

UOE Broadens Access to the University

One of the recommendations made by the Provost's Committee on University Outreach, as outlined in its 1993 report, *University Outreach at Michigan State University: Extending Knowledge to Serve Society* (pp. 38-39), was that "Michigan State University should enhance the awareness of external constituents regarding its outreach activities, and then help them gain efficient access to these offerings." This mandate is directly in line with UOE's administrative responsibility to reinforce and streamline delivery of the University's primary engagement message: We are here as a resource for you.

As we saw in the first section of this issue of *The Engaged Scholar Magazine*, UOE has worked hard to create and sustain innovative research partnerships and to establish place-based networks capable of bringing together existing programs and organizations to tackle community issues systemically.

In this section we look at programs with a broader invitation, in many cases one that goes out to the general public rather than to academics and professionals with specific expertise.

Introducing New Models for Successful Teaching and Learning:

THE MSU MUSEUM Collaborations

By Matt Forster

As it is traditionally understood, the responsibility of a museum is to gather and house various collections or artifacts—cultural or scientific—and exhibit a small portion of those collections for the edification of the museum-going public. Visitors expect a museum to draw on these collections and present the public with a changing schedule of exhibits. Lora Helou, interim director of the MSU Museum since 2013, said that this museum aims to challenge some of these expectations and expand the idea of what a museum does and can do. "We're expanding into models for successful learning," she said. "It's not exclusive to our own artifacts anymore."



Lora Helou, interim director of the MSU Museum

Helou's efforts have done just that; they have also created opportunities for the Museum to partner with MSU researchers to create new kinds of exhibits and collections. As the museum reaches out, imagining new ways to meet its mission, new partners have come on board. In turn, these partners have created new models for collaboration and given researchers the opportunity to think differently about their work, broaden their audience, and find partners around the world for furthering their knowledge.

With its mission to explore both the natural and cultural history of Michigan, the Great Lakes, and the world, the MSU Museum is in a unique position

to work with researchers from various disciplines. What follows are two examples of projects that the museum has worked on with MSU professors from the colleges of Education and Natural Science.

Deep Play

Not many people hear about the various research interests of professors in disciplines outside their own. A biologist measuring photosynthesis will rarely keep up on the engaged scholarship of a philosopher working with indigenous populations on responses to climate change. By working with professors from every college on campus, the museum creates a space where these diverse research interests can be shared with others on campus and with a larger public audience.

This past year saw the first ever collaboration between MSU's College of Education and the Michigan State University Museum. Dr. Punya Mishra, professor of educational psychology and educational technology and director of the Master of Arts in Educational Technology program, worked with the Museum to co-produce an exhibit titled, "Deep Play: Creativity in

Math and Art Through Visual Wordplay" (deep-play.com/creative). Displayed in the Creativity-Art-Science Gallery, the exhibit explored the world of ambigrams—stylized word forms that hold different meanings when looked at from different perspectives.

The playfulness of ambigrams can be deceiving. Underneath the fun exterior, there are deeper discussions to be had about math, language, and human perception. Ambigrams have interested Mishra for years, and he has found that the practice of creating and interpreting ambigrams reveals the importance of play in the process of learning. The process of creating an ambigram is a highly engaging activity that challenges the viewer to search for solutions. These solutions can be elegant, and they are often surprising.

Ambigrams are interesting in the ways they engage different disciplines, in particular mathematics and design. "I am not a mathematician, or artist, or designer, though I work at the intersection of these disciplines," Mishra said. "This exhibit helps

present the nature of our research. It's transdisciplinary." By getting outside the College of Education and exhibiting at the museum, that transdisciplinary nature can be shared across disciplines.

Typically, ambigrams are displayed in two dimensions, and in the past, Dr. Mishra has published ambigrams in journal articles and on his Deep Play website (punyamishra.com). The museum exhibit, however, allowed visitors to experience ambigrams in three dimensions. This not only made the exhibit more interactive for visitors; it challenged Mishra to consider new ways of engaging an audience with his research.

"The exhibit puts a very public face on our deeper research interest," said Mishra, "which is learning and the importance of play." Not only were museum guests seeing his work with ambigrams; the exhibit also led to an interview on Michigan Radio's *Stateside with Cynthia Canty*.

In many ways, Mishra's interest in ambigrams is part of a wider philosophy. He finds them interesting so he looks for ways that this interest might enrich his teaching. It's something he encourages his students to do, especially in their role as future educators. "When you look at educators who have won teacher awards, you find that they bring their personal interests to their teaching," said Mishra. "Their avocations inform their vocations."

To create the exhibit, Mishra worked closely with Sandra Sawaya, a doctoral student in educational psychology, and Teresa Goforth, exhibitions manager for the MSU Museum. Both Mishra and Sawaya credit Goforth as being an irreplaceable help preparing the exhibit. She helped them navigate their way through the new territory of museum exhibitions.

Sawaya became interested in ambigrams in a design class taught by Mishra, where she became intrigued by the ways design could be used to communicate and problem-solve.



Pamela Rasmussen, MSU integrative biologist and assistant curator at the MSU Museum.

This interest led to her participation with the museum exhibit. "This experience helped me think of design as an effective, powerful, and engaging way to represent ideas," Sawaya said. "It helped me think of design as a tool to create meaning and elicit reactions and emotions from others."

AVoCet

With the ubiquity of digital media, the 21st century poses several challenges to museums. People expect more sophisticated displays, more interaction, more bells, more whistles. At a deeper level, however, the digital revolution offers curators a whole new way to look at collecting. Not all exhibits require walls and a roof, and collections can more easily be shared with an international audience. In fact, some collections make it possible for individuals around the world to participate in the co-creation of knowledge.

A major activity of ornithological research is the determination of how many bird species exist. The task is not always straightforward, and many birds may long remain considered a sub-species (and therefore of lesser importance to conservation) until enough data emerges to challenge that classification. Birds are identified by a number of

characteristics, including size, coloring and plumage, habitat, and habits. One important identifier is bird sounds or vocalizations.

Researchers and amateur birders have been recording bird calls for generations, but the technology to record, store, and widely share these calls has not been available until recently. New technology and web-based social networks have made way for sites like

xeno-canto (xeno-canto.org), which allows users to share their own bird recordings online. These sites, however, are like Wikipedia in that they rely on knowledgeable users to verify information and query sketchy contributions. Like a Wikipedia entry, the data on these sites are generally accurate, but often do not provide enough information on how identifications were made for the needs of someone trying to use them for scientific purposes.

What had been missing was a database of more researcher-qualified recordings, assembled with significant contextual information, and cataloged so that recordings could be cited in research papers. To answer that need Dr. Pamela Rasmussen, MSU integrative biologist and assistant curator at the MSU Museum, helped launch the Avian Vocalizations Center (AVoCet) in 2008, building off the collection of field recordings that she had been making for her own research. As expressed on the AVoCet website (avocet.zoology.msu.edu), "Project AVoCet aims to provide a global database of well-documented, downloadable bird sounds in aid of environmental and ornithological research,

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The Deep Play exhibit at the MSU Museum.

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THE MSU MUSEUM Collaborations



Photo courtesy of Pam Rasmussen

The Sichuan Bush-warbler is a new species recently discovered by Dr. Pam Rasmussen and a team of ornithologists.

conservation, education, and the identification and appreciation of birds and their habitats.”

An important part of providing this global database is gathering quality data. “We need recordings that can serve as baseline data and can be independently verified,” Rasmussen said. “So uploading recordings takes a lot of time. There’s a lot of information that goes along with each recording.”

Since its creation, the database has grown to almost 18,000 recordings of almost 4,700 bird species, much of the work being done by student workers and volunteers here at MSU. One of those students was Joseph Shemanski, who came to work with Rasmussen as part of the Professorial Assistantship Program. His primary research was a project that looked at the vocalizations of two Southeast Asian crows. When he wasn’t up to his ears in sonograms of *Corvus enca* and *Corvus macrorhynchos*, he helped prepare recordings for the AVoCet database.

“My experience with AVoCet allowed me to interpret sonograms, which are visual representations of sound, in a program called Raven, with great efficiency,” Shemanski said. “I was able to see sound and then hear it. I could predict what a call would sound like just by looking at it.” Shemanski credits the experience with a new interest in the vocalizations of birds. He’s also begun wondering more about vocal learning and how it differs between language regions in Europe.

These recordings have been used by researchers around the world. Being able to have confidence in the data—being able to identify the recorder and the context of the recording—has led to AVoCet recordings being used in a number of journal articles. 🌱

Opening Doors for Students With Academic Aptitude: Gifted and Talented Education

By Matt Forster

MSU’s Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs offer gifted students in Michigan the opportunity to access accelerated learning with programs that run the gamut from a crime scene investigation camp to Future DOcs, which works in collaboration with the College of Osteopathic Medicine to get middle school students excited about careers in the STEM fields.



Photos courtesy of GATE

Several of the GATE programs have been successfully challenging gifted students for decades. The **Mathematics-Science-Technology (MST)** program, for example, is a two-week summer program for academically talented students who are currently in 7th through 9th grades. The residential or commuter program is conducted on the East Lansing campus of Michigan State

and is designed for academically talented students selected from Michigan and across the nation. Referred to as MST@MSU, the program was launched in 1990.

MST@MSU relies on faculty from numerous departments, from the MSU Music School to the National Superconducting Cyclotron Laboratory. Students are able to schedule their own math-, science-, or technology-based classes and an enrichment workshop to create their own experience. When classes are done for the day, the students are supervised by resident advisors who help make the social aspects of the two-week program successful.

Two programs that run throughout the year are **CHAMP** (Cooperative Highly Accelerated Mathematics Program) and **ISHALL** (Intensive Study in Humanities, Arts, Language and Literature). Rather than bringing students to Michigan State, these bring Michigan State to students. Through CHAMP and ISHALL, students take just two years to complete the four-year Michigan high school mathematics or English curriculum. The accelerated curricula were developed in collaboration with Michigan State faculty, many of whom continue to teach in the program.



GATE works with Ingham County Intermediate School District as well as other districts in Michigan to offer satellite classes. These have included and continue to include Memphis, Newaygo, Lapeer, and Mason. Most recently the programs have become available to students in southeast Michigan with satellite classes being offered in Novi.

The GATE website (gifted.msu.edu) offers a complete listing of the programs for gifted and talented students. 🌱

Capitalizing on a Cultural Resource:

THE MSU FEDERAL CREDIT UNION INSTITUTE FOR Arts and Creativity at Wharton Center

By Matt Forster

Michigan State University’s Wharton Center for Performing Arts brings world-class theatre to mid-Michigan with a regular schedule of concerts, Broadway shows, and other live performances. The MSU Federal Credit Union Institute for Arts and Creativity at Wharton Center capitalizes on this cultural resource to engage the community in new and meaningful ways. This translates into programs aimed at different populations, from students to area residents.

One of those programs is the **Young Playwrights Festival**, which helps identify and encourage new playwrights while they are still in high school. Students at area high schools are encouraged to submit their original one-act plays. The entries are whittled down to 12 semi-finalists, and the best six entries of those are produced for the stage.

Bert Goldstein has been director of the MSU Federal Credit Union Institute for Arts and Creativity since it was established in 2008. One of his first projects was adding a mentoring component to the Young Playwrights Festival, partnering the six finalists with theatre professionals experienced in preparing scripts for the stage, who can help them polish their work. Finalists and semi-finalists each receive a small cash prize, but the real prize is seeing their works performed for an audience.

Another way the Institute for Arts and Creativity develops talent is through the **ImaGen** program. In collaboration with MSU’s Department of Theatre in the College of Arts and Letters, the program pairs students—from high school through graduate school—with Broadway professionals to produce musical theatre at Wharton. The inaugural production this year was the staged concert, *Chess*, which played in the Pasant Theatre in March 2015. With only a week to prepare, the participants’ final performance was a stripped-down production that served to highlight the story and the show’s incredible music.

Wharton Center’s collaborations with the Department of Theatre and local high school theatre programs that recognize and develop theatrical talent are a natural extension of its role as a regional cultural center. However, the MSU-FCU Institute for Arts and Creativity also reaches out to other academic units and to discrete groups within the broader community. Many of these relationships are developed through the Institute’s **Artists-in-Residence** program.

Two of those artists are Stuart Pimsler and his wife, Suzanne Costello. They are the team behind Stuart Pimsler Dance and Theater, which, for the past several years, has partnered with MSU’s College of Osteopathic Medicine to offer a workshop titled, “Transforming the Doctor-Patient Relationship: Telling the Story.” For three days,

medical students and faculty take off their shoes, dance, draw, and write their way to a better understanding of the human element in medicine, especially gaining insight into how to approach and relate to people who are suffering both physically and emotionally.

“The program is a natural fit for the College of Osteopathic Medicine,” said Goldstein. “The doctors at the college are already very holistic in their approach to medicine.” According to Goldstein, word of mouth has played a big role in the success of the workshop here at MSU. “The first group of students who went through the program were excited by the experience and told other students,” he said. “Professors have learned a lot too, and each year sees more people looking to participate.”

Another artist-in-residence has been David Gonzalez. A master storyteller, Gonzalez weaves together music, comedy, and visuals to fully engage audiences in his narrative. Several years ago, Rubén Martinez, director of the Julián Samora Research Institute, talked with Goldstein about ways the MSU-FCU Institute for Arts and Creativity could engage more with Lansing’s Hispanic community. The storytelling work of Gonzalez addresses that need. While at MSU, he not only works with students on campus, he partners with local schools, performs at the Cristo Rey Community Center, and participates in the classes of Sheila Contreras, associate professor in the Department of English.

These are just a few examples of the many ways that the MSU-FCU Institute for Arts and Creativity broadens community access to the University. Visit the Institute’s website (whartoncenter.com/education-engagement) for a list of current programs for students, educators, and families. 🌱

Photo courtesy of MSUFCU Institute for Arts and Creativity at Wharton Center



David Gonzalez engages the community with storytelling.

Supporting Exploration of Arts and Cultures:

THE MSU China Experience By Matt Forster

With a population of nearly 1.4 billion people across 3.7 million square miles of East Asia, China boasts a rich and wildly diverse cultural heritage. That heritage is the focus of the China Experience, an 18-month exploration of the arts and culture of the world's most populous country. This MSU-themed year is an example of how campus-based networks create valuable experiences for students and broaden community access to the University's cultural resources.



Photo courtesy of the MSU Museum

The China Experience was officially launched in February 2015 with events timed to coincide with the Chinese New Year and the 10th anniversary of the MSU China

Initiative. The latter was commissioned by President Lou Anna K. Simon to expand the University's presence and outreach in China through academic, research, and economic development programming, and strategic global, national, and local alliances.

Continuing through August 2016, there will be events that celebrate Chinese culture all over the MSU campus. Kurt Dewhurst is the director of arts and cultural initiatives for University Outreach and Engagement and co-chairs the China thematic year for the MSU Cultural Engagement Council (CEC). "The China Experience," he said, "will showcase both signature events such as art exhibits and musical performances, and more informal events where Chinese students can share their culture with others on campus."

The first spate of events has already attracted a lot of attention. One of the first was the "Future Returns: Contemporary Art from China" exhibit at the MSU Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum. The exhibit was on display throughout the winter. There was a regular schedule of tours led by Chinese-speaking docents for those who wanted the full immersion experience.

In February, the Chinese Undergraduate Students Association and the Chinese Students and Scholars Association at MSU hosted a 2015 MSU Spring Festival. Held in the Breslin Center, this event featured traditional Chinese music, performances, and food. In March, visitors to the Communication Arts and Sciences Building discovered the award-winning advertising work of Chinese students and professionals on display. There have also been concerts and TED-style talks.

Behind the China Experience stands not one organization, but rather an entire campus-based network dedicated to broadening access to the University's cultural resources, MSU's Cultural

Engagement Council. The CEC was established in 2007 to explore ways that deans and directors from various units on campus could gather to share their own activities with a wider audience and then work together to promote arts and culture to the greater community. This network of leaders is assisted by the Cultural Engagement Council Communicators, which is in turn composed of individuals from each unit charged with disseminating information to their departmental colleagues.

The China Experience is only the most recent of the MSU-themed years spearheaded by the Cultural Engagement Council. The first was the Year of Arts and Culture in 2007. This was the council's first big effort, and University Outreach and Engagement (UOE) helped launch the initiative with financial resources and leadership. The Year of Arts and Culture was heralded by a campus-wide awareness campaign, with banners and flyers and stories in all of the campus's major publications.

Themed years are intended to meet the CEC's core goals: strengthening ties to ensure lifelong engagement, enhancing the teaching and research capacity of campus units, and increasing the visibility of cultural resources. These goals spring from a conviction that the cultural contributions of MSU are more than trivial. Cultural enterprise not only benefits student and community well-being; it not only adds value to the learning experience; it also proves to be an economic driver that can dramatically impact a local community and region.

There are a number of reasons to focus on China this year. China's influence has been growing and is felt around the world, economically and geopolitically. Economists anticipate that China will soon be the largest and most important consumer market on the planet. There is, consequently, an increasing awareness of and interest in Chinese culture.



Another factor is the growing number of Chinese students on the MSU campus. In 2013-2014, more than 5,000 students from China attended Michigan State. That represents well more than a twofold increase from 2009-2010. These students not only want to experience American culture, they want to share their own heritage with their classmates. This presents opportunities which benefit everyone.

According to Elizabeth Matthews, assistant director in MSU's Office for International Students and Scholars, the China Experience broadens access for both domestic and international students to arts and culture. "China and Chinese culture, as a shared point of interest, opens opportunities for Chinese international students to impact the campus and community through culture-sharing," she said. "At the same time, it provides opportunities for Chinese students to learn more about their home country through arts and culture."

The China Experience not only gives these students the opportunity to share an important piece of their identity with the community, it also connects them with local Chinese organizations like the Greater Lansing Chinese Association. These connections help them integrate into the community, both on campus and in the greater Lansing area.



Sponsoring Public Festivals:

SCIENCE, JAZZ, AND FOLK ARTS FESTIVALS

The MSU Science Festival is a multi-day celebration of science, fueled by curiosity, wonder, and discovery, held every year in April on the MSU campus and at participating sites around the state. Event formats include demonstrations, lectures, discussion panels, hands-on activities, exhibits, and guided tours.

The Summer Solstice Jazz Festival kicks off East Lansing's summer cultural calendar every year in June. The Festival is presented by the City of East Lansing, the Wharton Center for Performing Arts, and the MSU College of Music, and is funded by dozens of sponsors, including University Outreach and Engagement at MSU and the MSU Federal Credit Union.

The Great Lakes Folk Festival showcases the traditional cultural treasures of the nation's Upper Midwest and a sampling of the best of traditional artists from around the country and the world. This unique fusion of art fair, music festival, county fair, multi-ethnic festival, and celebration of cultural heritage is held annually in August in downtown East Lansing. MSU collaborators include the MSU Museum's Michigan Traditional Arts Program, University Outreach and Engagement, the International Studies Program, and WKAR. The City of East Lansing and provincial and state folk arts programs of the Great Lakes region are also partners.

Developing and Maintaining Online Directories of MSU Resources:

Catalog Websites

MSU Statewide msustatewide.msu.edu

MSU's Office of University Outreach and Engagement maintains the MSU Statewide website, an online catalog of more than 1,000 programs and services that connect MSU resources with Michigan's professionals and practitioners working in government, business and industry, education, agriculture, nonprofit organizations, health care, law, and the media. Resources profiled on the site are searchable by keyword, topic and subtopic, program type, date, and location. Users can find professional development opportunities, such as conferences, online courses and certificate programs; medical and clinical services; publications, software, and databases; expert consulting; and special events, such as performances and exhibits.

Spartan Youth Programs spartanyouth.msu.edu

The Spartan Youth Programs (SYP) website is a popular web portal that displays a wide range of exciting opportunities for pre-K through 12th grade students to improve their knowledge and skills in specific subject areas. With over 200 listings, the SYP is the comprehensive source for finding resources in agriculture, art, business, computers, engineering, math, music, science, sports, and writing. The SYP can be searched for summer and school year programs, opportunities to earn college credit, residential experiences on the MSU campus, programs that include financial assistance, and study abroad possibilities. Precollege programs are an excellent way for students to explore career possibilities while being introduced to the college environment.

"Each page...is a concrete example of how MSU translates new ideas into practical knowledge that improves the quality of life for Michigan residents."

LOU ANNA K. SIMON
PRESIDENT, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY