BELONGING
A MESSAGE FROM THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR THE DIVISION OF STUDENT LIFE & ENGAGEMENT

Winter is a time for stillness, reflection and renewal as the days start to get a bit longer. Taking some time to press pause allows us to approach the new year with an open heart and open mind.

As President Stanley noted in the Michigan State University DEI Plan, “Understanding diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is everyone’s responsibility at MSU. The deep roots of racism and xenophobia and the persistence of bias in our society require continued efforts within the university to raise awareness and develop systems to support positive change and ensure accountability.”

It is with this in mind that we continue to learn, listen and work together to make MSU — and our division — a place where students can find comfort, safety and, ultimately, a home away from home.

Our division is home to several of the university’s points of pride, including: the MRULE-ICA Program, the Office of Cultural and Academic Transitions, the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities, the Student Parent Resource Center, the Student Veterans Resource Center, the Gender and Sexuality Campus Center, and Women’s Student Services. That’s not to mention all the work and programming being done in our residence halls.

This issue of Serving State focuses on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging for our teams and our students. It looks at options for teams to start their own DEI work — from attending learning opportunities to participating in book clubs — as well as the initiatives in our division that are centered on our students. The issue also touches on the renaming of the Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Transgender Resource Center to the Gender and Sexuality Campus Center. All of these initiatives and changes are inspired by our need to make campus a more welcoming, inclusive environment for everyone.

“We must all be active participants in the work to embed DEI principles in the work we do — from our day-to-day jobs to the strategic planning process — to build a sense of belonging for all Spartans.”

Vennie Gore
Senior Vice President for the Division of Student Life & Engagement
Service Road Turf Complex
Coming Soon
Fall 2022

We collectively acknowledge that Michigan State University occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Lands of the Anishinaabeg — Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi peoples. In particular, the university resides on land ceded in the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw. We recognize, support and advocate for the sovereignty of Michigan’s twelve federally-recognized Indian nations, for historic Indigenous communities in Michigan, for Indigenous individuals and communities who live here now, and for those who were forcibly removed from their homelands. By offering this Land Acknowledgement, we affirm Indigenous sovereignty and will work to hold Michigan State University more accountable to the needs of American Indian and Indigenous peoples.

Photos courtesy of University Communications.
DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION: Where Can Your Team Begin?

THE SUBJECTS OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI) HAVE APPROPRIATELY TAKEN THEIR PLACE AT THE FOREFRONT OF MANY BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS ON CAMPUS. SOCIAL EVENTS OF THE PAST YEAR HAVE PUSHED PEOPLE TO LOOK INWARD AND EVALUATE THEIR OWN WORK ENVIRONMENTS TO CELEBRATE THEIR UNIQUE FACULTY AND STAFF. IN STUDENT LIFE & ENGAGEMENT, SUCH EVALUATIONS HAVE COME INTO FRUITION IN THE FORM OF TANGIBLE METHODS TO PROMOTE DEI IN THE WORKPLACE. THROUGH ACCESSIBLE AND THOUGHTFUL APPROACHES, FACULTY AND STAFF AROUND CAMPUS CAN NOT ONLY SERVE TO PREVENT CERTAIN AGGRESSIONS, BUT TO SUSTAIN WORK POPULATIONS OF MINDFUL AND RESPECTFUL EMPLOYEES FOR YEARS TO COME.

DEI PROJECT COMMITTEE
Culinary Services is looking to structure project committees with existing team members from varying gender identities, cultural backgrounds and position levels. Utilizing team members who have already adapted to the work culture of the department can help with resolving existing concerns and preventing potential future issues specific to the team’s work environment. Although some DEI methods are universal and can be applied to all workplaces, other methods will inevitably be unique.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT
Team members can check out landgrabu.org to better understand the history of MSU’s Land Grant institutions and consider adding land acknowledgement to email signatures and sharing it at the beginning of presentations or events.

INFORMATIVE DEI CONFERENCES AND EVENTS
The Career Services Department is planning a DEI Employer Conference in cooperation with the MSU Black Alumni Association to focus on diversity recruiting, development and retention of MSU partners. Events like these can serve as inspiration to other departments in their own creation of DEI-related conferences and seminars. Presenting information efficiently to faculty and staff, whether under formal or casual settings, is a great way to support open communication and new education of updated DEI methods.

DEI HIRING AND ACCOMMODATION PROCESSES
Career Services and Recreational Sports and Fitness Services (RSFS) are dedicated to hiring a diverse workforce. The Career Services department has created a toolkit for new staff that includes the best practices for supporting their commitment to diversity recruiting, hiring and retention, while RSFS remains intentional in their hiring process and looks to hire competent employees ranging in ethnicity, gender preference and socioeconomic status. Hiring and recruiting new team members who share the common goal of encouraging and promoting DEI practices is an easy and logical way to sustain them.

REVIEW POLICIES AND PRACTICES
Discuss with your team making it a habit to look at all policies and practices from a DEI/racial equity lens whenever going into a new operational cycle. For example, REHS has reviewed its winter break housing plan, hiring practices, dress code and other processes. The team also recently gathered a diverse team across the department to review the On-Campus Housing Handbook to flag policies that may be problematic.

PERSONAL PRONOUNS
If they haven’t yet, encourage team members to consider adding pronouns to their email signature and getting comfortable sharing them during meeting introductions. Residence Education and Housing Services ordered pronoun stickers for their professional staff and added pronouns to their student nametag template. Making these efforts regular practice can provide a more inclusive and comfortable environment for our Spartans. Students and team members may not want to share pronouns, and that is okay too.

Diversity, equity and inclusion are a natural priority within professional communities. As MSU strives to prepare students for lifelong civic and social responsibility, it aims to incorporate those same values into the work of their faculty and staff on campus. Taking inspiration from big changes within MSU and tailoring them to each unique department or unit is the best way to be intentional in all DEI efforts. Take the time to consider how some of the above ideas may positively impact your team and areas of focus.

ATTENDING STUDENT EVENTS
Students want staff to hear their voices and perspectives and then find ways to share those perspectives when planning operations, changes and communications. Building relationships with students and student groups is a great way to support their success.

FIND A COLLEAGUE/FRIEND TO DISCUSS DEI ISSUES

• Ensure they are willing and have capacity to share open, candid conversations about DEI topics.
• Share articles, books and podcasts that discuss the issues.
• Talk about personal impact and community impact and how you can help.

DEI BOOK CLUBS AND CHALLENGES
Setting challenges and routines to learn and grow with your team members through low-barrier-of-entry methods collectively helps to both bond and broaden perspectives. The Creative Services team has established a book club after seeing a need to become more culturally competent and hear from diverse people in their own voices. The Center for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL) is committed to continual professional development that includes book-read efforts as well as a 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge with staff rotating a discussion facilitation role.

Culinary Services Leadership also schedules “road shows” where the team visits different units and meets for two-way communication. Such examples are fun and effective ways to build and strengthen team relationships that cost little to nothing.

CONFERENCES AND EVENTS
INFORMATIVE DEI
The Inclusive Campus Initiative (ICI) at Michigan State University (MSU) was created in fall 2021 out of student concerns relating to developing a safe and inclusive environment on the MSU campus. The initiative is the university’s way of acting and supporting students who may feel unsafe and unheard on campus. It was created under the leadership of Senior Vice President for Student Life & Engagement (SLE) Vennie Gore, with Meaghan Kozar named interim project manager.

ICI’s Success in Fall 2021

The Inclusive Campus Initiative has found great success at MSU during its first semester. These are some of the main ways in which it contributed to the DEI efforts at MSU.

The Inclusive Campus Initiative Summit

An ICI summit was held July 26 and 27 to launch the initiative. “The focus was on listening to students, and people at the summit had to strategize ways to support students,” explains Kozar. The aim was to brainstorm ways in which the university could work toward fulfilling student demands. These demands were listed by several student communities, mainly the Black Students’ Alliance and the...
Every forum is recorded and available on at ocat.msu.edu/inclusive-campus-initiative. ICI committee members are also highly involved in planning future steps as well as promoting DEI efforts across campus. The ICI project has partnered with MSU Counseling & Psychiatric Services (CAPS) for these Virtual Community Forums. The forums offer resources and support to students for their mental well-being. Dr. Swapna Hingwe, CAPS representative, is present at the forums to ensure that the space remains safe and healthy for all those attending. With discussion on difficult topics concerning campus safety, Dr. Hingwe engages with students in a positive manner by asking reflection questions for them to think about.

The Yellow Whistle Project
Creating and supporting campaigns that call for inclusion and equity is a part of the work of the ICI. The Yellow Whistle Project, linked to the initiative, is a campaign that aims to create awareness of the racism, xenophobia, and violence faced by the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community on campus is a literal and metaphorical campaign to create awareness as it calls on campus community members to “blow the whistle” on the racism, xenophobia and violence directed toward the Asian community heightened during the pandemic. Learn more about The Yellow Whistle by visiting theyellowwhistle.org.

The Campus-Partner Spotlight
To contribute toward and help the inclusive campus ecosystem thrive, the ICI puts forth a campus-partner spotlight, wherein it appreciates the inclusion work done by its campus partners. The aim of this activity is to celebrate collective DEI efforts and contribute to the growth of the inclusive ecosystem. One of these spotlights focused on a group called Violence Free Communities (VFC), which provides a space for the discussion of strategies to eliminate violence from the MSU community.

ICI’S PLANS FOR THE FUTURE
Following this successful semester, Kozar says they plan to work on reconvening the ICI planning committee to “think of ways to follow up from the first summit and continue to create a campus ecosystem.” They plan to review these recommendations and strategies to create follow-up opportunities for staff and campus partners and address student demands.

McCord puts forth the mission of the ICI and explains, at its heart, it is student-centered. That is what makes it powerful, exciting and important. “It is centering student voices and student experiences, while also looking at the situation through the lens of diversity, equity and inclusion.”

Kozar is also working on a project that aims to map MSU’s history of activism and celebrate the impact of student activism at MSU. This project is being worked on with Assistant Director of Detroit M.A.D.E Scholars Program Dr. Joy Hannibal and African and African American Studies Librarian Erik Ponder. It will serve as a reminder that MSU’s efforts toward inclusion have been born out of the protests and activism of marginalized communities and their allies. It is also a celebration of their work, legacy and impact. The next step of the project includes the formation of a committee with members from the MSU community.
The ICI will continue its tireless work toward fostering a safe, inclusive and healthy community at MSU. As project manager, Kozar is open to hearing from anyone interested in learning more or in contributing or who simply have questions. She welcomes the opportunity to engage in conversations with the MSU community and share thoughts and ideas. Kozar works at MSU’s 1855 Place Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays and at the Office of Cultural and Academic Transitions (OCAT), Room 339 in the Student Services Building on Thursdays and Fridays. You can also get in touch with her by emailing her at kozarmea@msu.edu.

To follow the Initiative and to get involved, there are several calendars of events you can keep an eye on for updates. These include the calendar of the Office for Institutional Diversity and Inclusion (inclusion.msu.edu/events/index.html) as well as the Office of Cultural & Academic Transitions website (ocat.msu.edu).

Eduardo Olivo took up the role of associate director for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) going on six months ago, and has brought his passion and commitment to it in an effort to decolonize the department. “DEI is my call and responsibility, and in this position I feel like I can definitively make an impact,” says Olivo.

He has a long history of working with Michigan State University (MSU), from being a resident assistant while a student here to becoming a full-time employee in 1995, serving as assistant director of Residence Education for 18 years, among other positions. For Olivo, Residence Education and Housing Services (REHS) has been an integral part of his life for over 30 years, giving him a space to work with students and have a positive impact on them.

Olivo is driven in his new role as associate director for DEI by a vision to help REHS become an antiracist and inclusive department at the campus-wide level. As he puts it, Olivo’s work entails “Providing leadership and direction for REHS in the areas of equity and justice, working directly with students from minoritized communities (including People of Color, Queer and Trans student groups, among others), and supporting, developing and implementing an antiracist and anti-oppression vision.” Olivo engages REHS leaders to ensure the department is reviewing and responding to student demands in their sphere of influence. The most rewarding aspect of this new role for him has been his team, which supports his vision and aims and values connecting with students.

He plans to investigate conditions that create inequity among REHS staff members and MSU students. Students can now directly talk to him about the harm they have faced as well as concerns they have regarding hate and bigotry, and in this role, he can in turn provide them with support and resources. Olivo says his new position has provided him the access to spaces, resources and support to lead this effort and make the vision of an equal and inclusive campus a reality.

**JOINING THE EFFORT FOR AN INCLUSIVE CAMPUS**

Eduardo Olivo, associate director for DEI, discusses his mission, experience and goals.
Prior to the fall semester of 2021, the Lesbian Bisexual Gay and Transgender Resource Center or LBGTRC at Michigan State University was renamed the Gender and Sexuality Campus Center.

The Gender and Sexuality Campus Center is more inclusive of the diversity of sexual and gender identities on campus. While many think the center serves only LGBTQA+ students, this new name conveys it is a resource for everyone, including faculty and staff. A more inclusive name also shows it is a space for those who want to support and affirm LGBTQA+ community members and those seeking to learn.

“MSU’s center serving the LGBTQA+ community is a critical hub for creating and supporting an inclusive and welcoming campus for all Spartans,” says MSU President Samuel L. Stanley Jr., M.D. (he/him). “The center will continue to be a critical asset to help prevent gender and sexuality bias and will be better positioned to serve our community with its new name.”

Further evidence of the university’s commitment to the LGBTQA+ community is the recent expansion of gender-inclusive housing in campus residence halls. “We are dedicated to supporting LGBTQA+ communities, and the new center name is a reflection of that,” says Senior Vice President for Student Life & Engagement Vennie Gore. “This new name — The Gender and Sexuality Campus Center — not only better reflects the important work of our staff and students but also lets our students know we are responsive to their needs and want them to continue to be engaged and connected with MSU.”

The change was announced March 31, 2021: International Transgender Day of Visibility (TDOV), which is a day to celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of transgender and nonbinary people. Visit the center’s program webpage (gscc.msu.edu/programs/index.html) to learn more about TDOV and the many upcoming events the center will host.

---

We all make mistakes. Try not to ignore it or be defensive. Re-Aact is a simple tool for remembering how to apologize when you are made aware of a mistake. It is intended to be used in the heat of the moment when your reaction may be fight, flee or freeze.

**React.**
Reflect on the situation and be attuned.

**Acknowledge.**
Acknowledge and accept responsibility for your actions.

**Apologize.**
It doesn’t matter what you intended, apologize.

**Change.**
Share how you will change your behavior.

**Thank.**
Thank the person for sharing their experience.