servingstate
DELIVERING OUTSTANDING SPARTAN EXPERIENCES

A publication of The Division of Residential and Hospitality Services at Michigan State
For the second year in a row, MSU’s incoming class has grown. Despite the institutional transitions, MSU’s reputation prevails. We’ve once again welcomed the largest, most diverse class of freshmen to move into our residence halls. And for the second year in a row, move-in spanned an entire weekend. Our team members worked tirelessly to make sure our students and their families were taken care of, and they received an abundance of positive feedback in response. But of course, we don’t do it for the praise. We do it for the students.

While our classes continue to grow, so do concerns for their safety and well-being. This edition of Serving State focuses on how our team impacts students through creating welcoming and safe environments. Articles will discuss the extensive training that our resident assistants go through, updates to MSU’s summer student orientation program and accommodations for students with dietary restrictions.

Again, at our core, we are in the people business. We are here to assist in the educational process, helping our students achieve their hopes and dreams. But we are also here to create a secure environment for our Spartans — not just secure in that they are physically safe, but also mentally and emotionally safe in their new home away from home. We are here to build this inclusive community. We are here to help create an atmosphere so they can become the best version of themselves. It is with us that this generation will understand how to appreciate and learn from people who are different from them.

This requires us to be generous with our talents and skills. We have the opportunity to share our lives, wisdom and knowledge. We have the opportunity to be generous with our time. We have the opportunity to be inclusive of all.

This year, we updated our mission, vision and values to highlight our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion on campus. Every team member is encouraged to review and live by these values. Remember, it’s not what we do but who we do it for that gives our work meaning. Across Residential and Hospitality Services, we measure ourselves in our impact while delivering outstanding Spartan experiences.

“WE ARE HERE TO ASSIST IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS, HELPING OUR STUDENTS ACHIEVE THEIR HOPES AND DREAMS. BUT WE ARE ALSO HERE TO CREATE A SECURE ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR SPARTANS.”

VENNIE GORE
Vice President, Auxiliary Enterprises
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THE ROOST
Favorites like mac and cheese, chicken tenders and fries.

STREET TACOS
Original street-style tacos and nachos.

UNBELIEVABOWL
Made-to-order grain, green and hummus bowls.

DIVISION OF RESIDENTIAL AND HOSPITALITY SERVICES
Auxiliary Enterprises
Culinary Services
Residence Education and Housing Services
Spartan Hospitality Group
rhs.msu.edu

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Following a renovation, the building was named after Alice B. Cowles, mother of MSU alumnus Frederick Cowles Jenison. Jenison was a student in MSU’s first class and helped haul bricks during its original construction.

Currently, the house is the oldest existing building on campus, though only the foundation and two exterior walls remain from the original 1857 construction.

After a renovation, the building was named after Alice B. Cowles, mother of MSU alumnus Frederick Cowles Jenison. Jenison was a student in MSU’s first class and helped haul bricks during its original construction.

As faculty moved away from Faculty Row, the house served several purposes over the years, including offices for the Education Department and a women’s dormitory.

Archaeology done in the area in 2008 revealed the bricks that were used to build the house were fired on the then Michigan Agricultural College campus, using clay from the Red Cedar River.

Although MSU is known for our land-grant roots, dairy and agriculture, Cowles House is pronounced like the national department chain, Kohl’s, not “cow-els.”

It has been the official president’s residence since 1941, beginning with President John A. Hannah, who had the house extensively remodeled to suit this purpose.

At least two university presidents have chosen not to live in the on-campus landmark. Walter Adams, 1969 administration, and Lou Anna Simon, 2005-2018, chose to live in their East Lansing homes and instead used the house for entertaining purposes.

MSU’s newest president, Dr. Samuel L. Stanley Jr. will reside in Cowles House. President Stanley says leading MSU means being an integral part of the community as well as being accessible and visible to everyone.

The house is undertaking a $6 million renovation scheduled to be completed in February 2020. Updates include improved kitchen and public first floor staging for events and improved accessibility to the first floor, outdoor areas and public restrooms.

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Residence Education and Housing Services’ (REHS) Director for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Sharon Chia Claros discusses the many trainings offered by the DEI unit.

INTEGRATING DEI INTO YOUR ROLE AS A STUDENT EMPLOYEE & LEADER DEI ICA PILOT PROGRAM

The DEI intercultural aides (ICAs) have been hosting educational learning opportunities with REHS student team members in facilities, housing, communications, residential education and outreach in order to bring awareness to various DEI topics. The goal is to create a more inclusive environment in the workplace as student employees and student leaders. In the past, student employees outside of the resident assistant (RA) role have not received DEI-specific education. But now, in partnership with Maggie Chen-Hernandez, associate director of MOSAIC, MSU’s multicultural unity center, and co-director of the Multi-racial Unity Living Experience & ICA (MRULE-ICA) program, student team members through the DEI-ICA peer educators will be learning about various DEI topics to improve their skills as they constantly interact with a diverse range of students. Additionally, RAs in West Circle, Armstrong/Bryan and Emmons/Bailey halls are engaging in Race Dialogues led by the DEI ICAs facilitating an adapted curriculum from the MSU Dialogues program. Participants had exceptional reviews of the program. One participant said, “I liked how we expressed what we thought about incidents and scenarios that involve bias.”

INTENTIONAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

On Oct. 12, RHA hosted the first Leadership Summit. Congratulations to the Residence Hall Association (RHA), RHA’s Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Sarah McConville, DEI Graduate Assistant Dee Jordan, and everyone else who helped make this happen!

Students from a variety of leadership backgrounds attended this conference in order to share leadership strategies and learn how they can become more purposeful, inclusive and empowering with their leadership skills. The summit included guest speakers from a variety of backgrounds and a panel discussing experiences with leadership and how certain aspects impact each panelist. There were also a variety of group activities, such as drawing what leadership looks like and explaining terminology such as “diversity, equity and inclusion,” and what it means to individual attendees.

Students had a great experience at this summit. One student said, “It allowed me to collaborate with individuals and listen to speakers who could give me a deeper understanding of these concepts. Through activities and discussion, I learned what these mean like, their importance and how to bring them into my own leadership style and organization. The summit was an amazing opportunity for myself as a leader and for my organization. I’m grateful I got to meet and listen to the individuals I did today.”

NORTH AMERICAN INDIGENOUS STUDENT ORGANIZATION (NAISO)

At the start of various events and presentations on campus, reading MSU’s Land Acknowledgement is becoming a regular practice. The Land Acknowledgement is a statement that shares the history that MSU occupies land from the Anishinaabeg – Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi peoples. This refers back to the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw, which can be read at ais.p.msu.edu.

NAISO is a student organization that brings attention to and caters to the Native American/Indigenous student population.

LGBTQIA+ COMPETENCY, DELIVERING OUTSTANDING SPARTAN EXPERIENCES, PRONOUNS

Pronoun groups, such as he/him/his, she/her/hers and they/them/their, can be a huge part of how someone expresses their identity. Chia Claros often stresses the impact misgendering someone can have and the importance behind asking someone what pronouns they use instead of making a wrong assumption. It’s important to remember that asking, rather than assuming, is the best course of action, and then that person will feel validated when you’re able to use the correct pronoun.

In order to get people to start doing this and seeing the relevance it has, Chia Claros, in partnership with RHS Human Resources has offered a Trans 101 and LGBTQIA+ cultural competency workshop for current RHS team members.

OUR PLEDGE AND PROMISE: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND SOCIAL

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SPARTANS DON’T JUST SURVIVE, THEY THRIVE!

WHEN IN COLLEGE, YOU’RE NOT SUPPOSED TO JUST SURVIVE, YOU’RE SUPPOSED TO THRIVE!

THRIVE IS A NEW DINING HALL AT MSU THAT IS CERTIFIED FREE FROM THE BIG 8 ALLERGENS (MILK, EGGS, SOY, WHEAT, PEANUTS, TREE NUTS, FISH AND SHELLFISH) AND GLUTEN.

Registered Dietitian Gina Keilen spoke about the adjustments MSU has been making to better accommodate faculty and students’ needs as they are constantly changing.

“We’ve seen a drastic increase for dietary, religious restrictions and allergens. We have to keep moving,” says Keilen.

Dietary needs and restrictions have skyrocketed, and, everywhere, campus dietitians are trying to keep up and inform chefs, but it hasn’t always been easy. “Historically, chefs and dietitians haven’t always seen eye to eye. We’ve been able to find common ground, even nationally, for dietary restrictions and allergens. I have great rapport with the [MSU] chefs. I manage the recipe database, and we work together often. It’s important to have that relationship, knowledge and confidence, says Keilen.

For students with allergens, Thrive at Owen offers delicious, allergen-free meals for Spartans to enjoy without the worry of possibly consuming harmful ingredients. Kelsey Patterson, Culinary Services’ registered dietitian, has seen the impact Thrive has had on campus, saying, “Thrive has been a wonderful addition to our dining halls on campus. It has been the tipping point for some students to commit to MSU as they feel that they have a safe option to eat on campus.”

Of course, MSU has allergen-conscious meals throughout its other nine dining halls as well. “We can accommodate dietary restrictions in any dining hall on campus, not just Thrive,” Patterson says. On the menus, online and in the halls, there are symbols that indicate whether the meal is vegetarian or vegan and lists the allergens that are in each item of food, making guests aware of what they will be eating.

“We can accommodate dietary restrictions anywhere in our dining halls,” says Patterson. “For example, if we can use oil instead of butter and remove a milk allergen, we will make that change. They are a great support and resource for students that have dietary needs.”

Patterson and the chefs meet with students to explore how to improve meals and experiences in the dining halls. “In the one-on-one meetings with myself and the chefs, we discuss dietary restrictions with the guest and how to navigate our menu and the dining halls to best suit them. If a student is unable to schedule an appointment to see the dietitian, they can ask to see a chef in the dining hall.”

For students with religious-based dietary needs, MSU’s dining halls offer kosher and halal options.

“We serve kosher meals provided by Woody’s Oasis, a local restaurant, Monday through Thursday in Brody, Holmes and Holden halls,” Patterson says. “MSU Hillel serves kosher dinner Friday nights. We also offer an extended menu during Passover. We have vegetarian and vegan options daily. Halal proteins are offered regularly at Holmes Dining Hall. Our other dining halls on campus do rotate halal proteins throughout their menu on a rotation. We are currently working on increasing our halal choices in our dining halls.”

Between Culinary Services’ dietitians and chefs, MSU’s dining halls strive to go above and beyond to cater to Spartans’ needs. And as Keilen says, “They’re often amazed at the amount of accommodations that we can make and the level of personalized experience available.”

Options,” says Patterson. Despite this, students are sometimes unaware that their needs can be met in a manner as simple as asking one of the chefs.

“From what I hear from the students I work with who have restrictions, they are utilizing it. Some ideas for growth would be increased information about how we accommodate dietary restrictions online. This is something that I’ve been working with Culinary Services Communications Manager Leah Ball on, as well as social media outreach, including but not limited to Instagram takeovers and social media posts. Print signage is great, but with the amount of signs and advertisements already in the dining halls, this information can get a bit lost.”

Luckily, the dietitians and chefs keep an exceptional line of communication open in order to make small changes that could help students without the student needing to ask. “Made-to-order service is becoming popular. Oil instead of butter; agave versus honey — little changes to fit more populations and more people,” Keilen says. For students seeking guidance, there are options. They can reach out to a dietitian and share their restrictions. The dietitian will then share the options they could find in the recipe database, the chefs and dietitians have at Thrive.

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My name is Aleaha Reneé Smith, and I am a junior marketing major within the Eli Broad College of Business. I currently work as a student communications assistant for the Division of Residential and Hospitality Services. Earlier this year, I underwent the process of becoming a resident assistant (RA) at MSU. 

After receiving the position in February, all placed and alternate RAs were tasked with completing a six-week Leadership Training course. Each week, neighborhood community directors (CDs) and assistant community directors (ACDs) progressively explained the RA role by facilitating activities and discussion pertaining to a specific topic/lesson.

MARCH – APRIL 2019

WEEK ONE: THE RESIDENTIAL LEARNING MODEL
This session allowed me to get to know fellow Spartans as well as learn a bit about the RA position and its expectations. All students participated in several ice breakers and were able to share their housing assignments for the 2019-20 school year. We were then introduced to the Residential Learning Model (RLM), a framework developed by Residence Education and Housing Services (REHS), to assist Spartans in living, learning, leading and impacting the world. This model outlines three main objectives:

- Individual Development: Assisting students in developing strategies for wellness, achieving academic goals and demonstrating a sense of self.
- Community Development: Stressing the values of communicating effectively, creating healthy relationships and supporting community responsibility.
- Inclusive Living and Learning: Aiding students in recognizing systems of oppression, creating positive change and intervening in instances of bias.

These objectives are the basis of how Michigan State University RAs conduct their daily operations.

WEEK TWO: INTERSECTIONALITY
During this session, we were asked to explore our own intersectionality. Intersectionality, a term coined by civil rights activist and legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, is defined by Oxford English Dictionary as, “The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.”

Our intersectional identities include religion, gender, physical ability, sex, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status and much more. Personally, I identify as a middle-class, African American, straight, Christian, Millennial female. While categorizing myself, I came to realize just how many identities I carry around and were able to share their housing situations. For instance, if in the unfortunate event I witness racial injustice, my identity as a minority influences the way I feel, respond and react regarding the issue. Having these somewhat uncomfortable conversations fostered a productive, respectful dialogue among my classmates.

Our takeaway: We must learn to take our unique identities into consideration as we approach issues of bias in our residence hall. Respecting and protecting others’ identities, as well as our own, is of utmost importance to the MSU community. As RAs, we can begin to do this by fostering authentic relationships with our residents. Through listening, mutual respect, understanding, compassion and empathy, we can make the Spartans in our community feel heard and safeguarded.

WEEK THREE: COMMUNICATION
Having proficient communication skills is an essential trait of an effective RA. Being able to communicate university policies, safety tips and other important information to residents is vital to fostering a safe environment on campus. Because of this, our third week of training dealt heavily with the need to understand just what communication is and how it can be used to the benefit of ourselves and our residents.

We began by learning about encoding, or the process that takes place as someone contemplates something to say and formulates a way to communicate it. The message then travels to the recipient, so the process of decoding can begin to take place. Decoding is the way in which the encoded message is interpreted by the receiver.

Miscommunication usually occurs in one of two places: as the message travels from one individual to another or during the decoding process. To offset this, RAs must do their best to eliminate distractions as they relay important messages to residents. Also, communicating messages in alternate ways will ensure information is interpreted accurately by residents.

Using different forms of communication to relay important messages is extremely beneficial, because everyone receives or learns information in different ways. We discovered the three main learning styles were visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Finally, we brainstormed ways in which we could communicate information satisfying all learning styles.
WEEK FIVE: EFFECTIVE MEDIATION

Effectively mediating roommate conflict is deeply rooted in the RA job description. MSU has a diverse population of Spartans from all over the world, with various backgrounds and experiences. This in mind, and though MSU’s Housing Assignments Office takes great care to pair roommates with similar living preferences, not all roommate assignments will be a perfect fit. Therefore, RAs are required to learn proper ways of managing conflict between individuals in our residence hall. My instructors offered these five steps to conflict resolution:

• Set the Stage: Meet in a neutral zone, and make sure everyone is sitting at the same level. 

• Establish Ground Rules: Make both parties aware they are in a safe space and should respect the ideas of one another. If things begin to escalate or become disrespectful, you, as the RA, can choose to postpone the conversation until both parties regain respectability.

• Discuss the Problem: Have both parties share their grievances completely uninterrupted of the other. Try your best to understand the underlying issue and communicate it effectively to both parties.

• Problem Solve: It is best to have the students formulate a solution to their issue on their own. If they cannot, suggest unbiased and mutually beneficial solutions. Amend their roommate agreement if necessary.

• Follow Up: Check in with your residents in a week or two. Make sure they are still complying with the mutual course of action and abiding by the roommate agreement.

WEEK SIX: THE FINAL WEEK

During this session, we were encouraged to ask questions about our future training, housing assignments, expectations, procedures and anything at this point unanswered. We were also introduced to various on-campus student resources such as Counseling & Psychiatric Services (CAPS), and reviewed campus regulations and policies. Afterward, we took a class picture and wrapped up conversations with our classmates and instructors. All newly admitted RAs completed leadership training by the end of April and awaited summer training in August.

AUGUST 2019

Summer training was an educational, beneficial and challenging experience. Every day for two weeks, mandatory sessions were held from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. At first glance, this may seem like an average professional time commitment, but these two weeks proved to be strenuous. MSU goes to great lengths to foster an inclusive and diverse educational environment, and RAs play a vital role in this process. Therefore, as we learned how to write incident reports, we were also constantly prompted to reevaluate and dispel our personal biases regarding extremely difficult topics of discussion. These included campus-wide issues involving diversity, equity and inclusion, sexual assault, relationship violence, instances of bias, and much more.

During training, all RAs participated in an activity called Behind Closed Doors. This activity placed new RAs in real on-duty situations and allowed us to react using policies and techniques we’d learned. The individuals acting as residents were returning RAs from our neighborhood staff. At first, this activity was entertaining as we busted residents with “alcohol” and dealt with imaginary noise complaints, but it grew increasingly difficult as we began to confront more serious matters.

For me, this activity brought many campus-wide issues into perspective. It drove me to figure out ways of becoming more supportive of my fellow Spartans. Over these two weeks, I discovered this role granted RAs the responsibility of advancing the MSU community’s awareness regarding diversity, equity and inclusion, sexual assault prevention and various other issues. By doing so, we contribute to the advancement of our university as a whole.

A two-day training competition was entertaining as we busted residents with “alcohol” and dealt with imaginary noise complaints, but it grew increasingly difficult as we began to confront more serious matters.

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RA training was challenging, but still made room for lots of fun. I was able to connect with many RAs from across campus. I also had the opportunity to spend time with my amazing Wilson Hall team.

Wilson Hall is an all-freshman residence hall consisting of mainly engineering students. As a marketing major, I was originally a bit nervous about being surrounded by people with a different major than me. Fortunately, as time progressed, I came to love each and every one of my team members. Everyone, including my amazing CD and ACDs, was so welcoming and helpful. I felt as though they truly wanted me on their team and for me to succeed. As the weeks progressed, our bond became evident in the way we performed during competition.

Each day of training, every hall on campus had the opportunity to participate in the annual spirit competition. Spirit days included themes like Neighborhood Color Day, Dress Like Your Hero Day and Wacky-tacky Day. By taking a daily team picture, each hall received points for participating. On the last day of training, every RA on campus gathered in Anthony Hall for the Spirit Competition Award ceremony. As my team entered the auditorium, we hoped to win at least one award. To our surprise we won four — the most out of any team on campus! We were even granted the Best Staff on Campus award. In those moments, I realized just how proud I was to be a part of such a great group of individuals.

Overall, my RA training experience was extremely beneficial. I came away feeling I was prepared to take on this role and effectively perform my daily duties. Also, I gained a sense of empowerment during this process. For individuals who take on this position, being comfortable as a bystander is no longer an option. Impacting MSU’s campus by speaking out against bias, supporting survivors, fostering dialogue and standing up for social change is only the beginning of what this job entails. I am sure, with the support of my team, my junior year will be a great one.
New Student Orientation (NSO) celebrated several successes during the program's pilot year. In the past, the program had been called the Academic Orientation Program, commonly referred to as AOP. Previously, AOP had been primarily run by one office, but this year Residence Education and Housing Services took on a larger role in revamping the program in an attempt to increase campus partnerships and overall student engagement.

The first change included relocating the program to be housed in North Neighborhood's Mason/Abbot and Snyder/Phillips halls. For the past several years, AOP had taken place in South Neighborhood's Case Hall. The move to North allowed South Neighborhood to focus more time and attention into the youth sports programs that take place in the neighborhood around the same time each summer. It also allowed for crucial renovations to take place in South Neighborhood, along with giving another neighborhood the opportunity to be showcased during orientation.

Assistant Director of Communications for Residence Education and Housing Services (REHS) Bethany Balks assisted with the transition. Her role was to collaborate with the North Neighborhood REHS team and the NSO office to support in-hall marketing and communications efforts, in an attempt to support students on their Spartan journey with the on-campus living experience.

“We watched the NSO team examine every piece of the orientation program to ensure they would help students successfully transition into college and pursue their academic goals,” says Balks. “REHS [was able] to oversee the housing and evening portions of the program and provide an experience that closely represents living with us in the fall.”

An immense amount of thought was put into the planning process to ensure students had an experience interacting with groups they could get involved with while at school. This included collaborations with multiple campus partners to provide activities that would actively connect students to resources and other engagement opportunities on campus.

Assistant Director for Mason/Abbot and Snyder/Phillips Kelsey Skinner took on the task of coordinating events, partnerships and overseeing the staff of summer resident assistants (RAs) who staffed the program.

“Essentially, we took over after dinner, and then we had them until the next morning when they had breakfast,” says Skinner. “So a part of our goal was to kind of start to show them what it’s actually like to live on campus, and what their evening could look like as an MSU student.”

The RAs Skinner oversaw had one of the first programming tasks of the night, which included hosting a traditional floor meeting. While campus policies were discussed, the majority of the session included a question session, during which students could ask any questions they may have, such as discussing packing lists, and it also allowed time for the RAs to share their campus experiences and favorite places to go.

“They also did a few fun activities together, and those were in partnership with our communications department within REHS and the Live On brand,” says Skinner. “We did Bingo, so they could start meeting people. Some of the examples of squares were: find someone that’s living in your neighborhood, find someone that’s not from Michigan or find someone that speaks another language.”

This helped students start building community early on, according to Skinner. For orientation, students were specifically placed on floors near people who would be in their neighborhood in the fall. That way, they could start getting to know each other and hopefully make friends prior to their official move-in.

After the floor activities, students were given an opportunity to self-reflect with a postcard activity. Students were asked to sit down and write out something important they’d learned at orientation, something they wanted to remember to bring with them or a place they wanted to check out on campus after they arrived for the semester. Then, the postcards were collected and mailed back to the students.
in late July. This way, they could receive them just before move-in as a reminder of their time at orientation and of anything they might have since forgotten.

Another program collaboration was the Be Campus Confident session. Be Campus Confident represented the tour portion of training, in which students had an opportunity to learn about campus history and traditions, see classrooms, and learn about diversity, equity and inclusion opportunities at the MSU Union with MOSAIC: The Multicultural Unity Center.

“Twas a really cool opportunity to partner with MSU Tours and show a little bit of North Neighborhood while also showing how to be confident on campus and how to navigate campus,” says Skinner. While students explored campus, the RAs worked diligently to set up a plethora of opportunities for students to participate in activities and engage with one another.

“We really thought hard about, ‘what are the experiences that you have when you live on-campus?’” says Skinner. “So we worked with the University Activities Board [UAB] and The Impact radio station on campus. The Gallery, our dining hall, had crafts just like UAB always has craft nights. We did games, and we had Open Mic Night, and The Impact helped DJ. These activities aligned closely with things students could find during the year.”

North Neighborhood also took advantage of its large courtyard and the long summer nights and hosted several outdoor activities students could participate in.

“Outside, we partnered with Recreational Sports and Fitness Centers,” says Skinner. “We wanted to work with them to advertise the neighborhood fitness classes we have during the year, and we also learned that intramurals tend to have the lowest participation for first-year students because they don’t know about getting involved or how to make a team.

“From there, we worked with referees who helped facilitate volleyball and basketball to get people started on making teams and joining intramurals. We also had a bunch of yard games outside in that space.”

Additionally, NSO also partnered with the Residence Halls Association (RHA) to host a movie night in the theater in Snyder Hall. RHA provided the movie streaming service, which offers pre-released films students could enjoy alongside popcorn, beverages and their new friends.

NSO also worked hard to introduce topics surrounding diversity, equity and inclusion early on. One of the sessions included a partnership with the Intercultural Dialogues Program. Its goal was to start introducing the idea of open dialogue with a focus on building community across difference. This was a way to premiere the The Multi-Racial Unity Living Experience (MRULE) on campus as well as the Dialogue program, which encourages people to push their understanding of different cultures and backgrounds.

In order to combat students becoming overwhelmed by the amount of information and activities students experience at orientation, NSO also partnered with Counseling & Psychiatric Services (CAPS) to offer a session called Refresh. Refresh was structured to be a quiet, calming space that offered relaxing music and coloring pages. The room was also staffed with a counselor provided by CAPS nearly every night of the orientation program.

“We wanted to make sure students had someone to talk to,” says Skinner. “Sometimes they asked questions about CAPS, and other times they just enjoyed the quiet space.”

A lot of care and effort was put into making sure every student had something they could participate in. Essentially, the team wanted to give students so many opportunities to engage with their peers that they wouldn’t want to go back and sit in their room. The program had a strong emphasis in building community and making campus feel like home prior to move-in.

“We found out pretty quickly that when we cut programs off at 10:30, people weren’t ready for bed,” says Skinner. “So we did offer a lounge space in Snyder, and we’d bring games and some snacks and allow them to hang out longer in that space. And then the duty staff would clean up the games later.”

Part of the vision statement for the new orientation program includes introducing students to the MSU community while working collaboratively with campus partners. The updated orientation program proved to be a resounding success in these areas and will play a large role in structuring what the program will look like in years to come as the program grows and expands upon the accomplishments made this summer.
MEET RHS
INTRODUCING OUR TEAM MEMBERS

CANTHON MOLTRIE
HOMETOWN: Georgetown, South Carolina
JOB TITLE: Operations Supervisor at the MSU Union
TIME AT MSU: Eight months; six with IPF and two with RHS

CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR ROLE?
Unlocking the building, checking banquet orders, making sure staff is in and that all daily operations are ready to operate smoothly for the day.

WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE PART ABOUT BEING AN RHS TEAM MEMBER?
Working at the MSU Union is great. It’s such an old building, there’s so much history here, and I get to walk through it every morning.

WHAT HOBBY WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET INTO?
Woodworking. I’m kind of a do-it-yourselfer, so like making furniture and spinning wood and getting into that.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE DRINK?
I love sweet stuff, so my favorite drink is apple cider on the sweeter side with whipped cream.

WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU KNEW MORE ABOUT?
I wish I knew more about gardening. I am awful. I kill about anything, plant-wise. I could probably kill a cactus if really necessary.

BRITTANY LESAGE
HOMETOWN: Jackson, Michigan
JOB TITLE: Sous Chef at Shaw Hall
TIME AT MSU: Two months

CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR ROLE?
As a sous chef, I am the go-between the staff and executive chef. One of my largest roles is focusing on production and things coming out of the kitchen. I also work on recipe development.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE KIND OF MUSIC?
I’m pretty eclectic. My mom brought me up on Led Zeppelin. Now, Lizzo. But I listen to just about anything.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEAL?
Anything Italian. I’m also big on sushi.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW EVERY WORD TO?
“Old Town Road” by Billy Ray Cyrus and Little Nas X.

WOULD YOU RATHER GO HANG GLIDING OR WHITEWATER RAFTING?
I’d probably do whitewater rafting because at least I’d probably stand a chance of survival.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEAL?
Being from the coast of South Carolina, there was always a lot of fresh seafood. So I love seafood.

WHAT COULD YOU GIVE A 40-MINUTE PRESENTATION ON WITH NO PREPARATION?
The whaling industry. In college, I really got into watching “Whale Wars” on the Discovery Channel. I was really into that because I didn’t agree with the whale industry in general. I’ve done so much research on it, and I’m very save-the-whales.

WOULD YOU RATHER GO HANG GLIDING OR WHITEWATER RAFTING?
Probably whitewater rafting, mostly because I’m not big on heights. Ziplining maybe? But hang gliding, no.
MEET RHS
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MEET KIRBY R. GIBSON
HOMETOWN: Chicago, Illinois
JOB TITLE: Assistant Director of Residence Education for North Neighborhood
TIME AT MSU: Four months

CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR ROLE?
I am responsible for the oversight of neighborhood operations and functions. We just try to support the students as best as we can.

WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE PART ABOUT BEING AN RHS TEAM MEMBER?
I really appreciate the people. It’s really been great to connect with folks who really love the institution, who are committed to their work and are committed to DOSE.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE DRINK?
I love a good ginger ale. No, I don’t like Vernors. I love Canada Dry. That’s my go-to.

WHAT JOB WOULD YOU BE TERRIBLE AT?
I love to think that I’m good at all of the things. Umm, gymnastics? Or a coach of an athletic team. I have the inspiration and motivation factor, but to actually tell folks what they need to do to play “the sports?” Probably not.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEAL?
I love a good homemade mac and cheese with dressing. But dressing, not stuffing. Folks don’t realize there’s a difference.

WHAT SONG DO YOU KNOW EVERY WORD TO?
“Brown Skin Girl” by Beyoncé.

WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU KNEW MORE ABOUT?
I wish I knew more about my ethnic heritage. I know what my racial identity is, but I can’t say I’m X-percent this or that.

MEET NICOLE SIMI
HOMETOWN: Newberry, Michigan
JOB TITLE: Human Resources Administrator
TIME AT MSU: With MSU in the police department since 2002; with RHS six months.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR ROLE?
We investigate any employee claims that are brought forward and any workplace issues.

WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE PART ABOUT BEING AN RHS TEAM MEMBER?
I absolutely love the team environment. Everyone I’ve worked with has been so helpful. I just love getting to meet people with different job duties within RHS, that’s been really interesting and fun.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE DRINK?
Sweet tea; my homemade sweet tea, for sure.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE KIND OF MUSIC?
Anything from the ‘80s or ‘90s is my favorite.

WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU KNEW MORE ABOUT?
Psychology. Because then you can understand people’s actions better.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT ARE GUARANTEED TO MAKE YOUR DAY BETTER?
Spending time with family, watching my youngest daughter play sports, and spending time with my dog.

WHAT TV CHANNEL DOESN’T EXIST BUT REALLY SHOULD?
A reality TV show on life in the Upper Peninsula. Life is so different up there, and people don’t know much about it. It’s like a totally different world. Have I talked about the Upper Peninsula too much? I love it.

WHAT COULD YOU GIVE A 40-MINUTE PRESENTATION ON WITH ABSOLUTELY NO PREPARATION?
Anything fraud-investigation or fraud-prevention related, just because I did it for so long.

WOULD YOU RATHER GO HANG GLIDING OR WHITEWATER RAFTING?
Definitely whitewater rafting. I’d be too fearful of hang gliding.

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