Center on the Detroit riverfront. The DWEJ program stated: “An articulate leader, Dr. Whyte advocates with passionate vision and philosophical precision in an often challenging dialogue.”

“There was much passion in the room as DWEJ convened an incredible group of justice advocates to honor the organization’s 20th anniversary,” Whyte said. “It was energizing to hear about how DWEJ’s future plans involve continuing to expand its capacity to ensure that all people live in clean and healthy environments. DWEJ has been a dedicated partner in the formation of the Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition.”

Whyte successfully bridges the academic world and the life of the community through the lens of climate justice and environmental justice.

An enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, originally occupying the Great Lakes region, his primary research addresses moral and political issues concerning climate policy and indigenous peoples, and the ethics of cooperative relationships between indigenous peoples and climate science organizations.

Regarding climate change and indigenous peoples, he is involved in the work of the Sustainable Development Institute of the College of Menominee Nation, the Climate and Traditional Knowledges Workgroup, U.S. Department of Interior’s Advisory Committee on Climate Change and Natural Resource Science, and numerous federal climate science programs.

Whyte has published in a wide range of humanities and science journals from *Hypatia* to *Climate Change*. His work has been supported by funders such as the National Science Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Northeast Climate Science Center, Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessments Center, and Sustainable Michigan Endowed Program.
“It’s a frustrating experience,” says Professor Michael O’Rourke, Department of Philosophy. “It’s especially frustrating if you don’t realize it and only later recognize that what you thought was agreement was in fact disagreement.”

The likelihood of this type of experience increases when interdisciplinary and interprofessional teams work together to solve complex problems. In these situations, a number of different perspectives typically are brought forth with different assumptions, jargon, values, and priorities. These differences can lead to misunderstanding or disagreement among team members.

Situations such as this drove O’Rourke to investigate whether philosophy can help resolve the issue. His current research effort, The Toolbox Project (toolbox-project.org), focuses on making it possible for complex scientific endeavors to avoid this kind of frustration.

A National Science Foundation-sponsored initiative, The Toolbox Project studies and facilitates communication in collaborative, cross-disciplinary research and practice. The project has developed an approach that enables teams to identify potential disagreements and misunderstandings about fundamental research commitments.

The Toolbox approach is based on a facilitated workshop designed to enhance communication among collaborators who may have different approaches to investigating and understanding the world. In the workshop, teams engage in dialogue that helps them identify and examine the dimensions of their collaboration and communication from a philosophical perspective.

“What we do is use philosophy to structure a dialogue among collaborators in these complex projects that focus on real-world issues like climate change or invasive species,” O’Rourke said. “In that dialogue, collaborators are given the opportunity to share their research perspectives and learn about one another in a way that enables them to see the research landscape that they’re operating in and their particular problem through each other’s eyes.”

During the three- to four-hour workshop sessions, various data are collected, which then are used to produce a report for the team, including a summary of team member responses, a transcript of the workshop, and an analysis of the workshop experience with suggestions of how to apply what has been learned in ongoing team activities.

As of June 2016, The Toolbox Project has conducted more than 190 workshops across the United States and around the world, including Australia, Canada, Japan, Kenya, and Ethiopia.

“What we’ve learned is that philosophy can contribute to the conduct of science and facilitate the integration of perspectives that is required in order for those projects to be successful,” O’Rourke said. “Philosophy provides a number of resources that, if well used, can make science better.”
Foreign language teachers play a pivotal role in creating global citizens, but some lack confidence in their ability to speak in their nonnative tongue, which could undermine the quality of language instruction, MSU College of Arts & Letters researchers argue.

Peter De Costa, Assistant Professor in the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages, and Lorena Valmori, a recent PhD graduate of the Second Languages Studies program, surveyed nine teachers in an Italian high school system, some of whom taught in college prep schools and some in vocational schools. The research, published in the journal System, is the first qualitative study examining how teachers maintain foreign language proficiency.

“Good language learning only takes place if there’s good language teaching. For that to happen, language teachers need to be proficient, confident, and motivated,” said De Costa, who recently was awarded the 2016 Emerging Scholar Award of the Language and Social Processes Special Interest Group of the American Education Research Association (AERA).

In the study, foreign language teachers state that over time their speaking skills had declined since teaching required them to concentrate more on accuracy, such as the mechanical and semantic aspects of language, and less on speaking and fluency.

In addition, students’ needs dictated teachers’ desires to improve. Those teaching in a college prep setting focus on skills students need in college, such as vocabulary and grammar rules, while those teaching at the vocational school are less focused on grammar, feeling the language bar was lower.

Combined, the two scenarios lead to feelings of inadequacy for teachers, the researchers said. The solution? Professional development.
But unfortunately, the demographic and social constructs of a school often determine teachers’ access to resources, both in levels of support and materials, said De Costa and Valmori, both of whom are former high school teachers. Therefore, teachers in low-income districts or in vocational schools could be at a disadvantage.

In the study, teachers in college prep high schools formed active networks of foreign language teachers, while those in vocational education were frustrated by the lack of interest in doing so. In fact, vocational teachers reported feeling isolated, saying available resources didn’t cater to teachers with different needs.

Other key takeaways:

• Contrary to what many foreign language teachers believe, students don’t expect them to have perfect command of a language.

• In some cases, nonnative speakers of a foreign language are more empathetic to students’ needs, having been former language learners themselves.

• To seek out professional development, teachers must be motivated to improve.

• Professional development programs should be designed to meet differing needs, keep teachers motivated, and raise teachers’ awareness of their potential.

• Professional development doesn’t have to be expensive (i.e., attending a conference). It can be conducted among districts, and teachers can learn by collaborating.

Although conducted in Italy, De Costa and Valmori argue the issues addressed in their study are universal to all teachers.

“Our study is part of the larger narrative about how teachers need assistance and support from schools and the wider education system,” De Costa said. “We’d like to see more dialogue among teachers. Teachers don’t often talk to each other so they forget they’re probably their best helpers.”

De Costa earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Second Language Acquisition from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2011. He is part of MSU’s core faculty within the Second Language Studies PhD program and the Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) program. He was presented the Emerging Scholar Award at the AERA annual meeting on April 11 in Washington, D.C. The award recognizes outstanding scholarship among doctoral students and recent graduates.

Research by Assistant Professor Peter De Costa, Department of Linguistics, Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages, and Lorena Valmori, recent graduate of the MSU Second Language Studies (SLS) PhD program, examined how teachers maintain foreign language proficiency.
Faculty Researcher Leads Multidisciplinary Team to Produce Film
Nominated for Best Feature Film at the Indie Fest USA International Film Festival in October 2015, the documentary weaves the stories of three generations of Hmong refugees in the United States Midwest and France while focusing on Liachoua Naolu Lee, a former refugee and son of Hmong veterans of the French Indochina War (1946-1954) and American Secret War in Laos (1961-1975) who now lives in Rochester Hills, Michigan.

Lee’s story begins in Detroit, Michigan, then takes him to France, where he and his family sought asylum before immigrating to the United States. The film ends with his emotional return to his homeland of Laos for the first time in 40 years. In an effort to piece together fragments of his family history as it intersects with French and American recent histories, Lee’s personal story is brought into conversation with others from the Hmong community, American Vietnam veterans, French Indochina War veterans, historians and government officials.

“Featuring Lee’s journey of remembrance through an interdisciplinary lens allows us to recognize the way the process of remembering the legacies of global past conflicts informs current efforts to build more reconciled, just, and stronger communities,” said Babana-Hampton, who was the Executive Producer, Producer, Co-director, and Screenwriter on the film. “Connecting Hmong refugee experience in the American Midwest and France injects complex layers of meaning into historical events and the contemporary moment, complicates our understanding of refugee crises, and helps us gain new insights into global armed conflicts that shaped the Hmong’s experience in the American Midwest and France.”

Babana-Hampton added that “the film starts from the premise that storytelling through film can be an effective means of engaging with alternative histories and making visible erased memories as mechanisms for advancing social justice and human rights, connecting communities, bridging cultures, recognizing shared histories, imagining common futures, and ultimately building sustainable democracies at a time when the global community is called upon to respond to considerable ethical dilemmas in the face of unprecedented refugee crises and the humanitarian consequences of contemporary global conflicts.”

The College of Arts & Letters’ Department of Romance and Classical Studies premiered the film in February at MSU’s Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center. Since the premiere, public screenings and round table discussions were held at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Notre Dame, and University of Wisconsin-Madison. The film was introduced to international audiences in Paris, France, at the Musée National de l’Histoire de l’Immigration (The National Museum of the History of Immigration) followed by a panel discussion of internationally acclaimed scholars around the theme: “The Forgotten of Postcolonial Memories: The Case of Hmong.”

_Hmong Memory at the Crossroads_ is a production of Michigan State University in partnership with the Humanities Without Walls (HWW) Consortium based at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

With external funds recently secured through the Humanities Without Walls Consortium, a sequel is currently in production under the working title _Growing Up Hmong at the Crossroads_. The sequel will spotlight the Hmong diasporic experience from the perspective of second- and third-generation Hmong born and raised in France and the United States.

For more information on the film, visit the _Hmong Memory at the Crossroads_ website at hmc.cal.msu.edu.
2016 Faculty Alumni Board Awards

The 2016 Faculty Alumni Board Awards, recognizing College of Arts & Letters faculty for their outstanding achievements in leadership, teaching, innovation, and community engagement, were presented during the Faculty Alumni Board Reception April 23 at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center.

Hosted by the College of Arts & Letters Alumni Board, this year’s award recipients include:

**Jeff Wray – Paul Varg Award**

Wray is an Associate Professor in the Department of English and Film Studies program. He is a nationally recognized film director and screenwriter who has created a number of award-winning films, including *China*, which was broadcast nationally in the United States on PBS. He also has been featured in the Chicago Film Festival and the Los Angeles Pan-African Film Festival.

“Jeff has established a remarkable record of success as a teacher who successfully integrates his interdisciplinary skills and knowledge, and his creative activity, with his work in the classroom,” said David Stowe, who nominated Wray for the award. “Student comments bear this out, the word ‘amazing’ occurring frequently with his ability to motivate students and give them space to do their best creative work while attending to their professional development.”

**Rocio Quispe-Agnoli – College of Arts & Letters Faculty Leadership Award**

Quispe-Agnoli is a Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Romance and Classical Studies and the Latin American Studies program. She has demonstrated leadership in bringing the language sections within the College together in a fruitful collaboration between faculty working in the areas of critical theory and cultural studies.

“Rocio truly cares about bonds that make others care about each other, and she provides an example of how this works to everybody’s advantage and benefit,” said Department of Romance and Classical Studies Chair Douglas Noverr, who nominated Quispe-Agnoli for the award. “Her presence makes the Department, College, and University a better place to work, and a community where people aspire to be. Such individuals are truly invaluable to a culture of trust and mutual respect and appreciation.”

**Valentina Denzel – Alumni Award for Innovation and Leadership in Teaching and Learning**

Denzel is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Romance and Classical Studies and the French Literature program. She has set a new standard for engaged teaching, both for students and for community partners. Her courses make innovative use of visual culture and cultural artifacts designed to show students how such artifacts embody characteristics of an era, period, or movement.

“Dr. Denzel’s teaching is characterized by an ability to excite and involve students in their study of French language and culture,” said Department of Romance and Classical Studies Chair Douglas Noverr, who nominated Denzel for the
award. “Valentina has a passion for her field that students recognize as genuine and natural. Students identify her as part of a culture they find exciting and attractive for social and intellectual development.”

Tamara Butler – College of Arts & Letters Community Partner Award

Butler is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English and African and African American Studies program. Her research and pedagogy reflect her commitments to youth civic engagement, social justice education, critical literacies, cultural sustaining pedagogies, urban education, multicultural education, and secondary education. She fosters a spirit of collaboration within communities and bridges her work in the classroom with the work of scholars in various fields from MSU and other universities.

“Professor Butler is a committed scholar and teacher who uses her versatility and training to build bridges across the MSU campus, the East Lansing and Lansing communities, and [at the national and international levels],” said Professor Yomaira Figueroa, a colleague of Butler’s in the Department of English who nominated her for the award. “Her interest in youth activism, youth research, and social justice education is evident in her continual engagement and development of community partnerships.”

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American Council of Learned Societies
Assistant Professor Natalie Phillips, Department of English, received an $85,000 American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Digital Innovation Fellowship for her project, *The Neuroscience of Reading: Integrating Digital Humanities and Literary Cognition.*

Dart Foundation
Associate Professor Alison Dobbins, Department of Theatre, is part of a team, led by Associate Professor Charles Owen, Department of Computer Science and Engineering, that was awarded $25,000 by the Dart Foundation for their project, *Computational Literacy by Being a ‘Dancing Computer.’*

U.S. Department of Education
University Distinguished Professor Susan Gass and Professor Charlene Polio, both from the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages, and CLEAR Executive Associate Director Joy Campbell were awarded $164,000/year for MSU’s Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), a Title VI Language Resource Center (LRC), one of 16 in the nation.

Mellon Foundation
**Humanities Without Walls Program – Global Midwest**
**Direct Sponsor: University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign**
This initiative aims to reveal and rethink the Midwest as a major force in the formation of a global economy and culture – both now and in the past. MSU researchers received $314,895 in awards between 2015-2016:

- College of Arts & Letters Dean Christopher P. Long, University Distinguished Professor Susan Gass, Senior Associate Dean David Prestel, and Center for Language Teaching Advancement (CeLTA) Specialists Koenraad Van Gorp and Angelika Kraemer were awarded $1.2 million for the CIC Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTL) Partnership
- Associate Professor Mohammad Khalil, Department of Religious Studies (lead PI), *Muslims in the Midwest: An Oral History,* $45,000
- Senior Associate Dean David Prestel, MSU Seed Funding, $30,588
- Associate Professor Kyle Whyte, Department of Philosophy, and Associate Professor Stephen Gasteyer (MSU Co-PI Sociology), *The Great Lakes and the Global Midwest,* $28,799
- Associate Professor Safoi Babana-Hampton, Department of Romance and Classical Studies (lead PI), *Growing up Hmong at the Crossroads,* $60,435 (second round of funding)
- Associate Professor Gretel Van Wieren, Department of Religious Studies (lead PI), *The New Ethics of Food,* $50,418
- Professor Tze-Lan Deborah Sang, Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages, and Associate Professor Xuefei Ren (lead PI in Sociology), *Detroit in China: Postindustrial Cities and Urban-Representations in the Midwest and China,* $50,000
- Associate Professor Brahim Chakrani, Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages (MSU Co-PI), *The Midwest Heritage Language Network,* $3,000
- College of Arts & Letters Dean Christopher P. Long transferred his “Public Philosophy Journal” grant of $368,270 from Penn State University to MSU
- Associate Professor Sean Pue, Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages, New Directions Fellowship, *Publics of Sound: Data-Driven Analysis of the Politics of Poetic Innovation in Modern South Asia,* $213,000

Henry Luce Foundation
Professor Amy DeRogatis, MSU Department of Religious Studies, and Associate Professor Isaac Weiner, Comparative Studies at The Ohio State University, were awarded a two-year $200,000 grant by the Henry Luce Foundation to support *The American Religious Sounds Project,* a joint MSU-OSU Religious Studies project.

National Institutes of Health
Assistant Professor Ann Mongoven, Department of Religious Studies, collaborated with a team led by Joseph Krajick, Create for STEM, on a NIH SEPA project, *A New Genomic Framework for Schools and Communities,* awarded $755,474 for 2015-17.
Assistant Professor April Baker-Bell has been named a Fellow with the Literacy Research Association (LRA) STAR mentoring program. She also was invited to join the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Standing Committee on Research.

“NCTE is a very large organization, and for a junior faculty member only in her second year to be asked to join this important committee is impressive,” said David Prestel, Professor and CAL Senior Associate Dean for Research and Administration. “Similarly, the LRA STAR appointment as a fellow goes to only six faculty members for each two-year cohort.”

An Assistant Professor in the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures (WRAC) and the African American and African Studies program, Baker-Bell also assists English Education faculty in the College of Arts & Letters with coordinating, re-envisioning, and maintaining an English Education program serving urban communities surrounding MSU.

With more than 10 years’ experience teaching at the secondary and postsecondary levels, Baker-Bell’s research is situated in critical studies of African American Language at the intersections of literacy and pedagogy. Its primary goal is to align theory and research on language and literacy with classroom practice across K-U settings.

National Science Foundation
Associate Professor Kyle Whyte, Department of Philosophy; Professor Julie Libarkin, MSU Geological Sciences; and Christopher Caldwell, College of Menominee Nation, received nearly $450,000 for Collaborative Research: Values and Policy in Interdisciplinary Environmental Science: A Dialogue-based Framework for Ethics Education.

National Security Education Program
Associate Professor Paula Winke and University Distinguished Professor Susan Gass, both from the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages, and a faculty team from the Center for Language Teaching Advancement (CeLTA), Linguistics, and the Department of Romance and Classical Studies received $782,778 in 2015 and 2016 for the Michigan State University Language Flagship Proficiency Initiative.

Republic of Panama Ministry of Education
The English Language Center was awarded three grants, totaling $600,930, in 2015-16 for the Panamá Bilingüe Program for Teachers project.

Continuing Inclusive Excellence Grant (CIEG)
English Language Center Instructor Alissa Cohen was awarded a 2015-16 Continuing Inclusive Excellence Grant (CIEG) by MSU for her International Student Mentorship Program.
A n internationally recognized curator, scholar, and museum professional, Wahler brings more than 20 years of experience to the Broad Art Museum. He previously served as Founding Director of the Chalet Society in Paris; Artistic Adviser for De Appel Arts Center, Amsterdam; CI Contemporary Istanbul; and Founding Director of Transformer Sculpture Park, Melides, Portugal.

“Mr. Wahler brings a broad, international perspective to campus,” said MSU Provost June Pierce Youatt. “Such a perspective has always been consistent with our goal of having the Broad Art Museum serve as an MSU portal from which to explore the greater world.”

Throughout his career, Wahler has focused on contemporary art as a platform for building and strengthening communities and catalyzing interdisciplinary collaboration and exploration.

“The Broad Art Museum’s mission of employing international contemporary art and ideas as a platform for education and experimentation resonates deeply with so much of the work I have undertaken throughout my career,” Wahler said. “I look forward to collaborating with faculty and students conducting innovative research across the university and building upon the incredible work of the museum’s staff to deepen the institution’s role as a generator for experimentation and cross-disciplinary exchange and a vibrant resource for the entire East Lansing community.”

Wahler served as Director and Chief Curator for the Palais de Tokyo from 2006 to 2012. During this time, he founded and served as Editor in Chief of PALAIS magazine, the museum’s publication exploring contemporary art, criticism, and philosophy. In addition, Wahler served as Director of the Swiss Institute in New York from 2000 to 2006.

Wahler has curated more than 400 exhibitions around the world, principally as museum director/chief curator, but also as a consultant and independent curator.

“Marc-Olivier Wahler’s experience with international arts institutions makes him an ideal Director for the Broad Art Museum at MSU, which in just a few years has demonstrated its global reach far beyond East Lansing,” said Eli Broad. “Edythe and I are impressed with Marc-Olivier’s curatorial abilities and his deep appreciation for contemporary art, and we know he will continue the Broad Art Museum’s tradition of presenting thought-provoking and scholarly exhibitions.”

A Swiss native, Wahler was honored in 2013 with the Meret Oppenheim Prize, Switzerland’s highest cultural award in the contemporary arts, and was made Chevalier of the Order of Arts & Letters in France in 2011.

He has served as a guest lecturer at colleges and universities around the world, and holds a bachelor’s degree in English Literature and master’s degrees in Art History and Philosophy from the University of Neuchâtel.

The 46,000-square-foot Broad Art Museum opened in 2012 and boasts a collection of 7,500 objects from the Greek and Roman periods through the Renaissance and on to the Modern. The museum is named in honor of Eli and Edythe Broad, longtime supporters of MSU, who provided the lead gift of $28 million.
Faculty Publishing

The considerable research strengths of College of Arts & Letters faculty members are a central core of the intellectual climate of the University and the larger community. Faculty move their research and scholarship from the library, archive, lab, and stage into print, publishing in a wide range of fields with some of the nation’s leading academic presses. Their observations of the world also find their way into fiction and poetry. Listed on the following pages are titles published since spring 2016.

**Susan M. Gass**

English Language Center
*Second Language Research: Methodology and Design – Second Edition* with Alison Mackey, Routledge, 2015

In this second edition of the best-selling *Second Language Research*, Alison Mackey and Sue Gass continue to guide students step-by-step through conducting the second language research process with a clear and comprehensive overview of the core issues in second language research. Supported by a wealth of data examples from actual studies, the book examines questions of what is meant by research and what defines good research questions, covering such topics as basic research principles and data collection methods, designing a quantitative research study, and concluding and reporting research findings. The second edition includes a new chapter on mixed-methods, new “time to think” and “time to do” text boxes, and updates to reflect the latest research and literature.

**Bill VanPatten**

Department of Romance and Classical Studies

The new edition of *Key Terms in Second Language Acquisition* defines the key terminology within second language acquisition and provides accessible summaries of the key issues within this complex area of study. The final section presents a list of key readings in second language acquisition that signpost the reader towards classic articles and provides a springboard to further study. The entire book has been updated and expanded to take into account a wider range of theories and developments since the first edition. It remains at the top of its game and is an essential resource for students. The text is accessibly written, with complicated terms and concepts explained in an easy to understand way.

Department of Romance and Classical Studies
*Theories in Second Language Acquisition – An Introduction* with Jessica Williams, Routledge, 2014

The second edition of *Theories in Second Language Acquisition* seeks to build on the strengths of the first edition by surveying the major theories currently used in second language acquisition research. This volume is an ideal introductory text for undergraduate and graduate students in SLA and language teaching. Each chapter focuses on a single theory, written by a leading scholar in the field in an easy-to-follow style – a basic foundational description of the theory, relevant data, or research models used with this theory, common misunderstandings, and a sample study from the field to show the theory in practice. This text is designed to provide a consistent and coherent presentation for those new to the field who seek basic understanding of theories that underlie contemporary SLA research. Researchers also will find the book useful as a “quick guide” to theoretical work outside their respective domains.
Department of Romance and Classical Studies

Liaisons is an innovative beginning-level French program grounded in principles of communicative language teaching and research in second language acquisition. Components of the program are carefully linked together, allowing you to make connections with your classmates, your instructor, your community, and the French-speaking world. With an engaging mystery film shot on location in Montreal, Quebec, and Paris, the program provides a rich array of communicative activities designed to stimulate interaction. Liaisons guides you to first discover new vocabulary and grammar through different mediums, then connects form and meaning through a set of confidence-building activities, and finally, actively creates language.

Ann Larabee
Department of English
The Wrong Hands: Popular Weapons Manuals and Their Historic Challenges to a Democratic Society, Oxford University Press, 2015

In 1885, there was the Science of Revolutionary Warfare. In 1971, there was the Anarchist Cookbook. In 2012, the Boston Marathon bombers turned to the Internet to learn how to make explosives. For well over a century, the United States government has regarded the circulation of weapons manuals and instruction booklets by radicals as not only dangerous, but criminal. In The Wrong Hands, Ann Larabee traces the nuanced history of do-it-yourself weapons manuals from the late 19th century to the present to explain the trajectory of violent radicalism and how it provokes the state’s evolving policy toward radical dissent.

Edward Watts
Department of English
Edited with Keri Holt and John Funchion Mapping Region in Early American Writing, University of Georgia Press, 2015

Drawing attention to the geographical and literary diversity of American writers before the Civil War, Mapping Region in Early American Writing is a collection of essays that study how early American writers thought about the spaces around them. The contributors reconsider the various roles regions – imagined politically, economically, racially, and figuratively – played in the formation of American communities, both real and imagined. These texts vary widely: some are canonical, others archival; some literary, others scientific; some polemical, others simply documentary. As a whole, they recreate important mental mappings and cartographies, and they reveal how diverse populations imagined themselves, their communities, and their nation as occupying the American landscape.

David W. Stowe
Department of English
Song of Exile: The Enduring Mystery of Psalm 137, Oxford University Press, 2016

Oft-referenced and frequently set to music, Psalm 137 – which begins “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion” – has become a cultural touchstone for music and Christianity across the Atlantic world. Based on interviews with musicians, theologians, and writers, Stowe reconstructs the rich and varied reception history of this widely used, yet mysterious, text. He locates its use in the American Revolution and the Civil Rights movement, and internationally by anti-colonial Jamaican Rastafari and immigrants from Ireland, Korea, and Cuba. Stowe concludes by exploring the presence and absence in modern culture of the often-ignored final words: “Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.” He finds these words echoed in modern occurrences of genocide and ethnic cleansing, and in the culture of vengeance that has existed in North America from the earliest conflicts with Native Americans.

Ann Folino White
Department of Theatre
Food and Theatre on the World Stage with Dorothy Chansky, Taylor & Francis (Routledge), 2016

Putting food and theatre into direct conversation, this volume focuses on how food and theatre have operated for centuries as partners in the performative, symbolic, and literary making of meaning. Through case studies, literary analyses, and performance critiques, contributors examine theatrical work from China, Japan, India, Greece, Italy, France, Germany, England, the United States, Chile, Argentina, and Zimbabwe, addressing work from classical, popular, and contemporary theatre.
practices. This collection looks across dramatic genres, historical periods, and cultural contexts, and at food in all of its socio-political, material complexity to examine the particular problems and potentials of invoking and using food in live theatre. Food is considered as a transhistorical, global phenomenon across theatre genres, and as a crucial aspect of cultural identity.

Department of Theatre
**Plowed Under - Food Policy Protests and Performance in New Deal America**, Indiana University Press, 2014

During the Great Depression, with thousands on bread lines, farmers were instructed by the New Deal Agricultural Adjustment Act to produce less food in order to stabilize food prices and restore the market economy. Fruit was left to rot on trees, crops were plowed under, and millions of piglets and sows were slaughtered and discarded. Many Americans saw the government action as a senseless waste of food that left the hungry to starve, initiating public protests against food and farm policy. White approaches these events as performances where competing notions of morality and citizenship were acted out, often along lines marked by class, race, and gender. The actions range from the “Milk War” that pitted National Guardsmen against dairymen, who were dumping milk, to the meat boycott staged by Polish-American women in Michigan, and from the black sharecroppers’ protest to restore agricultural jobs in Missouri to the protest theater of the Federal Theater Project.

**Joseph Francese**

Department of Romance and Classical Studies

Vincenzo Consolo: The Years of “Unità” (1992-2012), or The Poetics of Guilt-Expiation, analyzes the collaboration of Vincenzo Consolo (1933-2012) with the Italian newspaper “Unità.” This partnership, which began in the early 1990s and lasted until his death, was a form of political protagonism the writer had previously avoided. In this same period, Consolo ceases in his literary works to be a “storyteller” who aimed to console his readers and becomes a Benjaminian narrator, offering up to the younger generations, in his fictions and non-fictions, a life model based on experiences lived as a youth. This artistic development is of a piece with a transformation of his narrative point of view, that is to say, his adoption of the “shameless” (his term) first-person

pronoun utilized in these autobiographical tales. This form of literary experimentalism, markedly different from his previous work, enables Consolo to expiate the guilt of the progressive intellectual who might have done more, in the 1970s and 1980s, to contrast the social, environmental, and political degradation then rampant in Italy.

**Rob Roznowski**

Department of Theatre

*Comfort Food* is a comedy that explores the intersection of food and history. A collection of scenes told in reverse chronological order, decade by decade, back to the first published American cookbook. Funny and insightful vignettes include the rise of the microwave in relation to women’s lib, the swinging ’60s mixing with fondue parties, and bread lines contrasting with cocktail parties in the 1930s.

Department of Theatre

*The Summer Circle* is an award-winning comedy that entertains and educates. A small rental cottage community in Michigan provides the perfect opportunity for four young children to meet and become friends. Although they are very different, the youngsters find their collective voices by presenting free theatre shows to local audiences each night. This comedy about the importance of friendship and the arts is an endearing audience participation charmer.

**Joseba Gabilondo**

Department of Romance and Classical Studies

*Before Babel* addresses the historical conflict and violence that define Basque history and culture, defining Basque literary history as that of at least two literatures: one expressed by Basque subaltern (oppressed) classes in their language, euskara, which mainly constitutes an oral tradition, and
the other written by Basque elites in Spanish, Latin, French, etc. The book emphasizes that this double literature remains at the core of the Basque Country’s history and culture. Even today, Basque literature in euskara plays a symbolic role: to represent a Basque Country where the majority speaks and writes in other state languages. Euskara, used by a minority, remains subordinate. In this respect, this book is a departure from previous Basque literary histories; it redefines Spanish and French literatures, advances a new theory of what a minority literature is, and pays attention to texts, disciplines, and practices that traditional histories neglect: political discourse, anthropology, tourism, economics.

Edited by Peter DeCosta
Department of Linguistics, Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages

This book explores how ethical issues are negotiated in different areas of language research, illustrating for graduate students in applied linguistics the ethical dilemmas they might encounter in the research methodology classroom and how they might be addressed. The collection investigates and records the research practices of prominent international applied linguists from a wide variety of subdisciplines, including discourse analysis, educational linguistics, heritage and minority education, language planning and policy, language and technology, literacy, second language acquisition, second and foreign language pedagogy, and sociolinguistics. By problematizing research practices that draw on a range of methodologies, the book puts front and center the urgency to prepare the next generation of applied linguists with the tools and knowledge necessary to conduct ethical research in an increasingly globalized and networked world.

Shawn Loewen
Department of Linguistics, Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages

Covering qualitative and quantitative research design, sampling instrumentation and analyses, this is an indispensable guide for any applied linguist who needs to look up a specific term quickly or who wants a refresher on methodological practices and the issues associated with them.

The book includes:

- An exhaustive set of entries related to all aspects of research methodology, ranging from basic to more advanced topics
- Bites-sized, fully cross-referenced explanations of key concepts and techniques
- Methodological practices and terms using numerous examples from published applied linguistics research

Frederick Rauscher
Department of Linguistics, Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages

In this comprehensive assessment of Kant’s metaethics, Frederick Rauscher shows that Kant is a moral idealist rather than a moral realist and argues that Kant’s ethics do not require metaphysical commitments that go beyond nature. Rauscher frames the argument in the context of Kant’s non-naturalistic philosophical method and the character of practical reason as action-oriented. Reason operates entirely within nature, and apparently non-natural claims – God, free choice, and value – are shown to be heuristic and to reflect reason’s ordering of nature. The book shows how Kant hesitates between a transcendental moral idealism with an empirical moral realism and a complete moral idealism. Examining every aspect of Kant’s ethics, from the categorical imperative to freedom and value, this volume argues that Kant’s focus on human moral agency explains morality as a part of nature. It will appeal to academic researchers and advanced students of Kant, German idealism, and intellectual history.
From the beginning, I was struck by his views of early 20th century Native Americans,” Smith said. “Non-Indians don’t often get to see what being modern and Indian looks like. Even more rarely acknowledged is an American Indian’s awareness of the power of representation in this period, as well as concerns about the loss of cultural knowledge, such as Horace possessed.”

The idea that cultural identity is static is part of what Smith said she is trying to challenge with her book. She notes that her ancestors were different than she is, and American Indians are not the same as they were centuries ago, but non-Indians resist the image of the 21st century American Indian.

“Horace Poolaw strived to document, not the disappearance of the American Indian, but their resistance to assimilation while correcting misunderstandings of their culture,” Smith said. “I have interpreted his work in line with
other scholarship on early indigenous photographers, which argues for a pro-Indian stance in protest of and in resistance to assimilation.”

**Research Proved Difficult**

Finding information on Poolaw proved difficult as he did not talk about his work or print very much of it because he couldn’t afford to do so. In fact, there was only one exhibition of his work while he was alive.

“Much of my research focused on Bureau of Indian Affairs records in Washington, D.C., that primarily showed what was going on politically,” Smith said. “While several museums had his work, including postcards, they didn’t know they were Poolaw’s images.”

After his death in 1984, Poolaw’s daughter was invited to work with students at Stanford University, and she drove out to California from Oklahoma with boxes of his photographs. Together, the students and family did some of the first documentation of his work.

As Smith notes in her book’s introduction:

“Poolaw never had his own darkroom. He took most of his photographs outdoors and set up a makeshift darkroom in his house. By the mid-1920s, he was taking his own photographs, had married his first wife Rhoda Redhorn (Kiowa), and had his first son, Jerry. Most of Poolaw’s early images are portraits of family, friends, and noted leaders in the Kiowa Community….Horace pursued photography for fun, income, and to produce pictures so that the Kiowa people could remember themselves. His cameras were large-format types that accommodated 4” x 6” and 5” x 7” silver nitrate negatives, not the mass-market Kodaks. None of the Poolaw images that I examine in this book is a snapshot. The last camera Horace owned was a Speed Graphic by Graflex, the most popular professional camera from the 1930s through the 1950s.”

“Were he alive today, I think he would be continuing his work to nurture and sustain the Kiowa identity. Of course, this remains a complex issue,” Smith said. “Indigenous survival, as with any culture, depended upon (and continues to depend on) transformation. It’s in the dynamic ways the Kiowa reshaped their culture and identities that I find Poolaw’s pictures to be expressions of Indian modernity.”

Then, beginning in 1990, a traveling exhibit of Poolaw’s photographs was mounted, which is when a lot of his more familiar images were first shown.

As part of her research, Smith made four trips to Oklahoma to speak with Poolaw’s children, Linda and Robert, and to be connected with other family members over the 11 years it took her to complete her dissertation and book. She said they were invaluable in providing information on Horace’s life.

**The Early Years**

Poolaw was born March 13, 2006, in Mountain View, Oklahoma, and was given the Indian name Py-bo (American Horse or Big Horse). He was one of 11 children in the Poolaw family.

He attended Mountain View (Oklahoma) public schools and developed an interest in photography as a teenager, acquiring his first camera when he was 15. Mostly self-taught, he sought out technical advice from local commercial photographers.

Assistant Professor Laura Smith
Amy Simon became the first William and Audrey Farber Family Chair in Holocaust Studies and European Jewish History at Michigan State University when she began the newly created position on August 16, 2016. She now is one of just a handful of Holocaust Studies chairs in the country and the first and only one in the state of Michigan.

“I am thrilled and honored to be joining the MSU faculty,” Simon said. “The areas of Holocaust and Jewish Studies continue to be important and relevant not just historically, but also in the context of current events. I am therefore pleased to have the opportunity to take a leading role in the continuation and development of these studies at a university so clearly dedicated to their future.”

Simon, who holds a PhD in History from Indiana University, previously was a researcher at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) and taught at the University of Maryland in its History and Judaic Studies departments.

She is a former Leon Milman Fellow at USHMM and a former Kagan Claims Conference Fellow. She also has published articles on Holocaust literature and Holocaust perpetrators and regularly participates in international workshops and conferences through the USHMM, Yad Vashem, the Association for Jewish Studies, and the Holocaust Educational Foundation.

The William and Audrey Farber Family Chair in Holocaust Studies and European Jewish History is a core position for MSU’s Jewish Studies program, an interdisciplinary program spanning six colleges including the College of Arts & Letters and more than 10 campus departments.

“It is integral to our Jewish Studies program, which serves, on average, 600 students in our classes and 35 Jewish Studies minors,” said Associate Professor Yael Aronoff, Director of Jewish Studies and the Michael and Elaine Serling and Friends Chair of Israel Studies.

The new position is funded by a $1.5 million gift by donors William and Audrey Farber of West Bloomfield, who recognize how MSU’s Jewish Studies program has grown during the past few years.

“Now one of the most outstanding Jewish Studies programs in the country, the addition of a professor in the area of Holocaust Studies is critical,” said Jeffrey Farber, son of William and Audrey Farber.

Inspired by the Farbers’ generosity and motivated by the influence the position could have on Jewish Studies, Detroit-area couple Michael and Elaine Serling contributed $500,000 to the endowment.

In Simon’s new role at MSU, she has access to the University of Southern California’s Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, an online portal housing more than 52,000 video testimonies of survivors and witnesses of genocide – namely, the Holocaust. Using this online archive brings the teaching and research of Jewish Studies into the realm of the digital humanities, an area in which the College of Arts & Letters already excels.

And, like the chair position itself, private support made a subscription to the archive a reality. MSU alumni Edward Brill and his sister, Leslie VanBrandt, made a $150,000 gift in memory of their brother, Michael, who had a fondness for history and a fascination with World War II. This gift made the Shoah Foundation access possible.
Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, Diversity, and Inclusion

Sheila Contreras has been named Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, Diversity, and Inclusion, effective August 16, 2016.

In this expanded position, she assumes the responsibilities of the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education and will continue the work she is doing as Associate Dean for Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement.

“To embody the core value of inclusiveness, Sheila understands that we must invest resources and articulate priorities at all levels of the academic mission – curriculum, faculty, and culture – because excellence does not exist without diversity,” said Christopher P. Long, Dean of the College of Arts & Letters. “We best live out our land-grant mission through inclusive engagement.”

An Associate Professor in the Department of English, Contreras was Director of Michigan State University’s Chicano/Latino Studies program for seven years. Her research and teaching interests are in Chicana/o and U.S. Latin@ literature, multiethnic literatures, comparative indigeneities, and women’s and gender studies.

Chair of the Department of English

Cara Cilano has been named Chair of the Department of English, effective July 1, 2016. Cilano comes to Michigan State University from the University of North Carolina Wilmington where she served on the English faculty since 2001 and was the Director of General Education.

“Dr. Cilano is a gifted teacher, researcher, and scholar whose teaching interests and experiences have long had a global focus,” said Christopher P. Long, Dean of the College of Arts & Letters. “I am pleased to welcome her as our new English Chair.”

A two-time Fulbright recipient, Cilano’s research focuses on Pakistani literature as well as terrorism and literature. She’s also a scholar of post-colonial and South Asian literature.

Cilano has a PhD in English from Duquesne University as well as master’s and bachelor’s degrees in English, both from St. Bonaventure University.

Chair of the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures

Malea Powell was named Chair of the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures (WRAC), effective January 1, 2016. Powell has served as Associate Chair and Director of Graduate Programs in WRAC since 2013. She is an Associate Professor in the American Indian Studies program.

“Dr. Powell brings years of leadership experience to her position as Chair of WRAC,” said Christopher P. Long, Dean of the College of Arts & Letters. “She is a recognized national leader in the field of rhetoric and communication and a scholar of the first order. She has played a critical role in creating a culture of inclusion and excellence within the department.”

Powell earned her PhD in Rhetoric and Composition in 1998 at Miami University of Ohio. She came to MSU in 2005 after four years on faculty at the University of Nebraska. Her research interests include graduate curriculum and pedagogy, indigenous and cultural rhetorics, theory in real life, and understanding decolonial rhetorical histories.

Director of African American and African Studies

Glenn Chambers was named Director of the African American and African Studies (AAAS) program, effective January 1, 2016. Chambers is an Associate Professor of History with research and teaching interests that center on the African Diaspora and an emphasis on the modern Caribbean and Latin America.

“The appointment of Dr. Chambers marks a transformative moment in the AAAS program’s history,” said Christopher P. Long, Dean of the College of Arts & Letters. “It offers us an opportunity to reflect upon what has been successful, identify avenues of improvement, and develop a comprehensive strategic plan designed to articulate and implement an innovative vision of academic excellence that draws on the unique strengths and rich history of Michigan State University.”

Chambers earned both his PhD (2006) and his MA (2002) in Latin American and Caribbean History from Howard University, and his BA in History from the University of St. Thomas, Houston, Texas.
Director of the Citizen Scholars Program

Sandra Logan, Associate Professor of English, has been appointed inaugural Director of the College of Arts & Letters Citizen Scholars program, effective July 1, 2016.

The Citizen Scholars program is designed to prepare the next generation of diverse, high-achieving, and engaged citizen leaders. Students aspiring to be Arts & Letters Citizen Scholars will be encouraged to succeed academically while gaining experience in high-impact learning environments starting their freshman year.

In this new role, Logan will provide the academic vision for and administrative oversight of a unique program that will empower students to embrace difference, deliberate publicly, think critically, and engage global and local partners to effect sustainable positive change.

“Dr. Logan has the vision and experience to be the inaugural Director of this signature program,” said Christopher P. Long, Dean of the College of Arts & Letters. “She has a proven record of developing strategic and innovative educational experiences that will position students to be the citizen leaders of tomorrow.”

Faculty Excellence Advocate

Amy DeRogatis, Professor of Religion and American Culture in the Department of Religious Studies, was named Faculty Excellence Advocate for the College.

Faculty Excellence Advocates, who are key drivers of faculty quality and diversity, build close working relationships with faculty colleagues to create a climate that promotes quality, inclusiveness, alignment, objectivity, consistency, and transparency of all academic human resource policies and practices.

“Professor DeRogatis has long been committed to cultivating practices of inclusion in her scholarship and teaching,” said Christopher P. Long, Dean of the College of Arts & Letters. “I am happy she has agreed to bring this commitment to her role as FEA. Embodying habits of inclusive practice is critical as we continue to foster a culture of excellence.”

DeRogatis’ principal scholarly interests are American religion and culture, 19th-century Protestant home missionaries, religion, gender and sexuality, American evangelicalism, and religion in the Midwest.

Director of the Master of Arts degree in Foreign Language Teaching (MAFLT)

Dustin DeFelice has been appointed to a one-year term as Director of the Master of Arts degree in Foreign Language Teaching (MAFLT) program, effective August 16, 2016. He will oversee recruitment, increase enrollments, provide oversight of MAFLT faculty, and coordinate course offerings.

An Assistant Professor in MSU’s Center for Language Teaching Advancement (CeLTA), DeFelice teaches courses on Language Concepts in Foreign Language Teaching, Pedagogical Grammar, and Technology in Foreign Language Classrooms.

His current research interests include the development of community/teacher based materials aimed at increasing literacy and/or documentation of endangered languages, the use of Huastecan Nahuatl or Yucatec Maya as a language of instruction through distance learning, and the perspectives and experiences of indigenous educators and their life work.

The online MAFLT program is housed within CeLTA and is designed for current and aspiring foreign language teachers. Coursework focuses on communicative and task-based language teaching principles and methods, as well as computer-assisted language teaching, language assessment, and language-program administration.

Interim Director of the Digital Humanities

Stephen Rachman, Department of English, was appointed Interim Director of the Digital Humanities (DH) Program in the College of Arts & Letters.

Rachman is an Associate Professor of 19th Century American Literature, Director of the American Studies Program, and Co-Director of the Digital Humanities Literary Cognition Laboratory at MSU. He came to MSU in 1993.

“I am honored and delighted to take on this position for the College of Arts & Letters,” Rachman said. “Digital Humanities is an exciting interdisciplinary endeavor in which our College has been and will continue to be a leader, and I am pleased to be able to participate in shaping its future and to aid in the cultivation of new areas of distinction and excellence.”

Rachman’s two-year appointment runs August 16, 2016, to August 15, 2018, and is on a nine-month academic-year basis.
Honor Roll of Donors

On behalf of the College of Arts & Letters, thank you to those who have given generously in support of our programs, students, and future. Gifts from alumni and friends are significant in helping the college maintain the highest standards of excellence.

Although we strive to list each and every donor accurately, errors and omissions do sometimes occur. If your name has been incorrectly listed or does not appear, please contact the Office of Development and Alumni Relations at (517) 353-4725.

Donor Societies

The following individuals have made a significant commitment to Michigan State University with at least 10 percent of their total giving directed to the College of Arts & Letters. Their generosity qualifies them for lifetime recognition in one of the University’s donor societies.

Joseph R. Williams Society ($5,000,000 cash or $7,500,000 planned gift)
- Thomas P. Yunck, Ph.D.

Clifton R. Wharton Society ($2,500,000 cash or $3,750,000 planned gift)
- Stanley C. and Selma D. Hollander
- Michael and Elaine Serling

Frank S. Kedzie Society ($1,000,000 cash or $1,500,000 planned gift)
- Mr. and Mrs. Albert B. Ratner
- Jack D. and Margaret D. Sweet
- Henry O. Timnick

Robert S. Shaw Society ($500,000 cash or $1,000,000 planned gift)
- Lauren Julius Harris
- Doug Jewell
- Ed Levy Jr.

Theophilus C. Abbot Society ($250,000 cash or $500,000 planned gift)
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- Dr. Wendy K. Wilkins and Mr. Jay A. Rodman

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