

buzz

FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS FALL 2022 VOLUME 15, NO. 1

**Metro State University
Alum of the Year
Steve Campos '17**

**Emerging Alum of the Year
Jim Houston '16**



Power
2020, inkjet print
Gretchen Funk

Office Hours



Dear Alumni;

As another academic year is fully underway, I am energized by the actions we are taking to fulfill our founding mission. As a university, we have adopted the theme “*Embracing Radical Inclusivity: Creating a Place Where We All Belong.*” This concept of radical inclusion builds on the foundation laid by our founders, President Sweet and Chancellor Mitau, that Metro State would be the college for those who have no college, treating each student as an individual filled with talent and potential, motivated to learn and capable of matching their education to their singular dreams. This mission has endured for more than 50 years as we have grown and adapted to changes in our society, students, and our university.

As a university community, we have worked to develop a definition of radical inclusivity in keeping with our distinctive features, and I am pleased to share our definition with you:

We believe education is for everyone. We find unity in diversity, strength in our differences, and create a space where all people feel like they belong.

I invite you as Metro State alumni to join us in adopting this definition and vision for our university.

I can think of no better examples of champions for inclusion than Steve Campos '17, and Jim Houston '16, our Alum of the

Year and Emerging Alum of the Year, who are featured in this issue of buzz. Over the course of their careers and in their service to Metro State, both Steve and Jim have made inclusion part of their life's work. We are pleased to recognize their service and accomplishments.

I am very excited to share that Metro State has entered into an agreement with Amazon to become an education partner for Amazon's Career Choice program, providing Amazon's hourly employees access to a variety of online and in-person programs. As an Amazon Career Choice network partner, Metro State is ready to offer its innovative online and in-person programs, comprehensive student support services, and decades of experience working with adult learners to Amazon front-line team members. As alumni, you know that a Metro State education is a pathway to improved economic and social status.

I believe that our corporate partnerships, like the Affinity Credit Union MBA cohort and Amazon's Career Choice for bachelor's degrees, are our newest way to reach the more than one million adults in the Twin Cities who have some college credit and no degree. You can be proud that your university continues to find ways to make earning a degree accessible for working adults.

Metro State University is your university. As we work to create a space where all people feel like they belong, this includes you. I invite you to reach out to our alumni relations team to help us understand what belonging means for you. You are our greatest and most enduring achievement. Thank you for being part of our community.

Sincerely,

Virginia “Ginny” Arthur, JD
President

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Cover photo by Jeff Achen

Alumni Association



My Dear Fellow Alumni,
Please join the Alumni Association Board of Directors in congratulating the 2021 Alum of the Year Steve Campos '17 and Emerging Alum of the Year Jim Houston '16. Both Steve and Jim have demonstrated a passion for serving Metro State alumni and students. As you read about their accomplishments, I think you will agree that they are wonderful examples of the ways alumni contribute to our university community and live our values.

The alumni board has recognized many outstanding alumni over the years with a long history of service to the university and the community. Jim Houston is the first Emerging Alum of the Year. The Alumni Board created this award to recognize an alum who is a recent graduate and has already shown a noteworthy commitment to serving the university. Jim Houston's work is exactly what that award was designed to honor.

Applications for the 2022 alumni awards open in December. I encourage you to consider nominating a fellow alum to recognize someone who is making a difference through a commitment of their time, talent, and resources.

The Alumni Board members continue to open doors for alumni to stay connected with the university. The Fundraising Committee is developing opportunities for alumni to support their fellow alumni, especially recent graduates, to launch their careers. You can read about contributing to the Alumni Professional Development Fund as we get closer to Give to the Max Day in this issue of *buzz*.

Our career resources committee is actively promoting Metro State Connect, our career-focused networking and mentoring platform. Have you joined this group? If not, visit www.metrostate.peoplegove.com. Once on the site, you can create a profile to connect with your fellow alumni and current students to give and ask for career advice, informational interviews, or to connect with groups that hold common interests. It is a powerful tool for creating connections and a wonderful way for alumni to give a gift of time and expertise.

Serving on a committee of the Alumni Board is a rewarding way to help Metro State strengthen its connection to alumni. One great way to learn about these opportunities is to connect with us on LinkedIn. The membership committee will be actively recruiting members in the coming weeks, so stay tuned!

Sincerely,

President

Metro State University Alumni Board

The Metro State University Alumni Board is comprised of alumni volunteers who share their time for the benefit of the university, fellow alumni, and current students. If you would like to learn more about volunteering for a committee of the Alumni Board, please email alumni_relations@metrostate.edu

Brittanie Aune '20

Matt Christenson '12

Amanda Clark '17,
Vice President

Deidra Isaac '16

Thulani Jwacu '05

Thomas Krueger '17

Munira Maalimisaq '19

Salman Mian '01

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Fidelis Odozi '18,
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Eric Rios '15

Betsy Salvatore '17

Shahbaz Shah '15

Nancy Uden '88,
President

Shanasha Whitson '00

Darrell Young '20

News@Metro

Metro State University becomes Amazon Career Choice partner

By Matthew Spillum '06

Metro State University announced they have been selected as an education partner for Amazon's Career Choice program, providing Amazon's hourly employees access to a variety of online and in-person programs.

"Metro State is proud to partner with the Amazon Career Choice program," says Metro State President Ginny Arthur. "As Minnesota's newest four-year Amazon Career Choice network partner, Metro State is ready to offer its innovative online and in-person programs, comprehensive student support services, and decades of experience working with adult learners to Amazon front-line team members."

Amazon's Career Choice program is an education benefit that empowers employees to learn new skills for career success at Amazon or elsewhere. The program meets individual learners where they are on their education journey through a variety of education and upskilling opportunities including full college tuition, industry certifications designed to lead to in-demand jobs, and foundational skills such as English language proficiency, high school diplomas, and GEDs. In the U.S., the company is investing \$1.2 billion to upskill more than 300,000 employees by 2025 to help move them into higher-paying, in-demand jobs.

Amazon's Career Choice program has a rigorous selection process for third-party partner educators,

choosing partners that are focused on helping employees through their education programs, assisting them with job placements, and overall offering education that leads to career success.

"We're looking forward to Metro State University coming on board as an education partner for Career Choice, adding to the hundreds of best-in-class offerings available to our employees," said Tammy Thieman, Global Program Lead of Amazon's Career Choice program. "We're committed to empowering our employees by providing them access to the education and training they need to grow their careers, whether that's with us or elsewhere. We have intentionally created a partner network of third-party educators and employers committed to providing excellent education, job placement resources, and continuous improvements to the experience. Today, more than 80,000 Amazon employees around the world have already participated in Career Choice and we've seen first-hand how it can transform their lives."

If you are an Amazon employee yourself, or know someone who is, visit Metro State's Amazon Career Choice page for more information. www.metrostate.edu/apply/amazon-career-choice

Make Metro State part of your Give to the Max Day tradition

Please join your fellow alumni, faculty, staff, and friends of Metro State by making a gift to support students on Give to the Max Day.

Your gift to the SAFE (Student Assistance for Emergencies) Fund will help students facing small emergencies that could derail their progress toward graduation. The goal is to raise \$5000 on Give to the Max Day to support students.

You can help launch a recent grad in their career when you make a gift to the Alumni Professional Development Fund. New alumni will be able to apply for up to \$500 to obtain a certification or licensure required to start their careers. The Alumni Board of Directors has a goal to raise \$10,000 to launch this innovative fund.

You can give online at metrostate.edu/give/give-now. Every gift is meaningful, and every gift is appreciated.



50th-anniversary timeline unveiled

Members of the Metro State University Community came together on May 3, 2023, to celebrate the 50th anniversary. Beth Clausen, Dean, Library and Information Services, Rachel Hughes, Executive Director, Metro State University Foundation, and Dr. Susan Rydell led the project. Alumni are welcome to visit the timeline on the first floor of St. John's Hall.



Timeline in St. John's Hall



Ginny Arthur and Kristine Hansen '07



Ginny Arthur, Rachel Huges, Genesis Williams

Alum of the Year

A Servant at Heart, Steve Campos '17

By Matthew Spillum '06

One of the traits Steve Campos '17 exhibits more than any other is genuine humility. Of this latest honor, he says “it’s really tough for me to fully embrace the honor and say, ‘yes, thank you, I deserve this,’ when my forte is helping others and getting them that recognition.” As noted by Brigadier General Sandy Best '88, a former Metro State Alumni Board member and author of Campos’s nomination letter, “Steve Campos is one of the most selfless servants and caring humans I know.”



That selflessness established itself early, in a career spanning active-duty service with the United States Air Force’s Strategic Air Command, a further three decades in the Minnesota Air National Guard, alongside 27 years with the U. S. Postal Service. Campos’s efforts as a volunteer, advocate, and champion for inclusion have been recognized in every context into which he has poured his energy, culminating in a Minnesota Humanities Veteran Voices Legacy Award for his extraordinary contribution to his service and community.

Similarly, Campos’s impact at Metro State was certainly focused on helping others. When asked what of his accomplishments at Metro he was most proud of, he quickly points to working with the Metro State Veterans Network to “bring it out of a dormant state to become a thriving, active organization again ... that embraced veteran students along with the university and set Metro State on the road to becoming a Beyond the Yellow Ribbon company.” That work leading up to Metro State’s Beyond the Yellow Ribbon recognition,



Metropolitan State University proclaimed a Yellow Ribbon Company, 2013. Pictured (l-r) Bruce Holzschuh, Senator Amy Klobuchar, Gen. Frank J. Grass, Steve Campos '16, Alfredo Oliveira, Sue Hammersmith, Matthew Idzik, Alex Kempe '14, Major General Richard Nash, Former Minnesota Secretary of State, Mark Ritchie

“It was a culmination of all the hard work our veterans did, and as an old chief master sergeant, my goal was always to bring in others, to bring in younger veteran students and give them charge of the organization, set them up to succeed, and just be there, ready to help, in the background. Helping the university attain that Yellow Ribbon recognition, and then having General Grass there, I think that was probably the single proudest accomplishment.”

and the recognition ceremony featuring General Frank Grass '85 and at the time the 27th Chief of the National Guard Bureau, remains a strong memory for Campos. “It was a culmination of all the hard work our veterans did, and as an old chief master sergeant, my goal was always to bring in others, to bring in younger veteran students and give them charge of the organization, set them up to succeed, and just be there, ready to help, in the background. Helping the university attain that Yellow Ribbon recognition, and then having General Grass there, I think that was probably the single proudest accomplishment.”

With all these accomplishments, Campos still expresses a reluctance to step boldly into the spotlight. Speaking about Metro State’s inaugural Emerging Alumni of the Year Award, given this year to Jim Houston '16, Campos says “the Minnesota Humanities Veteran Voices Award also has an emerging award, along with a ‘Legacy award’ for veterans who have served in the past but also contribute greatly to the community.” When reminded that the Alumni of the Year Award was not just a legacy award but given for extraordinary service, he continues to demur. “It’s great to be putting forward people who are just getting started on their journey as an alum who want to make a difference and letting them know the institution can see them

and see where they’re going and giving them another example... ‘here’s another person that’s seen that path a little further, and kind of knows where you’re going.’”

Similarly, Campos’s message for alumni looking for a way to get plugged in is to set up a kind of alumni-mentoring-alumni system, “where alumni of years past could meet

with younger alumni, not to toot our own horns, but to help give ideas, and ask the younger alums ‘what is it you’re really interested in?’... A lot of our graduates are younger than me, but they all have something to bring to the table: skills, resources, time, and it would be great to bring their ideas together. You only need 10 or 12 ideas to launch one person’s passion to give back, and then who knows how far we could go?”

“A lot of our graduates are younger than me, but they all have something to bring to the table: skills, resources, time, and it would be great to bring their ideas together. You only need 10 or 12 ideas to launch one person’s passion to give back, and then who knows how far we could go?”

Going forward, Campos continues to look for ways to serve Metro State, but is looking forward to some time traveling to Colorado to help care for a new grandson and spend time with family.

Bringing everyone in— Jim Houston '16, Metro State's first Emerging Alumnus of the Year


By Matthew Spillum '06

Metro State is no stranger to foregrounding diversity and inclusion. However, institutional intention and official statements do not, in and of themselves, make ideals manifest in the lives of our students, staff, and faculty. It takes people actually doing the work to bring these concepts to fruition. People like Metro State's first Emerging Alumnus of the Year, James "Jim" Houston '16.

As a young person, Houston spent time working for a job placement company in Minneapolis that went out of business. "In the process of looking for a new job, I noticed a position with the state of Minnesota working for vocational rehabilitation services," he says. "When I got to the interview, I said, 'I'm not really sure what I'm doing here.' But I let them know that if there was a chance that I could help people get jobs and navigate some things that are tough in the workplace, I'm gonna lean all the way in." Houston spent 6 years serving in that position before moving on to working with prospective employees with criminal backgrounds, until he realized he'd need a degree to continue advancing in his field.

"People that are going to school and graduating in their thirties and forties have 50 million things going on, and they need a lot of the same kinds of support that is critical in my field."





Houston tried other schools to meet his needs before arriving at Metro State. “Metro was the one school that would allow me to go to school, have a family, and have a life all at the same time,” he says. “And my experience at Metro really reinforced the things I’d learned in the work I do in workforce development ... People that are going to school and graduating in their thirties and forties have 50 million things going on, and they need a lot of the same kinds of support that is critical in my field.”

From that experience, it was both natural fit and existing connections that brought Houston into working with Metro State’s Career Center. “In my role (Inclusion and Diversity consultant, Xcel Energy), I am very interested in the Metro State student,” says Houston. “First, because I was one of them, and second, because, even though a lot of them are still figuring out where they are headed in their careers, they come in with that lived experience, and having had control over their academic journey and having had the kind of maturity and knowing what benefit a degree can bring is a big benefit to employers.”

“Jim understands how difficult it can be to find connections and support within a workplace, as an employee of color ... Jim is a champion for our students and uses his daily work to reduce racial disparities in our local workforce.”

Outside of just knowing the characteristics of the Metro State student, Houston also had connections with the Career Center staff. “Ironically, most of the staff in the Career Center have known or worked with Jim in different settings,” says Emily Johnson, career counselor. “He is a unanimous favorite employer partner.” Houston’s desire to pay forward some of the mentoring that enabled him to access his professional opportunities motivates his work with the Career Center’s programs, including serving as employer partner for Metro State’s METR 310 Reimagining Your Career: Job Search Framework and Strategies.

For such a recent graduate, Houston’s contributions to the work of the Career Center, and by extension the university’s students, have been extensive and impactful. “Jim has been very clear that when he reached out to Metro State, he reached out with purpose,” says Johnson. “Jim understands how difficult it can be to find connections and support within a workplace, as an employee of color ... Jim is a champion for our students and uses his daily work to reduce racial disparities in our local workforce.” It is this steadfast dedication to the success of Metro State students through the Career Center that makes Houston an ideal individual to receive Metro State’s first Emerging Alumni of the Year award.

Asked what he might say to other alumni looking to get plugged into Metro State, Houston is emphatic. “Dig in. Once I connected with the folks in the Career Center, I just went in full steam. If giving back and serving people is something you are interested in, you’re going to find someone who wants your help ... call somebody and ask, ‘Hey, is there something I can do? Is there something you need help with?’ Reach out to that staff member or faculty that you had a connection with and let them know you are available.”

Going forward, the Emerging Alumni of the Year has no intention of sitting on his laurels. “Bill (Baldus, Career Center director) has a working group I’m involved with, helping conceptualize and advise how diversity and career readiness ideas can be incorporated into classroom work. We’ll probably meet quarterly, and I really also love to just provide myself as a resource for individual students, talking to small groups, whatever is needed.”

Student Success

More Work to Do

By Sarah Guy-Levar

“We’re here! We have arrived!!” said Nikki Rykhus ’22, recipient of the Susan Morrison Endowed Scholarship for Urban Education Undergraduate Students. “Not really,” they said with a smile, “there’s always more work to do.” Nikki shared their unique path to their degree. “I grew up in the small town of Jordan, Minnesota, but I knew the small-town atmosphere was not the best fit for me for high school. I was fortunate that I was able to attend high school in the urban setting of Burnsville, about half an hour away. There I found community in the associated afterschool teen center program, *The Garage*, an alcohol-free, multi-

stage music venue, recording studio, and educational facility. It was there I participated and developed skills in Homework Help, played guitar in a metal band, and solidified my belief that I needed to make spaces for youth, especially LGBTQIA+ youth, to have their voices amplified.”

Upon graduating high school, Nikki enrolled at Minneapolis College but was challenged as they were responsible for funding 100% of their education and living expenses without outside resources. “Every class I took, I had to pay for myself, out-of-pocket. At one point, I was working for the Athletes Committed

to Educating Students program from 7 to 9 a.m., tutoring students at the Metcalf Middle School in Burnsville from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and then either attending a night class toward my degree or working a closing shift at a pizza restaurant while also doing homework and working at the restaurant on weekends. It was grueling, but the kids I was tutoring, my scholars, held me accountable while I held them accountable. It was a great way to model higher education’s importance and expectation. Once I turned 24, I could apply for financial aid and student loans. The scholarships I received from the foundation bridged the financial gap for me to attend college full-time and complete my unpaid 14-week student teaching internship.”

“I am truly grateful to donors who see the value of supporting work unique to urban education environments, such as increasing the number of teachers of color, so students can learn from a teacher that looks like them,” said Nikki, “Urban education is special, the diversity of our student body allows us to learn more, do more, and bring people together in a vitally important manner. As a middle school science teacher, I am just planting the seeds, and although I might not be around to see it, I know one day those trees will bear fruit.”



SARAH GUY-LEVAR

President's Outstanding Graduates Spring 2022 Award Recipients

Each semester, members of the faculty and academic advisors nominate undergraduate and graduate students from their respective colleges to be recognized at the President's Outstanding Student Award reception. The university celebrated the Spring 2022 graduates at a virtual celebration.

Alexandra "Allie" Bergeron of Saint Paul was selected as the outstanding undergraduate student from the College of Management. Bergeron, a double major, earned a bachelor of science in both marketing and entrepreneurship and innovation. Coming from Century College through the transfer pathways program, Bergeron was able to hit the ground running at Metro State and continued to excel while also interning at Wings for Widows, a nonprofit organization providing financial services to those whose spouses have died. This internship has led to employment, and Bergeron also intends to further her education at Metro State.

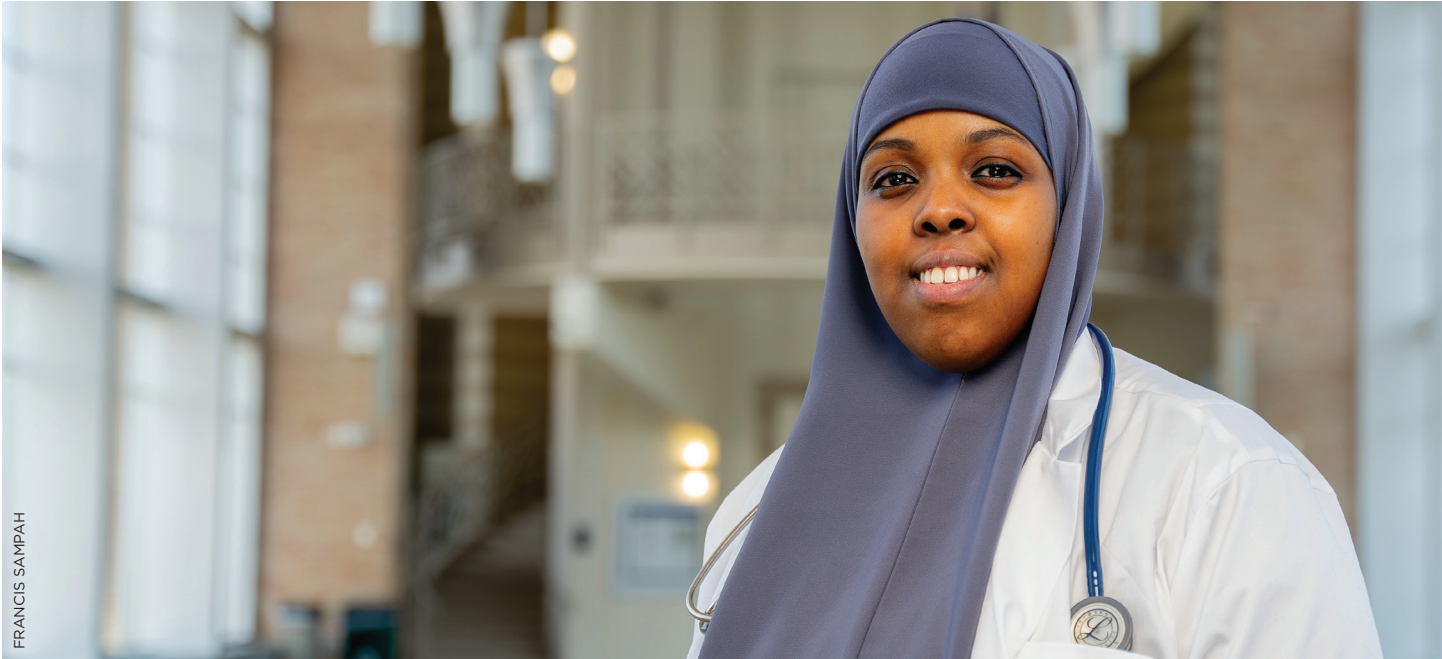


Susan Covington of Eagan was selected as the outstanding graduate student from the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. She earned a doctorate of nursing practice degree. Covington plans to focus her practice on working with geriatric patients, as well as using her knowledge on mission work in Kenya, particularly with children's education and HIV/AIDS awareness work.

Kenneth Daoheuang of Brooklyn Park was selected as the outstanding undergraduate student from the College of Sciences. He earned a bachelor of science degree in biology. Daoheuang credits his service in the Marine Corps with his drive to help others and work with people as a team. As noted by one of his instructors, Dr. Sarah Dimick Gray, "It was Ken who really helped me understand as an instructor what it was like for our students to return to the classroom after a year online and find the right combination of online support with in-person challenges." He plans to help make the world a better place using his scientific knowledge.



HaoPay Lee of Woodbury was selected as the outstanding graduate student from the College of Community Studies and Public Affairs. Lee earned a master of advocacy and political leadership.



Kadro Mohamed of Saint Paul was selected as the outstanding undergraduate student from the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. Mohamed earned a bachelor of science in nursing through the MANE-BSN program. She managed to excel in her program even while having not one but two children during the pandemic (her eldest child was born a year before) and is focusing her nursing career in the maternity area, serving at Regions Hospital Birth Center during her preceptorship.

Metro Fund



Dear Alumni,

I think that you will agree with me that Metro State University is special. As a long-time advocate and volunteer for Metro State, I am excited to take on the honor and responsibility of Chair of the Metro State Foundation Board of Trustees. Over the next two years, I will be working closely with my fellow trustees and university leadership move Metro State forward in its mission of creating inclusion and access for all who want to attend.

For a foundation board, creating access means garnering and stewarding resources for the university and its students so that tuition is not an insurmountable barrier to education. We approach our work with a passion for education as a transformational experience and degree attainment as a catalyst for social mobility, and we have the data to affirm this belief. Metro State University leads all other universities in the state of Minnesota in social mobility. In practical terms, this means that Metro State is doing the best job in Minnesota at giving students the tools they need to move from a low-income to middle-class

economic status. That is important work because improving economic circumstances transforms the outcomes future generations within the family.

The Metro State Foundation is leading the charge in attracting private resources to support the work of the university. Through individual giving, corporate grants, and private foundation partnerships, we bring the community into our work. The return on investment to our community is you. You and your fellow alums are making a difference through your work, volunteer service, and participation in our community.

One of the greatest honors I have received during my volunteer service to the university was to be named an honorary alumnus by the Metro State Alumni Board. I have earned degrees from other well-known institutions, but Metro State is so close to my heart that I choose to give back to the university through gifts of time and critical financial support. I ask you to join me as an advocate and donor to the university. Every gift is important because it is a tangible demonstration of the Metro State alumni value of their experience and want others to have the same access and opportunity that made a difference in their lives. There are more than 50,000 Metro State alumni. I invite all of you to join me in paving the way for future students.

Yours in partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Ellis '19".

Joseph Ellis '19 (Honorary)

Board Chair, Metro State University Foundation

Making a Gift

There are many ways to make a gift to the Metro State University Foundation. Choose what works best for you.

Online: Make a gift online with your credit card at www.metrostate.edu/give-now. You can make a one-time contribution or set up a monthly gift.

Check or EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer): Send a check for a one-time gift or a voided check to set up a monthly gift via electronic funds transfer (EFT).

Legacy Giving: You can make sure your family is taken care of while also making a significant gift to the Metro State University Foundation. To learn more about leaving a legacy, visit <https://metrostate.giftlegacy.com>.

News and Notes

Note: All towns are in Minnesota unless otherwise noted

Lutunji Abram '07, Minneapolis, was honored in *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* as a top female business and community leader. Lutunji, a fourth-generation baker, started Lutunji's Palate offering various cobblers, cakes, and baked goods. In addition, Lutunji partners with and supports local community organizations that focus on reaching out to young adults and formerly incarcerated men. A new brick-and-mortar location recently opened in South Minneapolis and sells baked goods along with grab-and-go food items.

Umar Ahmed '10, Minneapolis, founded and has received recognition for his company, Twiggy Fresh, which uses environmentally friendly toothbrushes to promote oral health. Umar started selling his toothbrushes in skyway space next to the IDS Center in Minneapolis and most recently received space at the Mall of America's Community Commons, a retail space for local businesses.

Marcia Anderson, '77, Golden Valley, director emerita of the Student-Directed Learning Office at Metro State University, was honored with the Morris T. Keeton Award, honoring leaders who have made contributions to experiential learning, access to postsecondary education for adult learners and students of color, and assessment of teaching and learning.

Chuck Aoki, '15, Lakewood, Colo., a three-time Paralympian and three-time Paralympic medalist (2 silver, 1 bronze) in Wheelchair Rugby; he most recently won the silver medal for Team USA at the Tokyo Paralympic games.

Kevin Asauskas '05, Woodbury, was recently promoted to EMS/Fire commander at Woodbury Public Safety. Kevin will oversee training, re-certification, awards and recognition, recruitment, public education, and community engagement for the EMS/Fire division.

Anne Atomssa, '17, Blaine, received recognition for her nonprofit Numaan, which supports single mothers and their children who were exposed to violence in their native countries. In just over a year, Anne has made two trips to Ethiopia, her native country, and completed a well project that now serves a village of 5,000. In addition, Anne's nonprofit has been able to supply other essential items to various regions in Ethiopia.



Todd Axtell '02, Saint Paul, retired from his role as Saint Paul Police chief. Todd served the Saint Paul Police Department for more than 30 years. In honor of his retirement and service, June 1, 2022, was declared Todd Axtell Day in the State of Minnesota.

James Barrett, '93, Minneapolis, is a User Experience designer at Jamf, a mobile device management company. James is in his 4th year volunteering at Impact Day, a local event that pairs tech experts with nonprofits.



Sandy Best, '88, Hudson, Wis., retired after 38 years of service in the Minnesota National Guard. Brigadier General Best is the first female general in the 166-year history of the Minnesota National Guard. In her time as general, she helped leaders across 54 states focus on diversity and inclusion to attract, recruit, and retain Guard workforce. She also developed the Women's Leadership Forum for the Minnesota National Guard.

Robert Blake, '16, Roseville, was recently featured in *Native News*. His renewable energy company, Native Sun Community Power Development, will be the beneficiary of federal funding provided to invest in and develop tribal infrastructure.

Phillip Boeke '92, Hugo, was recently named president of MME Group, Inc. Previously, Phil worked as director of Human Resources at MME Group, Inc.

Brielle Bredsten '13, Aitkin, recently joined *News Tribune* in Duluth as its business reporter. Prior to joining *News Tribune*, Brielle was a freelance writer.

Cheryl Carstens '04, Bloomington, is the manager of Curriculum Development at RMC Learning Solutions. Cheryl most recently volunteered as state secretary of MN NOW and serves with the nonprofit Girls are Powerful. Cheryl has a passion for equality and justice for our community.



John Lee Clark '16, Hopkins, recently had his essay, "Against Access" included in a new book from McSweeney Publishing. The book is an audio issue that focuses on making poetry and writing accessible to individuals who are blind and deaf.

Prince Corbett, '12, Saint Paul, recently received a two-year Bush Fellowship term. Prince is a formerly incarcerated individual who is determined to end the income and wealth gap for Black residents in the Twin Cities. Prince will serve as a leader for this large-scale change, he will build connections across community organizations and public systems.

Anna Dalrymple, '20, White Bear Lake, joined Essentia Health as a nurse practitioner in the Urgent Care department.



Jeffrey DeGree, '14, White Bear Lake, was recently promoted to manager at Mahoney CPAs and Advisors. Jeff provides tax and accounting services to real estate development and management companies.

Jean Carlos Diaz '18, Brooklyn Park, joined Wallin Education Partners as its marketing and alumni relations manager.

Rebecca Evan '18, Minneapolis, was recently appointed to the Governor's Equity and Inclusion Council. Rebecca is an assistant professor at Metro State University. In this role, Rebecca will advise and collaborate with the One Minnesota Council in achieving its goals to design, create, and implement effective and inclusive practices.

Tina Feigal, '90, Saint Paul, serves as director of Family Engagement at Anu Family Services. Tina has a TEDx Talk called "How to Stop Meltdowns and Gain Kids' Cooperation," released last December.

Tammy Fredrickson, '91, Burnsville, was recently hired as executive director of Business Services with Prior Lake-Save Area Schools. Tammy most recently served as budget director for Minneapolis Public School for nine years.



Dana Gray '99, Saint Paul, has been appointed to the National Association of Law Placement's (NALP) Board of Directors. She will serve as one of the organization's four at-large directors for 2022-2023.

Andrew Hallberg '14, New Prague, was recently welcomed as a patrol officer with the Edina Police Department. Andrew has worked in law enforcement in various capacities since 2011. Most recently, he served as an officer with the city of New Prague since 2019.

Ray Ramrup, '21, Saint Louis Park, was recently welcomed as a patrol officer with the Edina Police Department. Previously, Ray worked as a community service officer with the city of Plymouth since 2016.

Nathan Hamann, '14, Andover, was honored as American Legion Post 566 Outstanding Police Officer of the Year. Nathan has been with the Lino Lakes Police Department in various capacities since 2004. Nathan is recognized for his high quality of work and for his passion to help other officers gain skills.

Holly Heaser, '20, Lake Elmo, was recently elected to the board of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) in Washington County.

Jill Hillebregt, '18, Elk River, recently joined the board of the Middle Management Association (MMA) which is the supervisor union at the State of Minnesota.

Ellen Hufschmidt, '84, Minneapolis, recently published a book entitled "With Our Hands: A Guidebook to Ritual Blessings of the Dead."

Abdiaziz Ibrahim, '17, Saint Paul, recently received a two-year Bush Fellowship term. Abdiaziz is the founder of Immigrant Housing Solutions, which connects immigrant families and families of color, with resources to build economic mobility and find safe, decent, and affordable housing.

Chad Jaenke, '07, Peachtree City, Ga., was recently named chief information officer and senior vice president with Space Coast Credit Union. Chad has over 25 years of experience leading and mentoring international IT operations and security teams. In his new role, Chad will lead various IT divisions, which include operational systems, security, support and development.

Zachary Jansen, '13, Saint Paul, recently won first place in the Hollywood Jumbo Screenwriting Contest.

Barbara Johnson, '95, Saint Paul, retired registered nurse, helps with Mission Jamaica, where she supports setting up mobile health clinics. In addition, she enjoys spending time with her grandchild and family.

Rania Johnson, '00, Woodbury, recently received a two-year Bush Fellowship term. Raina will pursue a doctoral program dedicated to training Deaf researchers in linguistic, community and leadership work. Rania will also expand her national network of BIPOC Deaf leaders.

Katrina Jones, '18, Loretto, was recently hired as city clerk for the city of Osseo.

Zinet Kemal, '18, Minneapolis, recently was featured in Sahan Journal for her self-published children's book, "Proud in Her Hijab: A Story of Family Strength, Empowerment and Identity."

Lance Knuckles, '17, Saint Louis, Mo. Saint Louis Park, recently joined the Saint Louis Development Corporation as its director of Strategic Growth & Development. Lance has more than 20 years of community development experience, focusing on equitable development strategy and operational integration.

Adam Lares, '06, Farmington, was recently hired as Parks & Recreation director with the city of Inver Grove Heights. Adam spent 18 years with the City of Minneapolis Parks & Recreation Board.



Kyle Larsen, '00, Crystal, recently named chief financial officer for Children's Home Society of Minnesota. Kyle also serves as controller for Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota, an affiliate organization and partner in adoption.

Jeanne Lawrie, '94, Davenport, Fla., recently moved to central Florida and started a new job with Character.org leading their fundraising team.

Jeff Long, '03, Chanhassen, recently retired as the police chief with the Lakeville Police Department. Jeff was in this role for 8 years. Prior to working in Lakeville, Jeff worked in various capacities with the Edina Police Department.

Ryan Lybeck, '12, Pt Charlotte, Fla., has been working as director of operations for Ambitrans Ambulance since 2018. Recently, Ryan joined the Leadership Charlotte class of 2022, which brings together leaders of various businesses to learn more about services available in the community.

Omar Maklad, '19, Hudson, Wis., was recently promoted to police chief and assistant public safety director with the Woodbury Police Department.

Artiste Mayfield, '17, Minneapolis, founded two organizations: Sis-Stirs, which focuses on using the arts and conversation to bring together women for dialogue, healing, and action for change on issues like incarceration and drug addiction; and GrassRoots in Action, which focuses on engaging disenfranchised community members in voting.

Julia McColley, '14, Saint Paul, currently works as HR Coordinator for Saint Paul Public Schools. She recently became a board member with the Fort Road Federation District Council.

Kellace McDaniel, '07, Minneapolis, recently named police chief with the Brooklyn Center Police Department. Prior to this new role, Kellace served as lieutenant with the Hennepin County Sheriffs' Office.

Kelly Metz, '21, Pillager, recently joined the family medicine team at Lakewood Health System as a nurse practitioner. Metz sees patients at the Pillager and Staples clinics.

Emily Moe, '21, Stacy, joined Essential Health-Duluth as a nurse practitioner with the Urgent Care team. Her specialty is working in Urgent Care and enjoys the challenge of keeping people healthy via preventative medicine.

Mariam Mohamed, '15, Minneapolis, recently had one of her books, "Ayeeyo's Golden Rule," made into a short film aimed at representing Somali children. Mariam's books are about young Muslim children, especially young girls whom Mariam knows are underrepresented in literature and mainstream entertainment. Mariam's goal is to write more books and use this film as an opportunity to educate students.

Anne Murphy, '98, Prior Lake, was recently named vice president of Applications and Business Solutions at American Electric Power. In this role, Anne will be responsible for technology solutions for AEP business units and organizations.

Bryan Nelson, '85, San Antonio, Texas, was the recipient of the 2021 Sages of Clinical Services Award at UnitedHealth Group. This award is presented to clinical professionals who play important roles in the medical profession.

Harold Neville, '93, Nampa, Idaho, recently retired as CEO and superintendent of Canyon-Owyhee School Service Agency, an alternative and special education career-technical school. Harold had been in this role since 2010.

Steven Nolte, '97, Sioux Falls, S.D., recently joined the Board of Directors at the Hartford South Dakota Planning & Zoning Board.



Michael O'Connor, '92, Grant, recently received two project management awards for his work within and beyond Medtronic. The awards were from the Project Management Institute and the PMO Global Alliance. This is the first time a Medtronic employee has received either of these awards.

Marcus Owens, '04, Minneapolis, executive director of the African American Leadership Forum, was recently named to the Governor's Council on Economic Expansion. This council will study ways to leverage federal funding from the American Rescue Plan, to ensure that Minnesota uses its money effectively and fairly.

Maxine Pegors, '14, Bloomington, retired HR advisor of over 40 years. Maxine is volunteering part-time in retirement, utilizing her skills in HR for a local faith-based organization. In addition, she is serving as a PCA for a vulnerable adult.

Reggie Phoenix, '04, Newport, R.I., recently directed "A Raisin in the Sun," at Chesapeake Shakespeare Company. This is Reggie's directorial debut. He has also directed, "The Glass Menagerie," and "Spring Awakening" among others.

Jason Posel, '11, Hudson, Wis., was recently promoted to public safety director with the Woodbury Police Department. Posel began his career with the Woodbury Police Department in 1998.

Ray Ramrup, '21, Saint Louis Park, was recently welcomed as a patrol officer with Edina Police Department. Previously, Ray worked as a community service officer with the city of Plymouth since 2016

Lucky Rosenbloom, '97, Saint Paul, was recently inducted into the National Society of Leadership and Success. This induction recognizes both leadership and GPA above the national average.

Jose Sanchez, '21, Chicago, Ill. recently joined City Colleges of Chicago-Malcom X College as a college advisor. Previously, Jose worked as an academic advisor at Century College in Saint Paul.

Matthew Sanchez, '13, Saint Paul, recently featured in *MinnPost* highlighting how he used his own research to change how teachers reach kids experiencing trauma.

Yussuf Shafie, '12, Burnsville, founder of the Alliance Wellness Center, helps provide alcohol and drug treatment for individuals in the East African community. Yussuf was recently featured in the *Sahan Journal* about addiction problems within the community, and how the pandemic has impacted people, and how his organization has addressed those needs.

Nicole Sindelar, '13, Farmington, owner of Hastings Golf Club and Public House, a golf course, restaurant and event center. Nicole also serves on the board of trustees for Hastings Chamber of Commerce, YMCA, and Dakota County Historical Society.

Thomas Smith, '98, Saint Paul, recently joined the Minnesota Department of Public Safety as safety assistant commissioner. In this role, Thomas will be responsible for alcohol and gambling enforcement, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, and the Minnesota State Patrol.

Jake Spano, St. Louis Park, Metro State University faculty member teaching Executive Leadership, was recently appointed as director of Corporate Social Responsibility with Starkey Cares, the corporate responsibility program for the Starkey Hearing Foundation.

Laurel St. Marie Durushia, '22, Saint Paul, recently joined the Karen Organization of Minnesota as it's career pathways employment counselor. Prior to this role, Laurel has been in the financial service industry. Joining the nonprofit sector has been a dream for Laurel and she is excited to contribute to the Karen community.

Mandy Thao, '14, Saint Paul, recently hired as controller for CLUES.

David Tokkesdal, '10, Duluth, recently accepted for a doctorate in clinical psychology program at Wheaton University.

Brooke Trabant, '21, Blaine, recently joined the Rogers Police Department as a patrol officer. Previously, she was a police explorer with the Blaine Police Department and most recently worked as a community service officer with the Maple Grove Police Department.

Alfred Travis, '11, Minneapolis, recently completed graduate school for screenwriting study and is working on his first screenplay for the American Zoetrope Screenplay Contest.

Jillian Van Hefty, '03, Minnetonka, recently received the grand prize for the Anna Lefler Humorist-in-Residence Program. Jillian's submission was a compilation of humorous letters titled, "Dear Erma: Do Emotional Support Llamas Need Tuxedos?"



Mariah Wilberg, '17, Saint Paul, started a new role as senior director of U.S. Strategy and Ending the Epidemic at Prevention Access Campaign (PAC), a civic organization founded to end the dual epidemics of HIV and HIV-related stigma.



Helene Woods, '10, Monticello, recently had her artwork on exhibit at Gallery 120 of Inver Hills Community College. This collection of artwork was created by Helene by interviewing individuals who have experienced COVID-19 and created paintings exploring their narratives.

Lisa Xiong, '10, Saint Paul, joined Social Impact Strategies Group as a general consultant.

Rose Xiong, '13, Inver Grove Heights, was recently honored for her work as warrant officer who serves as Cyber Operations technician for the Minnesota National Guard.

Natalie Yang, '19, Saint Paul, recently became a full-time mental health therapist with Catholic Charities of Saint Paul and Minneapolis.

Samia Young, '17, Minneapolis, recently joined Fox Rothschild LLP as an associate in the Litigation Department. In this role, Samia helps clients resolve commercial disputes and provides advice on risk mitigation strategies.

Share your news

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

IN MEMORIAM

Beverly Aaron, '95,
Saint Louis Park

Page Appelbaum, '79,
Iowa City, Iowa

Carl Appelquist, '76,
Saint Paul

Rose Marie Bergherr, '83,
Bloomington

Dennis Blager,
Retired Faculty/Staff,
Edina

Marjorie Brennan, '91,
Minneapolis

Julie Brothen, '15,
Minneapolis

Kathleen Brown, '96,
Brooklyn Park

Una Craft, '75,
Woodbury

Marilyn Cunningham, '74,
Maplewood

Carolyn DeCoster, '76,
Sanibel, Florida

Ardys Denno, '74,
Saint Paul

Pamela Feldt, '91,
Saint Louis Park

Patrick Flahaven, '92,
Saint Paul

Karen Flood, '77,
Burnsville

Janet Froberg, '80,
Center City

Bernice Garbina, '90,
Saint Cloud

Paul Glaeser, '87,
Gibbon

Greg Grose, '77,
Dundas

Louise Hennen, '74,
Inver Grove Heights

Dorothy Hines, '93,
Brooklyn Park

Gary Hoffmeister, '85,
Lindstrom

Patrick Horan, '77,
White Bear Lake

Donald James,
Retired Faculty/Staff,
Saint Paul

Albert Jorgensen, '81,
Anoka

Ruth Kampa, '94,
Peoria, Ill.

June Kinsman, '84,
Excelsior

Piers Lewis,
Prof. Emeritus,
Saint Paul

Patrick Nelson, '96,
Minneapolis

George Pitlick, '78,
Ham Lake

Jon Ray, '21,
White Bear Lake

James Rogers, '93,
Inver Grove Heights

Margaret Rosenbower, '96,
Minneapolis

Ramona Sanders, '07,
Stillwater

Bergliot Schevenius, '73,
Minneapolis

James Schmidt, '76,
Oakdale

David Schwietz, '75,
Saint Paul

Eugene Sheridan, '75,
Rosemount

Macrina Sudbeck, '88,
Eden Prairie

Steve Trca, '95,
Ames, Iowa

Barbara Weinstock '05,
Richfield

James White, '76,
Bloomington

David Yantos, '81,
Minneapolis



Faculty Spotlight

Love your failures: Minnesota State Educator of the Year Alex Layne

on teaching more than filling in the blanks //////////////

By Matthew Spillum '06

Perspective change is a powerful motivator, according to Metro State Associate Professor Alex Layne, School of Communication, Writing, and the Arts, named one of Minnesota State's eight Educators of the Year for 2022. Prior to a maternity leave in 2019, Layne says, "I had always focused on having the most current resources and the best readings ... I felt like it was my job to expose (her students) to every possible thing, in whatever subject I was teaching." After her initial maternity leave, followed by a sabbatical, and then a second maternity leave, the latter two during the pandemic, Layne found her point of view shifting out of simple necessity. "I had two kids in 2 years, plus the pandemic, plus the sabbatical, so I really felt like I wasn't bringing my best self to the classroom. And what I realized was that the things I thought were important in my teaching weren't actually what the students found most valuable."



"Letting go of this loyalty to some version of academia that I had in my head—we need to teach (our students) how to be adults, to hit deadlines, to get to these certain standards. But now I'm living a life that isn't able to accommodate that either, so who am I to say 'no, you must do things like this?'"

Perhaps counterintuitively, Layne found instead that her students "read more when I assign less, and they watch more of my lecture videos if I have fewer minutes of them out there." As her own life circumstances forced her concern for hitting deadlines to "basically zero," she noticed that her students were "able to hit all their learning outcomes and do great by the end of the semester if I just backed off and didn't have a 'point of no return.' So it was really shocking that, when I thought I was doing my worst teaching, I got this award."

Layne remains keenly aware of the contextual circumstances that afford her this privilege, of course. "I'm not teaching nursing students who need to learn how to give insulin to a 9-year-old ... I'm teaching writers, technical communicators, and game design folks." Even so, she recognizes the shift in her own perspective as her circumstances more closely match those of many of her students. "Letting go of this loyalty to some version of academia that I had in my head—we need to teach (our students) how to be adults, to hit deadlines, to get to these certain standards. But now I'm living a life that isn't able to accommodate that either, so who am I to say 'no, you must do things like this?'"

Instead, Layne has found success with not only embracing more forgiving deadlines, but engaging students directly with where their own interests in the subject matter lie. As noted by Metro State President Ginny Arthur in Layne’s nomination, “Dr. Layne advocates and acts to make sure the students at Metro State have the opportunity to engage in high-impact educational practices that are not always readily accessible to adult and marginalized students. “She models innovation by letting students take the leadership and responsibility for their learning through the use of learning proposals.” Layne puts it this way,

“...in my head, I call it the customized class—I want my classes to be customizable to what the student wants to get out of it, while hitting the learning outcomes. I say to students ‘if this class isn’t going to serve you, pitch me something else, and I have maybe one student per class that does just that.”

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In keeping with the idea of the customizable class, naturally, the syllabus guidelines are a comfortable place for a lot of students. “For some students, the guidelines and deadlines are helpful,” says Layne. “If I’m teaching a document design class, and I say, ‘oh, just go do something cool in InDesign, that works for half the class, but some are going to say ‘I don’t know what those words mean,’ so in a lot of ways, it is about equity of experience.”

The idea of freeing the student from the fear of failure and constraints of the syllabus seems to have been the thing that set Layne apart in the eyes of those bestowing the award. “I teach in video games, right?” Says Layne. “In video games, you fail over and over, and each time, you learn. There are moments where you are kind of supposed to have failed because you are learning something that is challenging and that’s fine. The Board of Trustees picked out what stood out about my teaching, and one of those was the idea of failing not being the end of the line, but rather, ‘let’s figure out why you failed, and then either succeed or fail a little better and try again.”

Layne elaborates on the concept: “giving students the ability to approach a class or program from the perspective of what they care about: do they want to create the most perfect document? Do they care about working with a community partner to help fix something that fell apart? What do they want to learn the most? If a student says, ‘my project blew up,’ can I say ‘well, what is it you really want to do? Let’s boil down that original project to what was actually important to you and not worry about the other things?”

Providing students with opportunities to succeed in the face of either circumstance or the need to align personal/professional interest more accurately with course content, Layne can meld student passion with often necessary compassion, reflecting the innovative, student-driven spirit of Metro State University in her work. If any further evidence was necessary, Layne intends to use her award to help students in technical communications and interface design classes pay for their textbooks in the coming academic year.

From the Director



Recently I was giving a tour to one of our new student staff members. He comes to Metro State from his home country of Tanzania and arrived in Minnesota last January to begin taking classes in a graduate program. Since all his classes were virtual, he hadn't had much of an opportunity to tour the campus, so I was delighted to be able to show him around. When the tour reached the Great Hall, I was about to whisk him into the elevator when he stopped me. Looking up at the flags hanging from the ceiling, he expressed to me the feeling of being welcomed at seeing the flag of his home country prominently display at his new university. I asked him which flag was his, and he pointed to a bracelet around his wrist that he wears every day as a reminder of his home that matched one of the flags. It was clear to me that the flags in our Great Hall were important. To this student, they are a representation of the belonging that we are working to create for all the members of our university community. It was a very powerful moment of understanding for me.

By contrast, I feel at home at the Metro State Saint Paul campus. As an Eastsider transplanted to the suburbs a few years ago, returning to Metro State as a staff member in 2015 felt like a homecoming. A short Metro Transit ride from the house where I grew up, everything about the neighborhood feels like home. But when I was a student, as a first-generation college student,

I didn't fully believe I belonged, and through the care of my professors, eventually, I came to believe that I did belong in college and that I was included at Metro State.

The feeling of belonging to a community is central to true inclusion and is not a concept to be taken lightly. When a person feels like they belong, they can shine. When they feel like they are included, they can be fearless in the pursuit of their dreams. When a student feels valued for the gifts, talents, and life experience they already possess, they can grow to reach the fullest expression of their potential.

As the alumni relations director, I want you to know that my purpose is to extend the relationship between alumni and the university. You continue to be part of our community. You are welcomed and you belong at Metro State. I invite you to be an active part of our community and join us in making Metro State a place where we all belong.

Stay Well,

Kristine Hansen'07
Director of Alumni Relations

Stay Connected

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

Follow us on Facebook: Metropolitan State University Alumni Relations

Connect with us on LinkedIn: Metropolitan State U Alumni Relations

Follow us on Twitter: MetroStateAlumniMN @MetroAlum_MN

Volunteer to connect with students and alumni through Metro State Connect our new space for making connections with members of the Metro State community. Sign up at <https://metrostate.peoplegrove.com>

Calendar

Ongoing Wednesdays when classes are in session, 11:30 a.m.–1 p.m.

The Career Center Presents Résumé Drop-in Sessions

Résumé drop-in sessions are a great place to get started for both students and alumni. There is no appointment or RSVP needed to attend. Career Center staff and one of our Center for Academic Excellence writing tutors will be standing by, ready to offer suggestions and ideas on taking your résumé to the next level. Visit the Career Center online for more information. <https://www.metrostate.edu/calendar/resume-drop-in-sessions>

Every Third Tuesday

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

December 10

Metro State University Commencement Ceremony Exercise, Minneapolis Convention Center, 1301 Second Avenue South, Minneapolis.

December 23

Make your year-end gift for 2022. Make an online gift any time at www.metrostate.edu/give/give-now.

January 23 through February 23, 2023

The Unexpected Confluence of Elements (Book arts by five local artists) Saint Paul Campus, Gordon Parks Gallery. Gallery hours are Monday–Thursday, 11 a.m.–7 p.m.

March 27 through April 13, 2023

Student Salon 2023 (artwork by Studio Arts majors) Saint Paul Campus, Gordon Parks Gallery. Gallery hours are Monday–Thursday, 11 a.m.–7 p.m.

April 24 through June 22, 2023

Once and Forever (Japanese sculptor Mayumi Amada addresses the life cycle of water) Saint Paul Campus, Gordon Parks Gallery. Gallery hours are Monday–Thursday, 11 a.m.–7 p.m.

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



My Dearm—Going Back to Soil
packing foam, glue, paper, brads
Mayumi Amada



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MINNESOTA STATE

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A member of Minnesota State*



Falling in Minnesota
crochet thread, wire
Mayumi Amada