

# DEVELOPMENTS

FOR DONORS AND FRIENDS OF MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

FALL 2024

WOW! I WANT TO RESEARCH THIS...

## WHERE *Curiosity* IS LIMITLESS

*Treasures within  
MSU Libraries  
Special Collections*

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# DEVELOPMENTS

**FOR DONORS AND FRIENDS OF MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY**

*MSU Developments, published two times each year, is devoted to the inspiration and impact of private philanthropy at Michigan State University.*

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COMING TOGETHER AS ONE: Since the dawn of the civil rights movement, Spartans have heroically led the charge for dedicated spaces on campus that support the needs and well-being of their communities. This winter, students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members — and their trailblazing counterparts from generations past — will see their efforts come to fruition in a new way with the opening of MSU's first freestanding Multicultural Center. Prominently located at the corner of North Shaw and Farm lanes, the 34,000-square-foot facility will make for a culturally rich and welcoming environment that promotes belonging and inspires intellectual curiosity among students and their peers to learn and share experiences with one another.

# new DEVELOPMENTS

## CONTINUOUS GENEROSITY, UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

*“I have a great peace of mind knowing that I will be able to help future MSU students like me.”*

In 2024, more than 80 students received assistance from the Unconditional Love Fund because of donors like Ronald Moore.

Thanks to gifts to the Unconditional Love Fund, the Gender and Sexuality Campus Center can provide immediate financial assistance to help students in need—assistance to cover living expenses that support their health, wellness and safety.

“I do not have a financial support system in place to fall back on because my parents do not accept that I am queer,” says one very grateful recipient. “This fund was just what I needed during my lowest point this year.”

Ronald’s generosity toward MSU began in 1999 when he made his first gift to the College of Communication Arts and Sciences. Since then, he has made gifts every year to a number of areas that support students.

Ronald wanted to ensure that MSU students who are struggling with their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression have a safe place to go—especially students of color.

Having earned three degrees from MSU—a bachelor’s, a master’s in counseling, and a master’s in labor and industrial relations—he says he will always be grateful for his MSU education, which provided him with the skill set to have a successful career in human resources. That included 26 years at the Hewlett Packard Company (HP) across several roles based in five different cities. He took an early retirement from HP and spent seven years as vice president of HR at Safe Horizon, a New York City-based nonprofit.

His student years were a mixture of experiences. As an African American student in the 1970s, he dealt with being a minority. The saving grace was the support and camaraderie with other Black students, who numbered less than 4% of MSU’s student population at that time. He also joined a fraternity and still enjoys friendships created during those years.

But he lived with a secret: He was gay and didn’t want to be. A therapist tried to help him become

heterosexual, an acceptable goal at the time because homosexuality was considered a behavioral disorder. It didn’t work.

Next, he joined a campus religious group of conservative Christians. The minister would lay hands on him to “pray the gay away.” It didn’t work.

Later, he found an inclusive church, embraced his sexuality, marched in many Pride Parades and had no intention of altering his orientation.

He says seeing the dedication and genuine support offered to MSU’s students today through the Gender and Sexuality Campus Center has been an inspiring experience.

In addition to his annual gifts, Ronald has made a future gift to MSU from his estate, which will support programs and initiatives that deal with racism in the LGBTQIA2S+ community and homophobia among people of color.

“I have a great peace of mind knowing that I will be able to help future MSU students like me,” says Ronald.

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**LEARN MORE** about support for students by contacting Associate Director, Student Life and Engagement Danielle Matlick at [matlickd@msu.edu](mailto:matlickd@msu.edu) or by calling (517) 353-2116.



For 25 years, alumnus Ronald Moore has supported initiatives to help students, including Black students and those in the LGBTQIA2S+ community, and their allies.

## A BOOST FOR STUDENTS WHO BUILD BUSINESSES

*Spartan parents create Kaufman Family Scholarship*

The Detroit Salsa Company and its founder, MSU student Finn Gomez, are thriving thanks to hard work and dedication, the support of the Burgess Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and, most recently, a boost from the Kaufman Family Scholarship.

The scholarship, established by Spartan parents Brandon and Barbara Kaufman, supports exemplary student venturers working with the Burgess Institute as they build startups and nonprofits focused on social good—a profile that Finn most certainly fits.

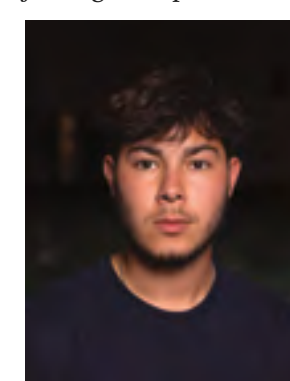
Finn, the 2024 recipient of the scholarship, started Detroit Salsa Company in middle school with his family as an homage to their heritage, which is deeply rooted in Detroit. The original recipe was created by his great grandmother, who, in addition to cooking for churches, schools, festivals and immigrant families for her entire adult life, was a Detroit entrepreneur and business owner in her own right.

Now in his fourth year at MSU, Finn is managing a busy—and diverse—schedule of classes, extracurriculars and hands-on learning experiences, all while continuing to run his company. In fact, some of his professors have become his clients.

The support he has received, and the resources he’s been able to access at MSU, Finn says, have been invaluable in helping his entrepreneurship skills, and the Detroit Salsa Company, grow.

“It’s not just about the money,” Gomez emphasizes, “but about the belief and support that comes with it.”

The belief and support from the Kaufmans is genuine. Entrepreneurs themselves, Brandon and Barb Kaufman aren’t alums, but their sons Brad and Blake are, and they got to know the university through them, joining the Spartan Parent Ambassador Council.



The Kaufman Family Scholarship supports excellent students like Finn Gomez—founder of the Detroit Salsa Company.

“We’re the kind of parents who have always been involved in public education as our kids have been growing up,” Barb says. “So when our kids came to MSU, we looked at it as a new opportunity to get involved and to support the kind of teaching we want to see happen.”

That kind of teaching, unsurprisingly, is the kind of hands-on learning that enables students like Finn to realize their entrepreneurial dreams.

“The scholarship is already being used to expand our operations,” Finn says, “allowing us to double our business by adding necessary equipment like a new refrigerator.”

Last year, the company reached 60,000 units of salsa sold.

This expansion, Finn says, isn’t just about growth. It’s about sustainability. It’s about being able to continue his family’s legacy—and carry out the Kaufman’s legacy, too—for years to come.

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**LEARN MORE** about support for the Burgess Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation by contacting Associate Director of Development Christopher Sell at [sellchri@msu.edu](mailto:sellchri@msu.edu) or by calling (517) 490-2138.



Spartan parents Barb and Brandon Kaufman.



## MSU ENDOWMENT REPORTS STRONG PERFORMANCE

**M**SU's endowment posted strong investment returns for the fiscal year ending June 2024 of 15.1% year-over-year and a value of \$4.4 billion. The five- and ten-year annualized returns were 12% and 9.3%, respectively.

"A strong endowment allows Michigan State University to provide more opportunities for our students and expands our impact in research and public service," says President Kevin M. Guskiewicz, Ph.D. "The endowment is integral to the institution's annual financial picture and is a cornerstone of our vision to enhance the academic experience and drive innovation."

MSU's endowment funds represent endowed gifts to the university and the university's long-term investments. The continued growth of the endowment is made possible by donor generosity and sound management.

Over the past five years, the endowment has provided more than \$1.13 billion from investment income to provide critical funding for scholarships and endowed professorships, and it helps alleviate certain financial burdens on the institution such as deferred maintenance costs. It also supports faculty research and academic programs, ensuring MSU remains at the forefront of innovation and discovery.

**LEARN MORE** at [go.msu.edu/endowments](https://go.msu.edu/endowments)



Current Rohini Desai Mulchandani Fellowship award recipient Ameen Mohamed Ziyad is researching blueberry preservation.

## FROM SCHOLARSHIP TO SPICE: A LEGACY OF GENEROSITY IN FOOD SCIENCE

*Trailblazer empowers future leaders through fellowships*

BY TRUMAN LANGLOIS

**R**ohini Desai Mulchandani was just 19 when she arrived in East Lansing from India in 1964 to pursue a master's degree. Her parents supported her financially for the first year, but funding for the rest of her education was "up to her."

If she maintained a B or better GPA in her first year, the food science department promised Rohini a research assistantship for year two. She did, and the rest is history. A second year at MSU and three years at The Ohio State University, all funded by research assistantships, helped Rohini finance her American education.

She says life on the MSU campus was a wonderful introduction to life in America, and she cherishes those memories to this day. After MSU, she earned her doctorate in dairy technology from OSU, started her career at Abbott Laboratories in Columbus, Ohio, and received notable awards for her outstanding achievements and scientific contributions.

After retiring from Abbott, she founded Arjay Gourmet Foods LTD, a specialty food business that developed a seasoning blend (garam masala) and 13 varieties of award-winning chutneys, garnering her the nickname "the Chutney Lady." Indian-inspired cookies and snacks were added to the mix of offerings over time.

Inspired by her own experiences, Rohini first documented an estate gift to support the Rohini Desai Mulchandani Fellowship for Food Science at MSU. Wanting to experience the joy and impact of giving within her lifetime, she established a second graduate award to help four internationally engaged food science students pursue master's degrees at MSU, in gratitude for the four years of financial assistance she received from two universities. The first of these four students graduated in April.

Ameen Mohamed Ziyad, a current Mulchandani Fellowship recipient, says the support inspires him to achieve academic excellence and to make the most of the many opportunities offered at MSU: meeting new people, exploring new fields and developing the core skills for competency in the food industry.

"I do hope to do the same that she has done for me," he says.

**LEARN MORE** about support for the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources by contacting Senior Director of Development Jeffrey Martin at [mart2767@msu.edu](mailto:mart2767@msu.edu) or by calling (517) 432-1576.



Alumna Rohini Desai Mulchandani was recently recognized with the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Dean's Pinnacle of Excellence Award.



A bench on the Red Cedar, named in Daniel Renzulli's honor, sits under the memorial tree for students who passed in the 2018 academic year.



The Renzulli family: Peter, Daniel, Meredith and Lori.

# MAKING CONNECTIONS, HELPING OTHERS

## *Renzulli engineering endowment supports social good*

BY LOIS FURRY

Students often dream that all their hard-won college knowledge will help them make a positive impact in the world after graduation.

Thanks to the generous spirit of a donor and her family, some MSU engineering students are getting that chance even before they toss their caps.

The Peter and Daniel Renzulli Spartan Engineering Endowment Fund honors a father and son who were known for meaningful accomplishments. The fund supports charitable institutions that may not have the budgets to sponsor capstone project teams, connecting them with the talent and expertise of MSU engineering students eager to make a difference.

Capstone projects are the headliners at the College of Engineering's Design Day, a premier event held at the end of every semester where hundreds of students showcase their engineering prowess. Their projects represent months of working in teams to find solutions to engineering challenges brought to them by the college's corporate and nonprofit partners.

The Renzulli fund recently enabled the sponsorship

of two projects in partnership with the Adventures in Training with a Purpose organization, which provides physical training for disabled veterans and others with physical challenges. One team created a prototype for helping people who cannot grasp or squeeze a handle. Another team designed a spring-loaded foot crutch.

The tangible results of projects like these are impressive. But the lasting benefit goes beyond the models, designs, systems and, even, the honors and awards. At the end of every Design Day, one of the most important things these students have made is connections.

That is a particularly fitting tribute for the Renzulli fund. Daniel and Daniel's father, Peter, lost their lives in a small plane crash in 2018. Both men were consummate connectors, as Lori Renzulli, Daniel's mom and Peter's wife, puts it.

Daniel was a freshman in mechanical engineering who always had a calculator, or five, in his backpack. While earning a spot on the Dean's List, he also left an indelible mark on countless Spartans.



Team "Adventures In Training with a Purpose: Enhanced Foot Design Ambulation Aid" created a prototype for an innovative mobility device thanks to support from the Renzulli engineering fund.

He emptied his pockets to help unhoused people he encountered in the community. His fraternity brothers remember him as the first person they would turn to when they needed some encouragement, as someone who was "always willing to give up something of himself for the betterment of others." Professor Jim Lucas, who led Daniel's Freshman Seminar in Iceland, recalls, "Daniel was the sun, and the planets orbited around him." Never embarrassed to greet his parents with a kiss and hug, Daniel followed his sister Meredith to MSU so he would stay close with her.

Peter was a successful certified public accountant, a CNN commentator, a caring part-time professor at Rutgers University and a tireless YMCA volunteer. He also was a hockey coach, a karate black belt, a pilot, a racecar driver, a devoted husband and father, and the kind of man who asked Lori to marry him within hours of meeting her for the first time.

"If he saw something, or someone, that interested him, he went all in," says Lori.

He once learned of Battleship New Jersey's need for help with an engineering project through a chance meeting with the museum's curator. The next day, Peter cold-called the College of Engineering, and an MSU project with Battleship New Jersey became another part of his legacy.

Everyone who knew Peter or Daniel understood quickly that they brought people together, helped find creative solutions to complex problems, and were advocates and servants to vulnerable populations, Lori says.

The engineering students who will benefit from the Renzulli fund will get a head start on building their professional networks. They also will experience some of the first aha moments of their engineering careers as they work together to tackle a challenging problem, and, to make life better for people in need.

That's a lot of connecting. And it sounds a lot like how Peter and Daniel would have done things.

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**LEARN MORE** about support for the College of Engineering by contacting Associate Director of Development Brian Keehner at keehnerb@msu.edu or by calling (810) 845-1611.

# GIFTS THAT SPEAK VOLUMES

*Howard Akumiah, a former MSU debater, helps build championship team*



Entrepreneur Howard Akumiah is helping to cultivate the next generation of innovators through support and service to MSU Debate.

**H**oward Akumiah's transformative experience through the MSU Debate Team propelled his success after graduation in 2015. The program is why he chose MSU in the first place. His focus now? Building a national championship team that cultivates the next generation of entrepreneurs, critical thinkers and innovators.

Earning championships takes commitment and investment. Akumiah has generously provided both since graduating in 2015 with a degree in International Relations from MSU's James Madison College. His generosity, which totals \$300,000 to date, is helping fuel the debate team's drive to achieve a fourth national title. Akumiah has also given generously of his time to help strategize with the team, which is housed within the Honors College.

"Policy debate taught me invaluable lessons in critical thinking, organization and strategy that have served me tremendously in my personal and professional life," Akumiah said. "I'm honored to support MSU Debate and help more Spartans have similar experiences."

Akumiah, a 31-year-old entrepreneur and angel investor, received MSU's Young Alumni Award in 2022 and joined the MSU Research Foundation Board of Directors in 2023. He established Betty Labs, a startup focused on building consumer social apps for sports fans. He credits connections he made as a Spartan with launching his career, including during a student internship at Google and as an MSU debater.

"We are tremendously proud of Howard as one of our debate team alumni and we are equally grateful for his support and generosity which is helping to provide the resources necessary for our world-class team to compete for the national title," said Honors College Interim Dean Glenn Chambers.

"His commitment to our Spartans and their success is an inspiration to us all as we work in partnership to cultivate a new generation of leaders," Chambers said.

Akumiah has confidence in the debate team's trajectory, guided by its director, Carly Watson, and head coach, Will Repko.

"Having a gift that has been an infusion of capital on the team has made a huge difference for our ability to make short-term improvements that are obvious from a competitive standpoint," Watson said. "It's immediately translated into us being in a completely different stratosphere of competitive success."

Watson said those short-term improvements include harnessing technology and improving recruitment efforts. Akumiah's gift has made it possible

to fund student recruiting trips to MSU, where potential Spartan debaters can feel what it's like to be on the team and on campus.

Going into this season, the team has been recognized as one of the top seven in the country, based on exclusive tournament invitations.

MSU debater Joanna Gusic said she's learned a lot from her conversations with Howard "about the competitive spirit and what it means to be a Spartan."

MSU Debate boasts one of the best public university programs in the country. For 27 consecutive years, the team has competed at the National Debate Tournament, becoming national champions in 2004, 2006 and 2010. MSU Debate has advanced over 40 teams to the elimination rounds of the tournament and received 24 first-round, at-large bids.

Gusic has been working with Akumiah to code a program that helps the team prepare for debates more efficiently.

"Debate provides a lot of things to a lot of students: research skills, connections, alumni relations," Gusic said. "But, in the end, we're here to do one thing, and it's to put MSU on the radar and get another national championship in the bank."

Gusic is a third-year Honors College student pursuing dual degrees in Political Theory and Constitutional Democracy in James Madison College and Statistics in the College of Natural Science with a minor in computer science.

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**LEARN MORE** about support for MSU Debate by contacting Honors College Director of Development Tonya Frisbey at [frisbey2@msu.edu](mailto:frisbey2@msu.edu) or by calling (517) 884-7591.



The MSU Debate Team enters their 2025 season nationally ranked in the top seven.



# WHERE *Curiosity* IS LIMITLESS

*Special Collections at MSU Libraries offers vast resources that strengthen research and artistry, branching out far beyond campus grounds*

BY AMELIA SHUGAR

There is a place within MSU Libraries where thousands of treasures reside. It is a bright space full of bold voices from across centuries that speak truths of tomorrow and fearlessly toss new, bold ideas from cover to cover. Here, vibrant heroes shout from moving stacks, 300,000 comics strong. Every voice is uplifted beyond the margins. Here, adventurers of thought discover new ideas from a collection that breaks through the fog of the moment and propels us into the emerging future. This is the MSU Libraries Stephen O. Murray and Keelung Hong Special Collections, where – now in a newly renovated space at MSU Libraries Main 3-East – ideas grow as tall as sequoias.

# About Special Collections at MSU Libraries

Faculty, students, community members and researchers from around the world come to MSU Libraries to explore the extensive array of over 500,000 printed works in the renowned Special Collections. Formally established as a unit within the Libraries in 1962, the purpose of the collection was to house special materials and build, preserve and make accessible important research collections for educational use. Ever since then, the collection equally informs and unites individual and collective voices.



Keelung Hong toured the renovation of MSU Libraries Special Collections, which will be complete in late November. Keelung contributed the generous lead gift of \$5 million for the Special Collections renovation in memory of his partner, Stephen O. Murray.



A watercolor portrait of Stephen O. Murray hangs in the Library Special Collections Reading Room where students and researchers can access collection materials by appointment. The portrait, and the memorial gifts made by Keelung Hong, celebrate Stephen's life and passion for research.

## Seeds of Thought

Research was always top of mind for Dr. Stephen O. Murray (1950-2019), the man whose legacy is embedded within the Special Collections. Stephen, a James Madison alum from Minnesota, was a sociologist, anthropologist and comparative historian who published in a variety of topics, such as sexual and gender diversity, sociolinguistics and the history of social sciences.

Whenever he and his partner, Dr. Keelung Hong, would ponder a current societal issue, or simply wonder if something was possible, his mantra was: "Let's do the research!"

Together, Stephen and Keelung would scour the Special Collections for materials written by authors throughout the ages until they found what they were looking for—and if they couldn't find a book dedicated to their subject, then Stephen would write the book himself.

As a gift to the MSU Libraries, Keelung donated Stephen's life works to the Special Collections where they can continue to inform and inspire those on their own quests of research. Additionally, funding Special Collections with a \$5 million gift in Stephen's memory is something Keelung is joyfully humble about. "Stephen's name comes first. This is because of him, and I am lucky to be able to do it."

The world-class collections further cement MSU's place on the map as a top-tier research institution, says Libraries Dean Neil Romanosky. Notably, the Special Collections was one of the reasons he felt drawn to MSU and became dean of Libraries in 2023.

The highly accessible collection includes an exhaustive variety of works: comic books, ancient texts, cookbooks, almanacs, manuscripts, vinyl records and ephemera. It is an invaluable resource to Spartans on campus and researchers from across the globe. Dean Romanosky is quick to emphasize that the Special Collections exist because of the dedication of donors.

"It would not be possible without the generosity of our donors, particularly the collections' namesakes, Stephen O. Murray and Keelung Hong," says Dean Romanosky. "We are grateful for both the impact of their support and the legacy it has already created, especially as we move toward opening our new Special Collections space."

For more than 20 years, librarians wanted to move the Special Collections from the basement of the Main Library to a more secure, climate-controlled and protected space. This endeavor is finally becoming a reality. The new renovation will move the entire collection to a fully updated space on the third floor of the Main Library's East Wing.

As Keelung recently toured the partially completed renovation, his smile radiated as he perused the many shelves waiting to be filled.

Keelung is thrilled that the collection will be protected and cared for in the new state-of-the-art space where librarians can easily work together and nurture new research. "That's the impact that the Special Collections can have," says Keelung. "It is real, real research. It is going to help people that we can't even imagine."

## Turning a New Leaf

A walnut ceiling will grace the entryway of the Special Collections, beckoning inquisitive minds with the wood-grain memory of years gone by. A little further down the wide hallway is the main collection area filled with tall bookshelves stacked together in a climate-controlled glass room. Librarians move the stacks seamlessly by using a digital control pad on the side of each shelf.



Renovations of the 26,000-square-foot space include premium storage with climate control and fire suppression systems to provide additional protection for the valuable materials. An additional two rooms with viewing windows are planned for collections processing.

Just behind the stacks lies the vault, the “jewel box” of the entire collection. A shimmering lighted green entrance will open into a 1,500-square-foot room, carefully secured to hold the most precious items in the collection.

Inside the vault, a fine reading table made from reclaimed campus trees waits for researchers to pore over its surface, studying Shakespeare’s portfolio, the first American edition of the second cookbook to be printed in the U.S. authored by Susannah Carter with plates created by Paul Revere or an ancient tablet from 1800 BCE Mesopotamia (a receipt for the sale of sheep in cuneiform script engraved in the clay).

Until now, Special Collections librarians, archivists and support staff were scattered throughout the Main Library. Now, they will all work together, in offices directly across from the collection rooms—their desks dappled with sunlight coming through UV-protected windows offering views of North Campus. Their creativity will have no bounds in a space that reflects the openness of the collection they steward. It will be the first time the unit is colocated, enabling further work together.

This environment of collaboration and openness is something the library is already known for. “Our goal is for everyone to be able to see themselves in our special collection,” says Leslie McRoberts, head of the Special Collections. And they do.



## Reaching to the Sky

Morgan Schwarz is a current student employee at the Libraries. As a third-year student studying history in the College of Social Science, she was looking for a job that would familiarize her with MSU and this job was a perfect fit. What started as an effort to get to know her university, turned into a love for books. She considers it a privilege to have access to such a vast collection of valuable works. “I look forward to going into work because I never know what I will find,” Morgan says.



Dr. Tim Retzlloff donated his own work, “Come Out! In Detroit,” to the Special Collections. The comic book was co-created with freelance illustrator Isabel Clare Paul and tells the story of the first Pride celebration in Detroit, Michigan.

Her presentation was classic librarian, and the student was terrified to share his research topic, given the time period. But he had nothing to fear. The librarian’s name was Anne Tracy, a dedicated library assistant and bibliographer who helped build several collections in the Libraries, including the LGBTQ+ collection. And she happily helped the student with his research.

That student continued his education and eventually became an MSU faculty member himself. Dr. Tim Retzlloff now teaches history and LGBTQ studies as a fixed-term assistant professor in the College of Social Science, and he considers his research in the Special Collections foundational to his work. “MSU Special Collections is the often-unsung repository of queer history and culture,” Tim says. Now he visits the Libraries with his students and has donated his own work, *Come Out! In Detroit*, to the Special Collections.

“When researchers want to and should try to understand marginalized people who are not often represented in mainstream sources, Special Collections is invaluable for maintaining material culture, because otherwise it would be easily lost,” says Tim.

One researcher who sought to understand marginalized voices was Dr. Brian Rouleau, professor of history at Texas A&M University. He came all the way from the Lone Star State to conduct research on the rise and fall of romance comic books within American popular culture.



Special Collections is full of colorful works, such as this image from a hand-drawn, hand-painted botanical album from the 1720s by Margaret Weld. The captions and index of the album are in Latin text.

There are fencing swords, sermons, celebrity phone books and even a book made of cheese kept in a refrigerator. Morgan’s job in Special Collections taught her research skills, how to properly handle historical objects and inspired her new passion for a career in Library Science.

It isn’t uncommon for students to gain a new appreciation of texts, history and the value of research after exploring the collection or taking the History of the Book class. Many new ideas take root and become the foundation for years of groundbreaking research in this very section of the Main Library.

Back when Special Collections was housed in the basement, a student visiting from UM-Flint was paging through card catalogs looking for books published on LGBTQ history. It was the '90s, a time when acceptance of such topics was rare. As he tediously continued his pre-digital search, a librarian walked up to him and offered to help.



“Sometimes the comic book world can feel like a boys’ club,” Brian says. “Romance comics can help to show young women today the important role that girls—as audience, authors, artists and editors—have always played in mass media.”

Since the MSU Special Collections has the largest comic book collection in the world, it makes sense that he traveled to the Great Lakes State. He spent two weeks in the massive comic book archive, studying the history of romance comics.

While he found the collection amazing, the best part of his experience was interacting with the Special Collections librarians. “There’s just no substitute for the expertise and enthusiasm they bring to their work at the library,” Brian says. “Historians would be utterly lost without the diligent efforts of the librarians and archivists we depend on to do our work.”

Their efforts create experiences second to none. “There is nothing like holding in your hands the seeds of discovery that led to one’s chosen field,” says MSU Emerita Associate Professor Laura L. Symonds, Ph.D. For several years, she has brought Physiology students to the Special Collections before they embark on the “Foundations of Neuroscience” education abroad program. Students are given the opportunity to turn the pages of books that teach them how neuroscience discoveries began.

They can see the first anatomical drawings that medical students studied in Europe half a millennium ago, and even view drawings by Robert Hooke, who coined the term “cell” and viewed insects and plants magnified by the compound microscope in the 1600s. “[Students] start to gain an appreciation of the genius—and fortuitous luck—that gradually built the foundation of the field in which they are majoring at MSU,” says Laura.



## Guardians of the Forest

The Libraries Special Collections are widely used by MSU faculty members and students—but, like Brian from Texas A&M, researchers from other universities rely on the collections as well. From Cornell University in New York, to Aberystwyth University in Wales and more, researchers have traveled to East Lansing to the Main Library along the Red Cedar to study rare materials that can only be found at Michigan State.

Accessibility is also increasing with digitization of certain works, such as Feeding America: The Historic American Cookbook Project. The online collection includes 76 cookbooks (out of 40,000) from MSU Libraries’ collection. So, if you need the definitive, original recipe for funeral potatoes or want to know what people in the 1950s took to a potluck – would you

believe a lime Jell-O mold with banana peppers? – you can find it here.

While many encounters with items in the Special Collections require an appointment, items are often accessible in the Reading Room, through the History of the Book class, or through pop-up exhibits at the library.

This treasure trove of ideas within the MSU Libraries Special Collections is accessible to all, to read, research and create bold new stories. And as long as they exist through the generosity of donors like Keelung, the stories within will never get buried. “We live and breathe our mission,” says Leslie, “that these stories of love, the stories of hope, will continue to grow”—even taller than sequoias.

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**LEARN MORE** about support for the Stephen O. Murray and Keelung Hong Special Collections by contacting MSU Libraries Director of Development Caitlyn Perry Dial at [dialcait@msu.edu](mailto:dialcait@msu.edu) or by calling (517) 432-0032.



Students get hands-on experience within the Libraries Special Collections as they learn about history and print culture in the History of the Book class.



## A Collection of Context

In her 25 years at MSU, Jyotsna Singh, Professor Emerita, Department of English, has made certain that her students recognize the importance of primary source materials in their studies of English literature.

As she celebrated her retirement, she unveiled the Jyotsna G. Singh Endowment in Early Modern Studies: Race, Empire, and Global Connections, aimed at enriching the MSU Libraries’ collection of early modern texts within MSU Special Collections, and enhancing awareness of and engagement with the materials, which can give valuable historical context, even to the most contemporary social concerns and issues.



William Shakespeare: A copy of “Mr. William Shakespears comedies, histories, and tragedies,” published in London (1685) is also known as the “Fourth Folio.”

Inspired by her formative experiences in libraries—including the British Library and the University of Oxford’s Bodleian Libraries, among others—Singh recognizes libraries as magical spaces that connect scholars and communities.

Her endowment at the MSU Libraries will do the same, by providing funding for annual public events, exhibitions and classroom projects that spotlight the early modern period.

By facilitating research on topics like colonialism, trade, travel and early printed works, her gift will empower and inspire future generations of scholars and students. “To hold a book published 400-500 years ago is a magical moment,” she reflects. “Then to observe annotations and other marks on the paper, which tell an important history in itself.”

Leaders at the MSU Libraries are excited for Singh’s endowment, which comes alongside another important

moment for the facility: the opening of the brand-new Stephen O. Murray and Keelung Hong Special Collections space. There, the vast collection of early modern materials that were so important to Singh’s career will have a new home, and thanks to her support, will be added to and cared for to serve the next generation of scholars and students.

“Giving and shaping this endowment has been an enriching journey for me,” Singh says. “I hope the events and activities will open up new and exciting journeys for students, researchers and the larger community.”

Her legacy will undoubtedly shape the future of the library and its role in exploring the complexities of history.



Kathryn Fort, director of the Indian Law Clinic, advocates for the rights of Native children and the Indian Child Welfare Act.

## JUSTICE IN ACTION, FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE SUPREME COURT

*Faculty attorney makes a difference nationwide through the Indian Law Clinic*

BY AMELIA SHUGAR

**B**ehind every child welfare case is a life. Sometimes, it is the life of a child who deserves to connect with their cultural heritage. In the *Haaland v. Brackeen* Supreme Court case, the children were from the Navajo and Cherokee Nations as well as the White Earth Nation and the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo. And when the case was won, all Native children were protected, as was the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), which prevents the removal of Native children from their families and tribes.

For six years, Director of the Indian Law Clinic Kathryn (Kate) Fort worked on this key Supreme Court case along with Tribal Nations, who believe raising children is a tribal responsibility. And finally, in 2023, they celebrated a successful conclusion, which meant the traditions of Tribal Nations would be honored.

“Children need to know their culture, religion, language and their people,” Kate says. “Being in foster care is traumatizing. Something happened in their past to require foster care, so being connected to their family and tribe in some way can provide resiliency.”

Resiliency is a requirement for appellate attorneys themselves, as they often argue complex cases against the odds. For some, like Kate Fort, the complexities only fuel their passion to right injustice.

Kate is the first lawyer in her family. After being recruited by MSU and getting a full ride as a Dean King Scholar in 2002, Kate completed her law degree and found her calling in federal Indian law.

Michigan is an important state for her practice, as it is the home of 12 federally recognized tribes. Kate finds working with the tribes to be lovely; they have been welcoming and generous and have trusted her with their children in the courts. “I don’t take that lightly,” she says.

Each child welfare case that the MSU Indian Law Clinic handles for one of the 574 federally recognized Native American tribes in the U.S. presents opportunities for justice for everyone involved.

No day is typical as Kate fulfills her role as the director of the MSU Law Clinic, runs the Indian Law Clinic, teaches multiple classes and serves as one of the nation’s leading experts on the ICWA – there is much work to do. When Kate isn’t working with students or advising attorneys and parents on cases across the country, she is busy writing articles and editing the second edition of her case book.

The Indian Law Clinic, which serves clients nationwide, recently received a \$400,000 grant from the NoVo Foundation, in addition to support from the Henry Luce Foundation. These prestigious foundations are dedicated to fostering a more equitable and just world, and their support emphasizes the important work happening at the MSU clinic.

Funding helps hire additional lawyers, increase administrative support and increase the clinic’s capacity. But resources are always needed. “The area of tribal child welfare tends to be underserved and there’s very little funding for this,” says Kate. “You don’t make money on child welfare. All of our clinics are pro bono.”

The costs of legal work are high, with court fees, travel for out-of-state oral arguments, filing fees and clinic infrastructure costs. Kate is determined to preserve what MSU has accomplished through the law clinics and help them grow with more staff and possibly an endowed position. “That would be the dream – we’d get so much done,” she says.

Michigan State University occupies the ancestral, traditional and contemporary lands of the Anishinaabeg–Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi peoples. “There is a responsibility of MSU as a land grant institution to provide services to our tribes,” says Kate.

Through her teaching, Kate hopes to pass the torch to the next generation. Until then, she will continue fighting for justice alongside Tribal Nations. “I do this work at the direction and inspiration of Native people, particularly Native women and tribal leaders who have been doing this work forever.”

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**LEARN MORE** about support for the Indian Law Clinic by contacting MSU College of Law Senior Director of Development Jacqueline Kontry at [jkontry@msu.edu](mailto:jkontry@msu.edu) or by calling (517) 432-6845.

*“There is a responsibility of MSU as a land grant institution to provide services to our tribes.”*

# A BOOST FOR BASEBALL AND MEN'S BASKETBALL PROGRAMS

*A \$10 million gift from the Ishbia family supports baseball facility upgrades and basketball excellence*

Family means everything to alumni Kristen and Justin Ishbia—and that includes their MSU family. A shared passion for their Spartan community and the success of its student-athletes, combined with their generosity and Justin's love for baseball, were leading forces in the couple's recent \$10 million gift to Athletics.

A 2000 graduate of the Eli Broad College of Business, Justin is the founder and managing partner of Chicago-based Shore Capital Partners, part majority owner and alternate governor of the Phoenix Suns and Mercury, and minority owner and alternate governor of Major League Soccer's Nashville SC. Kristen graduated from the College of Education with a degree in Kinesiology in 2008.

The Ishbias' gift includes \$8.5 million in support of men's basketball and baseball, and \$1.5 million in previous Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) payments. A portion of the gift will be used to support the baseball program and upgrades to the baseball facilities. The baseball field will be renamed Jeff Ishbia Field, in honor of Justin's father.

"As a lifelong baseball fan and former player, I know firsthand the lasting impression the game and a coach can have on an up-and-coming athlete," says Justin Ishbia. "Coach Jake Boss runs a fantastic program that has produced many successful players, and he and the team deserve to have best-in-class facilities that match the quality of the program."

"Spartan baseball is very thankful for the Ishbias' gift," says baseball coach Jake Boss. "The facility upgrades that we will be able to make as a result of their gift will benefit student-athlete development for years to come."

In gratitude for the tremendous impact Tom Izzo has had on countless collegiate basketball players, including Justin's brother, Mat Ishbia, the remainder of the

gift will support the Men's Basketball Excellence Fund.

"Coach Izzo embodies the true meaning of mentorship and team-first mentality," says Justin Ishbia. "It has been a privilege to be in his orbit, and we are excited to see the Spartans' basketball team continue to flourish for years to come under his leadership."

"We are incredibly grateful for Justin and Kristen's generosity," says Izzo. "The entire Ishbia family has been so supportive to both MSU as a whole, and for me individually. Justin and Kristen and their kids will always be special to me. To be an elite program, you must have elite support from donors. This gift will positively impact our ability to continue to chase championships, while also providing me greater motivation and incentive to keep our program at a championship level."

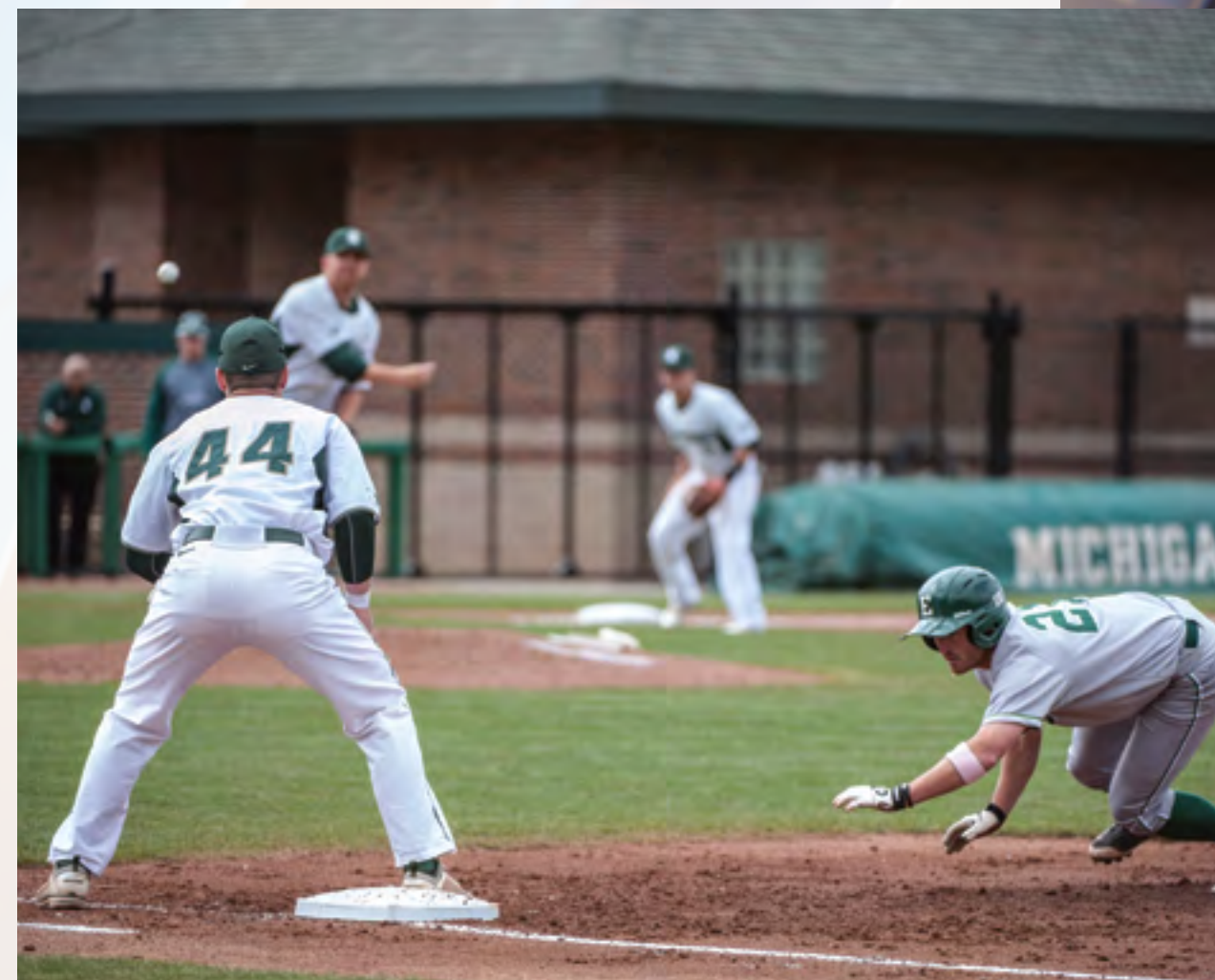
"Justin and Kristen are passionate alums and represent the core of who we are as Spartans," says MSU President Kevin M. Guskiewicz, Ph.D. "I appreciate their continued commitment to our athletics programs, and to creating an environment where our student-athletes have everything they need to succeed as they proudly represent our university on national and international stages."

"Spartan athletics is deeply appreciative of this transformational gift from Justin and Kristen Ishbia," says MSU Vice President and Director of Athletics Alan Haller. "While college athletics continues to evolve at the national level, donor support has never been more critical to supporting the overall mission of our department. The generosity displayed with their gift will help provide a first-class experience for our student-athletes."

**LEARN MORE** about support for MSU Athletics by visiting [spartanfund.net](http://spartanfund.net) or by calling (517) 432-1610.



A portion of the gift from Kristen and Justin Ishbia will bolster the Men's Basketball Excellence Fund, which supports player development.



The Ishbias' gift will also impact MSU baseball.

# CARING FOR THOSE WHO CARE FOR US

BY MELODY DRAEGER

**G**erald “Jerry” (MSU, 1976) and Julie Abraham are turning a lifetime of health struggles into positive impact with a \$500,000 endowment to support scholarships for nursing students who desire to serve as advocates for their patients.

Julie and Jerry have seen their fair share of hospital rooms during their marriage. Julie has spent most of her life battling pancreatitis, primary biliary cholangitis and their related complications.

“For about nine years, I would have to go into the hospital every six weeks,” says Julie. The empathy and education from nurses made a deep impact, especially Julie’s gastroenterologist nurse, Margo, who was always their first call to get answers to questions.

“The education we received from the nurses was huge,” said Jerry. “It wasn’t just the patient they were teaching; they also taught their support and family.”

A day finally arrived when Julie successfully underwent the Whipple procedure, which removed a dying portion of her pancreas. Five days afterward, Julie was not getting the pain

relief she should and realized the pump delivering pain medication had turned off.

“I was in excruciating pain. I tried to keep telling people that I was in pain, but it didn’t register with anyone that the pump was off,” she says.

Enter Bernice, a longtime nurse covering Julie’s recovery unit. Bernice corrected the malfunctioning pain pump, and took extra time to offer emotional support, staying in Julie’s room for two hours to calm her down from the depressing pain.

“Without her support and understanding, I may not have made it through that day,” says Julie.

Julie’s journey to recovery and health was not over. She later received a liver transplant at Indiana University (IU) Health University Hospital. At the time, MSU football was playing the University of Maryland. Julie requested updates as frequently as possible on the game, which the nurses happily obliged.

Later, when Julie was having additional follow-up procedures completed, the nurses would write the score of that week’s game on Julie’s wristband before she awakened from every procedure. “They even wrote it on the whiteboard in my room because I kept asking about it each time I woke up.”

Julie and Jerry continue to manage health concerns with the assistance of physicians and nurses across the state. Kathy, a nurse at her primary care office, is always ready to take her call when she or Jerry has questions.

“Kathy taught me how to do it all [managing pancreatitis at home] with as little struggle as possible,” says Julie.

Jerry and Julie want to continue preparing future nurses to advocate for their patients through education and support. They benefited greatly from the empathy offered by Bernice, the attentiveness offered by the IU Health University Hospital staff, and the education offered by every nurse they’ve interacted with. The scholarship will help them pay that support forward. Beginning in the 2025-26 academic year, students who display the same advocacy as those closest to the Abrahams will receive the Gerald and Julie Abraham Family Scholarship in Nursing.

Through all the struggles they faced, Julie and Jerry know that “nursing will always be there.”

**LEARN MORE** about support for the College of Nursing by contacting Director of Development [Anthonie Burke at burkean3@msu.edu](mailto:burkean3@msu.edu) or by calling (517) 432-5033.



Julie Abraham (right) and Kathy (left), a nurse from her primary care physician's office

Pictured at the investiture, from left, Lupe and Tom Izzo; Amy Guskiewicz and President Guskiewicz; Sparty; Dawn and Greg Williams.



## MAKING IT OFFICIAL

On Saturday, Sept. 29, Kevin M. Guskiewicz was formally installed as MSU's 22nd president. Leaders from around the university, the state, and from key points throughout President Guskiewicz's career shared messages of welcome, before the president himself spoke about the vision he shares with all of us for the future of MSU.

Following the ceremony, alumni, donors, friends and community members gathered for a celebratory reception and program.

**LISTEN TO** the investiture address at [president.msu.edu/investiture](http://president.msu.edu/investiture)

# STRENGTHENING K-12 EDUCATION THROUGH RESEARCH

*MSU-led team awarded \$3.5M from Spencer Foundation to study, support efforts to add Asian American Studies to K-12 classrooms*

The Spencer Foundation awarded its first-ever \$3.5 million Transformative Research Grant this year, and a professor in MSU’s College of Education was chosen as the recipient.

Noreen Naseem Rodríguez, an assistant professor of elementary education and educational justice, will lead a multidisciplinary team of co-principal investigators (co-PIs) from five other institutions across the country, to conduct a large-scale study on community-driven initiatives to teach Asian American Studies in K-12 classrooms.

Their study across five states will explore how communities advocate for curricular policies mandating the teaching of Asian American studies and how these policies get implemented in schools and impact student learning. Ultimately, the project aims to develop supports for families and communities to successfully advocate for curricular changes and for policymakers, systems leaders and educators to successfully implement ethnic studies courses in ways that increase learning and civic engagement.

The study takes place in the context of national politicized attacks on inclusive education, such as book bans and laws prohibiting authentic and truthful history.

“Despite substantial evidence that well-designed ethnic studies courses can have a positive, lasting impact on students’ life trajectories, we still lack an understanding of how community and legislative efforts to include ethnic studies in the curriculum get translated into classrooms, particularly in different political contexts,” says Rodríguez.

“Our project proposes to provide teachers, policymakers and communities with the knowledge, resources and tools to implement ethnic studies curricula that transform learning at scale and allow students to dream and act for a better future.”

Spencer’s Transformative Research Grant (TRG) funds innovative, methodologically diverse, interdisciplinary, collaborative research on education with the goal of transforming education systems for equity. TRGs focus is on projects of up to five years in duration that identify a clear challenge, problem or opportunity of equity in education and will have transformative, system-level impacts. Only teams that have received a Spencer Vision Grant, which supports the collaborative planning of large-scale research projects, can apply for a TRG.

The awarded team includes scholars with diverse methodological and disciplinary expertise, including ethnic studies, curriculum studies, K-12 policy, learning sciences, case study analysis, survey methodology and network analysis. The team consists of Rodríguez and co-PIs Sohyun An at Kennesaw State University, Esther Kim at College of William and Mary, Soo-yong Byun at Pennsylvania State University, Michael Brown at University of Michigan and Jennifer Higgs at University of California, Davis.

The Spencer Foundation has been a leading funder of education research since 1971 and is the only national foundation focused exclusively on supporting education research.

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**LEARN MORE** about support for the College of Education by contacting Senior Director of Development Eric Sturdy at [sturdyjr@msu.edu](mailto:sturdyjr@msu.edu) or by calling (517) 432-1983.



Noreen Naseem Rodríguez and her team of co-PIs were awarded the Spencer Foundation’s inaugural Transformative Research Grant.

## Student SPOTLIGHT



“As a student from Detroit, I wanted to go into community development and help students like me get resources to have more recreational opportunities and experiences. I received a scholarship my first year of college, and it meant the world to me because I fund my own education as a first-generation college student.”

**ARIEL DOWNS, B.S. '24**  
 Sustainable Parks, Recreation and Tourism

## Faculty SPOTLIGHT

### Prescribing Hope

When pediatrician Dr. Mona Hanna from the MSU-Hurley Children’s Hospital Pediatric Public Health Initiative looks into the wide eyes of her little patients, she sees promise and potential. She also knows that their future is endangered by the pathogen of poverty.

So, in the indomitable spirit of Spartans Will, Dr. Mona launched Rx Kids in the city of Flint to boldly prescribe health, hope and opportunity. Building on global evidence and the success of the expanded Child Tax Credit, Rx Kids is the nation’s first citywide cash prescription program for mothers and infants.

To help eliminate infant poverty and improve health equity, pregnant mothers receive a one-time mid-pregnancy cash prescription of \$1,500 and then \$500 per month for the first 12 months after the baby’s birth. A public-private partnership, Rx Kids was inaugurally supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation with additional support from the state of Michigan and dozens of other champions.

Rx Kids, which is now reaching almost every newborn in Flint, will expand into new Michigan communities, beginning with Kalamazoo in 2025—and beyond!





**MICHIGAN STATE**  
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**Developments**

*University Advancement*  
535 Chestnut Road, Room 300  
East Lansing, MI 48824