

# ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE COUNSELING & STUDENT DEVELOPMENT NEWSLETTER



**CCSD Class  
of 2021**



**Congrats  
Graduates!**

## A Portal Amidst Pandemics

By: **Dr. Aerielle A. Ashlee**, Assistant Professor

This past year we faced multiple pandemics, including COVID-19 and systemic racism. In student affairs and higher education, the coronavirus required a complete re-thinking of our field and how we support college students. Additionally, COVID (coupled with rampant xenophobia) contributed to 164% increase in reported anti-Asian hate crimes and violence in the United States alone. COVID-19 made clear systemic health inequities for Communities of Color, and the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, MN fueled the global Black Lives Matter movement and sparked protests against police brutality and racism on college campuses and in cities around the world. Despite these multiple pandemics, the words of author and political activist, Arundhati Roy, give me hope, "**Historically pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.**" As incoming CCSD Graduate Director, I look forward to what we can imagine together for the future of higher education, racial justice, and collective healing and liberation.

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# Congratulations CCSD Graduates

Congratulations to the CCSD Class of 2021! Listed from left to right in photo order: **Emily Hennes, Kacey Bostrom, Taryn Hersch, Yuliia Sobko, Summaiah Junaid, Nate Duncan, Alyssa Bergland, Virginia Sumihi.** [not pictured: **Dylan Koenig**] We look forward to hearing about the great work you go on to do in the field of student affairs!



Photo from SHHS hooding ceremony.

## A Brief History of the CCSD Program

By: **Dr. Dan Macari**, CCSD Professor



As the darkness that has been the covid pandemic begins to lift, I can see a bright future for higher education and for the College Counseling and Student Development (CCSD) program. Lessons learned from the use of technology and from the challenges faced (and largely overcome) by students will stay with us for years to come. As Dr. Aerial A. Ashlee begins in the role of CCSD Graduate Director, I thought this might be a good time for a brief recap of the history of the CCSD Program (to the best of my memory). The CCSD program began around 2002. I say 'around' because some courses

had begun to be offered earlier but the actual CCSD degree was first conferred in 2004. The program's first coordinator was Dr. Linwood Vereen. Dr. Vereen and I were doctoral students together at the University of Nevada. When Linwood left for a different position I was encouraged to apply. I did, and here I remain 17 years later.

Soon after I arrived, we decided to move the program through CACREP accreditation. A somewhat daunting task, but it helped establish and clarify one of the central tenets of our program - a helping skills foundation. In 2008 the CCSD program was fully accredited by CACREP (a counselor education accrediting program). As CACAREP moved further towards a pure mental health counseling orientation, we decided to let our accreditation lapse rather than move to a more clinical 60-credit program. This decision has freed us to make many of the curricular changes we have instituted over the past five years and allows Dr. Ashlee and I to pursue even more innovative and relevant coursework into the future.

Study abroad has also been a big part of the CCSD program for 15 years. The first venture abroad involved a naïve, somewhat younger faculty (OK, me) taking a group of students to Australia to visit various colleges and universities in the Sydney and Tasmania areas.



# A Brief History continued...

A steep learning curve for me, no doubt, however, this experience helped solidify my love for study abroad and established our foundational connections with the Center for International Studies and Multicultural Student Services. After the success of this trip, we were encouraged to participate in the South Africa study abroad program. In our first year in South Africa, 2008, CCSD was represented by me and one student. However, during this trip the idea for placing a CCSD intern in South Africa was developed. Since then, we have had a dozen interns at Nelson Mandela University and close to 100 CCSD students participating in the short-term trip. This has been a great relationship and I encourage anyone considering this study abroad to make it happen. In addition, some of our students participate in the study abroad trip to Laos, Thailand, and Malaysia. While this trip is not CCSD focused, per se, there is opportunity to not only visit colleges in those areas but also to work with undergraduate students participating in the trip. Many of our students who have taken advantage of this trip have returned the next year to work as coordinators and chaperones for undergraduate students traveling internationally. We have also had several students complete their internship in Malaysia. Last year, we began a study abroad internship to our partner program in Alnwick, England. While this year-long internship was cut short due to COVID, we anticipate its full return. What a great opportunity to spend a year living and working in the English countryside. Stay tuned for even more international opportunities!

The last piece of history I will recap is that of our program staff. This section will be short as we've had surprisingly few full-time faculty members. To begin with, we have been fortunate to have a variety of fantastic adjunct professors teach in the program. These professionals bring real world experience and a commitment to student affairs that sets an example for our students. As mentioned earlier, the program's first faculty was Dr. Linwood Vereen. I began when he left in 2004. Three years later, we hired Dr. Nona Wilson as faculty in the CCSD program. Dr. Wilson was here for 10 years before she left to pursue clinical counseling work in Chicago. Dr. Seth Christman joined the CCSD staff in 2012, serving as interim program coordinator for several years before leaving in 2019. Most recently, we have been blessed by the arrival of Dr. Aerial A. Ashlee. Dr. Ashlee brings so much to St. Cloud State and has shown tremendous commitment to the CCSD program and our students. With Dr. Ashlee taking over as program coordinator, I expect the next historical update of the CCSD program to be really interesting!

Much else has changed in the CCSD program in the 17 years that I have been here, but we will leave those updates for another time. The CCSD program continues to grow and evolve to meet the needs of ever changing student populations. While we are proud of our ability to flex and change, three foundational values of the program remain.

- **Student Development:** Our program features a critical examination of student learning and development theories and their application in student affairs.
- **Social Justice:** Our program examines power, privilege, and oppression in student affairs, encouraging reflection and action for educators to advance justice and inclusion.
- **Helping Skills:** Our program grounds holistic approaches to student development in helping skills and strategies to facilitate holistic wellness and student success.

I hope everyone has a great summer and I look forward to seeing you all in the fall!

# Inaugural CCSD Advisory Council

By: **Dr. Aerielle A. Ashlee**, CCSD Assistant Professor & Graduate Director

In the spring 2021 semester, the CCSD core faculty (Dr. Aerielle A. Ashlee and Dr. Dan Macari) assembled the inaugural CCSD Advisory Council. Comprised of key CCSD constituents (including current students, alumni, campus partners, and adjunct faculty), Advisory Council members will serve in this volunteer leadership capacity through spring 2022. The first Advisory Council meeting was held virtually in April 2021 and centered on clarifying the purpose of the Advisory Council, facilitating introductions and relationship building between council members, and presenting new proposed CCSD



*Photo of 1st CCSD Advisory Council meeting.*

mission statement, core values, and curriculum. The CCSD core faculty intend to use the feedback garnered from the Advisory Council to further develop these components, with the intent of submitting a new curriculum proposal to the SCSU Curriculum Committee in fall 2021. Please help us congratulate and thank the inaugural CCSD Advisory Council for their leadership and service to the program! *In alphabetical order:* **Dr. Kyle C. Ashlee** (CCSD Adjunct Faculty), **Kifaya Bishop** (CCSD Class of 2016), **Brandon Byrd** (CCSD Class of 2020), **Nikki Jagodzinski** (CCSD Class of 2013), **Summaiah Junaid** (CCSD 2nd year student), **Bao Lee** (CCSD Class of 2016), **Chee Moua-Yang** (CCSD Class of 2010), **Holly Schuck** (CCSD Campus Partner), **Tammison Smith** (CCSD Adjunct Faculty & Campus Partner), **Abbey Soldner** (CCSD Class of 2012), **Lucas Vetsch** (CCSD 1st year student), and **Angie Witte** (CCSD Campus Partner).

## New CCSD Course: Foundations of Student Affairs Research



*Photo of last research class meeting.*

This semester, Dr. Aerielle A. Ashlee created and piloted a new research class for the CCSD program. In the seminar course, students learned the strengths and limitations of various methodologies, constructed research questions related to their student affairs practice, and analyzed research articles to inform their work as scholar-practitioners. Students also proposed individual research projects and then worked collaboratively on a qualitative class research project. Yay research!



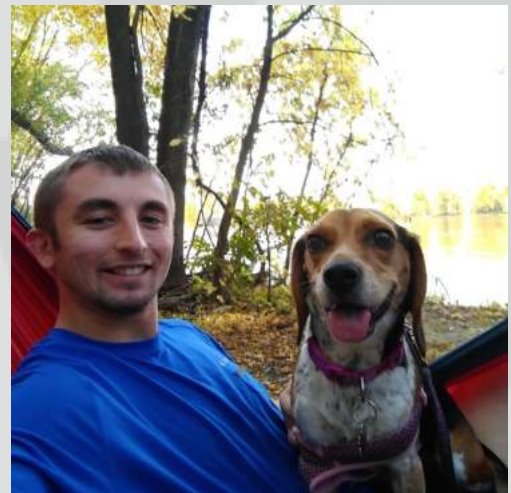
# Introducing New Leadership of the Organization for CCSD Scholars



Founded in 2015, the purpose of the Organization for College Counseling and Student Development (CCSD) Scholars is to promote interest in the CCSD program at SCSU, to provide fellowship among first-year students, second-year students, and alumni of the CCSD program, and to assist all CCSD students in achieving their academic and professional potential through professional networking and leadership development.

Here are brief introductions of the new board members for the 2021-2022 academic year!

My name is **Lucas Vetsch** (1st year CCSD student) and I am the incoming CCSD Organization President. I am a 2020 St. John's University graduate where I received my Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Sociology. I found my passion for higher education working as a Resident Assistant and utilizing Career Services. I am an avid Minnesota sports fan and a novice beer sommelier. I am excited be part of the organization's leadership team and look forward to facilitating interaction within the program.



Hi, my name is **Zoe Davis** (1st year CCSD student) and I recently moved back to Minnesota with my boyfriend Cameron. I am also loving the CCSD program! Cameron and I have grown our little family with the addition of two cats (Otter and Simba) over the past year and a half. I am so excited to serve as the Vice President for the CCSD Student Org next year and I have already started my summer internship with SCSU's Advising & Student Transitions as a Student Advisor.

## New Leadership continued...



Hello! My name is **Alyssa Duncan** (1st year CCSD student), the CCSD secretary. My undergraduate degree is in Psychology from Winona and I have a background doing case management and direct support at a day training and habilitation program. My current GA is in the academic appeals and probation office at SCSU where I supervise a class and do academic coaching; this summer I will be starting my internship at Anoka in the disability services office. This summer I am looking forward to camping, hiking, and attempting to grow food in my garden (cross your fingers for me)!

Nyob zoo, cov phoojywg deb thiab ze. Kuv lub npe yog Sabrina Nkauj Nag xeem hmoob Yaj. Kuv zoo saib tau ntsib nej hauv tsab ntauv no.

Hello, friends near and far! My name is **Sabrina Gao Na Yang** (1st year CCSD student), and I am so happy to be able to introduce myself through this newsletter. It wasn't until my junior year of undergrad that I found a love for helping students succeed. I am now trying to pursue that passion in this program. I am excited to be a part of the new executive board as the incoming Treasurer. I look forward to planning more engagement and fundraisers for our organization!



*If you are interested in connecting more with the Organization for CCSD Scholars, please contact Lucas (incoming President) at [lucas.vetsch@go.stcloudstate.edu](mailto:lucas.vetsch@go.stcloudstate.edu)*





## CCSD Student to SCSU Registrar

A conversation between Sabrina Yang (1st year CCSD student and CCSD Graduate Assistant) and Timothy Meendering (CCSD Class of 2007 and SCSU's Registrar) about Meendering's new role and what it is like being back at St. Cloud State University.

*“ Being able to put into practice effective counseling skills for coaching, feedback, professional development—simply managing the muck that is the human experience in a professional environment—was arguably the most valuable thing I learned from CCSD. Incalculably helpful.*

*-Tim Meendering*

*”*



# CCSD Alum Spotlight

**CCSD GA:** What drew you to the field of student affairs?

**TM:** As a child of a teacher and minister, education and serving others is arguably in my blood. During my junior year of college, however, it became abundantly clear my grand ambitions of being a high school teacher were unfortunately misguided. Couple that with some normative early-20's mental health concerns with which I was grappling, and dropping out of college for a bit became a serious consideration. Thankfully I met with Bonnie, a student relations coordinator at my undergraduate institution, who provided amazing guidance and helped me both figure out a successful academic path forward and seek proper help from support services on campus.

Following two years of working miscellaneous jobs after graduation, I started to reevaluate what I wanted to do with my professional life. Through a chance encounter with a family friend who worked at an area university, I realized

if I was not going to teach I could still support students in their educational journey. I began to research graduate programs in the region that could provide the skills and abilities said family friend mentioned would be beneficial to have, and serendipitously I enrolled at St. Cloud State sixteen years ago. Having served in different facets within multiple institutions over these many years, I would offer that perhaps I was less drawn to student affairs and more that at crucial moments in my life I was provided insight and guidance from student affairs professionals—the support I can only hope to provide others facing similar moments of struggle or challenge.

**CCSD GA:** Can you tell us about your current role as Registrar?

**TM:** At the time of this writing, I have been in the role only four months so it arguably feels like I am still figuring it out. That being said, the “what” of this role is providing vision and strategy for how to best operationally ensure students are supported from admission to alumni with any academic record, registration, and other related items. The “how” of this role is done largely through myriad consultations with office staff, internal partners, and institutional faculty to determine where a solid foundation exists and where opportunities abound for improving processes, procedures, and systems. Yet most importantly, the “who” of this role is overseeing a staff of eighteen professionals with time in position ranging from decades to months—these colleagues are where I place the bulk of my leadership efforts, for as I profess all the time if you take care of the people the results will follow.



**Sabrina Yang, CCSD GA**



**Tim Meendering,**  
CCSD Class of 2007



# Alum Spotlight continued...

**CCSD GA:** What did you learn from CCSD? How has that been helpful in your line of work?

**TM:** Where do I even begin...? My top five learnings, in no particular order (nor is this list exhaustive) would be:

1. *Empathy for the human condition* – It is impossible to adequately explain how helpful and impactful these “soft-skills” have been in my career. Being able to put into practice effective counseling skills for coaching, feedback, professional development—simply managing the muck that is the human experience in a professional environment—was arguably the most valuable. Incalculably helpful.
2. *Condensing complex information quickly* – Having to manage all the reading, discussions, and content of the program into writing or action laid a foundation for synthesizing complex information from peers, students, and colleagues quickly and effectively.
3. *Patience* – Yet I also learned organizations are often quick to over-solutionize and believe a problem is solved when in fact diligence and time should be taken to properly assess details. The patience I learned in the individual and group counseling-based classes goes a long way to working with peers looking to just solve an issue and overlook exploring for a problem’s root cause.
4. *Humility* – Focusing so much on removing my ego and sense of self from interactions and focus on the needs of others around me has allowed me to be successful in managing complicated and sticky interpersonal, student, and office dynamics throughout my career. Practicing curiosity over certainty has served me well with building relationships amongst students and colleagues.
5. *Learning can be fun!* – I was fortunate to travel to Australia in Summer 2006 with others in the program (and Dr. Macari), and learning about how another country views higher education while also experiencing a different culture and society showed me that learning can be a blast.

**CCSD GA:** How is it being back at St. Cloud State as an employee verses as a student?

**TM:** One word: *surreal*. Had anyone told me, when I graduated fourteen years ago, I would be working here—let alone I would not be working in my early passion area of academic advising—I would not have believed them. It definitely feels surreal walking around campus on nicer days and going past the Education building (which is just across the street from my office). Yet, I feel so fortunate as an employee to have experienced life as a student here, for it provides me what I call a “tangential familiarity” with colleagues and faculty—that despite only being here four months I bring an experience and perspective from my time here years ago. Also, having worked at other institutions has allowed me great opportunity to provide perspective of how we could do things differently. It is a great balance of insider knowledge paired with industry awareness.

## Alum Spotlight continued...

**CCSD GA:** Mentoring is an important component within the field of student affairs, do you have any advice for current students who are looking for mentors?

**TM:** Never underestimate someone's desire to talk about themselves. Call it vanity; call it wanting to share pearls of wisdom; call it pride—just know leaders and mentors typically love to talk. As well as ideally help others as they were also helped before. When I think back to those who were kind enough to mentor me in my career, often those relationships were started through an informal outreach of “Dear [so and so], do you have some time to let me pick your brain about [insert topic or area of interest]?” If I happened to know someone of great value in their world, that person was typically referenced in the outreach, too. I honestly cannot remember ever asking if someone would be open to “mentoring” me, for perhaps I felt that was overly formal for my tastes (it may work differently for you).

During that first meeting, I would have a minor blurb prepared for them to better understand my background, interest, focus and how it hopefully overlapped with theirs. I had questions prepared but additional questions sometimes emerged a result of the details they offered. As trust and rapport develop, conversations flow more easily and tend to be less structured than question/answer sessions like at the start. Finding out the person's favorite work-appropriate beverage always helps to offer to bring next time.

Yet all this implies there is some magic formula for being successful in these efforts. Much of my efforts were trial-and-error. Some conversations were just one-and-done; some did lead to future connections. Often these kinds of relationships started organically or via some random contact with someone who referred me to someone. Also, I tried to balance connecting with people who could provide additional depth in an area of interest with those who could offer breadth in areas outside my normal purview. I would stress the importance of honing your interview abilities and take the skills learned in the program of probing for more information and deeper details into these kinds of conversations.

**CCSD GA:** Thank you so much for sharing your insights and advice, Tim!

## Announcing CCSD Alumni Mentoring Program



CCSD is launching an alumni mentoring program! If you are a CCSD alum who would like to give back and reconnect to the program, please scan this QR code and mentor an incoming or current CCSD student. Our hope is to form mentee/mentor pairs in early fall 2021. If you have any questions, please email [ccsd@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:ccsd@stcloudstate.edu).



# What Emergent Strategy Can Teach Student Affairs Educators

By: **Emily Hennes**, 2nd year CCSD student



With the recent uprising against police brutality, demonstrations to stop Asian hate, and the trauma of living in a global pandemic, it is clear society is aching for positive, transformative change. Our students recognize there are a plethora of unique challenges they must face in today's society. Student affairs professionals have a responsibility to hold space for students to effectively process cultural traumas. Considering institutions of higher education reflect the practices of society as a whole, and these systems continue to be plagued by racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, classism and other forms of oppression, it is imperative that we do not endorse systems of power within institutions of higher education that only benefit those with privilege. Within higher

education, practices, policies, and procedures still negatively impact people from minoritized communities to this day. As change agents, we must think of avenues and tools to dismantle systems of oppression at an institutional level. Now is a prime opportunity for us to refuse to go back to “normal,” instead looking forward to new visions for the future that embrace diversity, inclusion, and social justice. It is time for us to start thinking about how we can help shape promising futures for all people to thrive in, and to strive to advocate against systemic oppression.

One strategy to challenge oppressive systems is to consider adrienne marie brown's (2017) concept of “emergent strategy.” brown describes emergent strategy as “shifting the way we see and feel the world and each other” (p. 191). Student affairs practitioners can utilize brown's emergent strategy as a framework to guide their interactions with students. brown reminds us how the Black lives Matter movement utilized emergent strategy. Black Lives Matter organized around heartbreak and is a successful movement because it impacted the way people are aware of barriers to freedom, safety, and justice—things many people long for and passionately believe in. The Black Lives Matter movement collectively—and organically—emerged from authentic desire and authentic longing for change to the status quo. Movements such as Black Lives Matter are very compelling because they call on us to begin caring about our own lives and the lives of others. If we—as student affairs leaders—embrace the same level of care, compassion, and desire for a better world for everyone to thrive in, we can encourage others to join our movement toward creating positive, safe, and inclusive campus environments for students. As student affairs professionals, we will benefit from embracing emergent strategies that focus on dismantling power structures that exist across college campuses. When we show our students that we care about them and their experiences, we offer a counternarrative to dominant perspectives that do not find love and humility as valid tools that can help us bring about social change.

## Lessons from *Emergent Strategy* continued...

Emergent strategy also offers vast opportunities to enhance our role as facilitators. brown's emergent strategy (2017) addresses valuable perspectives on facilitation. I argue that all student affairs professionals should see themselves as educators. One of the best ways we can teach others is to offer opportunities for group discussion on social issues. The need for student affairs professionals to be leaders in providing space for students to critically unpack important issues that impact them necessitates good facilitation skills. Through my experiences as a facilitator, I often notice myself over-preparing for activities as I hope to be seen as "all knowing," and that I "have my stuff together." If you relate to this phenomenon, I hope sharing an alternative to this mindset is liberating for you; emergent strategy shows us that it is important that we prepare less and be comfortable with not knowing. Although this seems pretty radical, ideas of being the sole proprietor of all knowledge and striving for perfectionism are not only unrealistic, but also rooted in westernized, dominant white perspectives that do not leave much room for voices and perspectives outside of those aforementioned positions of power. An emergent strategy facilitator mindset takes pressure off the facilitator to constantly direct and instead leaves the conversation open for everyone to create iteratively.

“ As student affairs professionals, we will benefit from embracing emergent strategies that focus on dismantling power structures that exist across college campuses. When we show our students that we care about them and their experiences, we offer a counternarrative to dominant perspectives that do not find love and humility as valid tools that can help us bring about social change. ”

Emergent spaces are meant to be fluid and adaptive—emergent strategy encourages us to move from “safe space” to “brave space,” meaning we as facilitators and helpers must embrace the uncomfortable by removing ourselves from our current “comfortable” space to consider how we can grow and better adapt to new frames of thought. Being fluid and adaptive often means abandoning our original plan and being open to allowing the conversation to organically reveal itself, enriched by the voices of all participants involved. From an emergent space lens, engagement is seen as “generative conflict” where everyone is working together to make meaning.

All too often, marginalized folx are not being heard or seen in higher education. Emergent strategy emphasizes concepts of interdependence and decentralization, which encourages us to walk away from hierarchies and hierarchical thinking. Intentional adaptation is at the heart of emergent strategy,” meaning how we confront change determines the impact we have on both personal and collective levels (brown, 2017, p. 69).



## Lessons from Emergent Strategy continued...

One can identify the power conflicts that arise in higher education: teacher/student, facilitator/student, mentor/mentee, advisor/advisee, etc. From an emergent strategy framework, we as facilitators need to focus on the ways we engage in privilege avoidance—where we avoid ways we create our environment and the environment for others. Doing so will allow us to hear more voices whom have been historically silenced. When emergent strategies are applied to the way we foster meaning-making for the students with whom we are privileged to work, we are rewarded with the opportunity to engage in shared learning.

brown (2017) argues we must be intentional with our actions when facing change, because change is inevitable, and if we do not adapt to this change, we will become “irrelevant.” Our visions for change also should not come only from one person, but from a group of people, meaning we must adapt together. Adaptation takes trust from all members who are “shoaling” together towards change. Collective adaptation can even promise to reduce the stress and anxiety that comes with change as you are not trying to change alone.

Emergent strategies are ways of looking at the world of which we are a part, and searching for collaborative efforts and learning about positive relationships with one another. In times like these when it feels like the world is overwhelming and it is hard to survive, emergent strategy is mindful of societal change and posits that we embrace it. Instead of reacting to change, we must adapt to change with intention and have an idea of how to collectively support one another in our vision for a better future. Utilizing an emergent strategy lens can help us learn how to problem solve within ourselves so we can work on helping others, and hold ourselves accountable when harm is caused. Emergent strategy also demonstrates how we as facilitators can abandon the use of power in group settings to instead be mindful of interrelatedness and what it means to understand that we all share a profound connection. Approaching the ways in which we perform our duties as student affairs leaders will help us collectively move toward positive change in higher education, and positively impact the lives of the students with whom we work.





## New CCSD Adjunct Faculty

A conversation between Sabrina Yang (CCSD 1st year student and CCSD Graduate Assistant) and Dr. Kyle C. Ashlee (new faculty) about Ashlee's role as an adjunct professor teaching student development theory in the CCSD program.

“ So far, my experience as an adjunct professor in the CCSD program at SCSU has been incredibly positive. My favorite part of the job is working with the bright and talented students in the program. They are thoughtful, reflective, compassionate, and dedicated to supporting college students.

-Dr. Kyle C. Ashlee

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# New CCSD Adjunct Faculty

**CCSD GA:** Tell me about yourself and your professional pathways to student affairs.

**KA:** My name is Kyle Ashlee. I use he/him/his pronouns. I am originally from a small rural town in mid-Michigan. I am a first-generation college student and attended the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. I graduated with two undergraduate degrees in Philosophy and Political Science. While at the University of Michigan, I was very involved in co-curricular leadership opportunities, and the most impactful was serving as a Resident Assistant. Through this experience, I learned about the field of student affairs in higher education and decided to apply to master's programs in student services.

In 2009, I graduated from Colorado State University with my M.S. in Student Affairs in Higher Education. While in graduate school, I began learning about social justice and the role I could play in this work as someone with mostly privileged identities. I got involved with a men's sexual assault prevention and awareness group at Colorado State and there, I discovered a passion for engaging those like me in conversations about social justice.

My first job out of graduate school was overseeing residence life at a small liberal arts college in Switzerland called Franklin College Switzerland. The name of the school has since changed to Franklin University Switzerland, but the school remains a hidden gem where students from all around the world come to learn and live in a truly multicultural environment. Since the school is so small (approximately 400 students total), I wore many hats during my time there, including doing work in New Student Orientation, First-Year programming, leadership programming, diversity, and social justice education, student government, student conduct, and athletics, to name a few. After Switzerland, I worked as the Coordinator of Health Education Programs at Dartmouth College, coordinating programs for men on campus to think more critically about their gender and how to be positive change agents for wellness. I also served as the Interim Director of the Center for Gender and Student Engagement at Dartmouth, extending my work related to gender identity development to all students on campus. From there, my partner (Dr. Aerial A. Ashlee) and I began consulting with organizations in and outside of higher education to provide training and facilitation for teams interested in expanding their social justice capacities.



**Sabrina Yang, CCSD GA**



**Dr. Kyle A. Ashlee,  
CCSD Adjunct Professor**

## Adjunct Faculty continued...

**KA:** In 2015, I served as a Resident Director onboard Semester at Sea, which is a college study abroad program that takes place on a cruise ship, visiting 12 countries in 4 months. In 2019, I graduated with my Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from Miami University in Ohio. My dissertation research focused on the impact of a Critical Whiteness Studies course that I helped create and facilitate for the graduate students in the program. Since that time, I have been teaching and publishing as an independent scholar and I began teaching in the CCSD program this past spring, teaching CEEP 645: Foundations of Student Services.

**CCSD GA:** What is your teaching student affairs philosophy?

**KA:** My teaching philosophy draws heavily from the Learning Partnerships Model (Baxter Magolda, 2004) as well as liberatory frameworks for critical praxis offered by theorists like bell hooks and Paulo Freire. I believe that everyone has something valuable to contribute to the learning environment. By fostering brave classroom spaces where vulnerable sharing is encouraged and supported, I aim to promote critical self-reflection on identity development and inspire action for social justice in higher education.

**CCSD GA:** Why did you decide to work in the CCSD program at St. Cloud State?

**KA:** I believe that student affairs professionals should have a strong foundation in student development theory. Despite the shift of many in our field to focus their professional energy on student retention efforts, I insist that the work of student affairs professionals should be focused primarily on developing students during their time in college. That said, there are not many student affairs graduate programs in the country that focus so intentionally on fostering skills for college student development as the CCSD program at SCSU. Also, I am a theory nerd, and I've always dreamed of teaching student development theory for a program that values student development as a core competency for its graduates. So when I was presented with the opportunity to teach student development theory in the CCSD program, I jumped at the opportunity!

**CCSD GA:** Why are you teaching theories? Why are they important?

**KA:** In the field of student affairs, we have an incredible opportunity to engage in what Paulo Freire calls "Liberatory Praxis," which he defines as the combined action and reflection of individuals within their communities in order to transform the world. In other words, student affairs professionals have the unique ability to transform students' lives by taking action that is informed by reflecting on theory. bell hooks describes theory as healing and liberatory because it provides language to describe the everyday experiences that shape our lives. Theory helps to provide a framework for making meaning and sense out of the world. Student development theory, in particular, is incredibly important for student affairs professionals because it provides useful frameworks for making decisions and supporting students.

## Adjunct Faculty continued...

**KA:** Planning a program? There's a theory for that. Supporting a student through a difficult challenge? There's a theory for that. Challenging a student to learn and grow? There's a theory for that. Aside from the practical benefits of theory, I think that theory gives educators tools to help students see their own strengths and potential. Whether helping a student of color see the immense cultural capital they bring with them to campus or highlighting the ways that a students' multiple intersecting identities create unique perspectives, I believe theories have the power to transform the world by transforming the way that students see themselves.

**CCSD GA:** What has your experience been like so far in CCSD?

**KA:** So far, my experience as an adjunct professor in the CCSD program at SCSU has been incredibly positive. My favorite part of the job is working with the bright and talented students in the program. They are thoughtful, reflective, compassionate, and dedicated to supporting college students. Teaching and learning alongside these students gives me hope that we can create positive change in higher education, focusing on supporting students in their holistic development and promoting social justice in higher education. While the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that I only get to see these students through a screen, I have been impressed with their resilience, their positivity, and their commitment to learning.

**CCSD GA:** Thank you for sharing your experience with us, Dr. Ashlee!



*"Joining the CCSD program has been nothing but transformative for me. I remember walking out of my very first class and going straight to Dr. Macari's office saying, 'I didn't know what I was signing up for - this is overwhelming.' Sitting there for what would be 30 minutes, I walked out thinking 'I guess I will give this a shot.' And it was the best decision ever! For me, this has been a journey to find who I truly am, what am I capable of doing, and how can I contribute to make college a better place for students. I am thankful for my cohort-mates and professors who have made this program an amazing journey to embark upon. "*

**-Summaiah Junaid**  
2nd year CCSD student



# Personal Lessons from a First-Year CCSD Student's Perspective

By: **Sabrina Yang**, 1st year CCSD student

My journey (so far) in the College Counseling & Student Development (CCSD) master's program has brought on many epiphanies, moments of clarity, worries, and overwhelming self-doubt. However, with the guidance of the program faculty, mentors, the teachings of holistic approaches to student development and student success (along with my own will), I have learned five important lessons that have helped me understand my own development as a first-year graduate student learning to be a well-rounded professional. I hope these truths resonate with and help others.



**Lesson 1: My body is my first-responder.** This year was plagued with unimaginable injustices, pain, and cynicism. I entered the new school year, trying to survive a global pandemic, and as lives were taken by COVID-19, the fate of humanity seemed lost as mask-wearing protests around the United States began. The world seemed even more doomed with the death of George Floyd, ongoing police brutality, the constant Anti-Asian hate crimes, and the mass shootings of Asian women outside of Atlanta, Georgia. No matter how many times we said their names, tried keeping their legacies and memory alive, the violence did not stop spilling blood. So what happens when this type of energy and painful emotions spin in a chaotic cycle? The soul hardens. And when the soul hardens, it begins to break down, and so too does the body. We either fight against the grain, going against the strongest currents life and our emotions could deliver, or we go with the flow and see where we emerge. When I fight against the current and battle with the thought of being swallowed by my emotions, my body is the first system to flash warning signs; it is there to remind me that I must take care of myself. The left side of my body becomes numb, and my jaw sets into a tense clench. My physical symptoms become more intense if I ignore my needs. If I am to start feeling like myself again, I must listen to my body and offer soothing resolutions.

**Lesson 2: Students going into ANY helping profession need access to mental health resources, but it may not as easy as it seems.** I would like to highlight that mental health counseling and mental health resources are a privilege. Many students who come from underrepresented and low-income communities have no one telling them to seek therapy to heal unresolved emotional, and mental wounds. Students may have underlining mental health concerns that are undiagnosed and stigmatized due to the lack of resources and outreach. As a student of color, I experienced moments of unacknowledged shame and inexplicable self-doubt. And, with the encouragement of faculty, I had the privilege of being able to find mental health services on campus.

## Personal Lessons continued...

The helping field can be daunting and demanding. I found going to therapy to be helpful with re-learning and un-learning toxic behaviors, stigmas, and biases. Lastly, I learned from my brief counseling sessions on campus that it is okay to finally try counseling and realize the mental health professional you are working with is not the right fit. Seeking therapy is a delicate process, for example there may be cultural disconnections, but with a little looking and perseverance culturally-relevant mental health specialists can be found.

### **Lesson 3: Communication with the program faculty is one of the healthiest things to adopt.**

When I felt lost and when I missed my family, Dr. Aerial A. Ashlee, Dr. Kyle C. Ashlee, and Dr. Dan Macari helped me feel safe. They helped me believe in myself. Oftentimes, there is a sense of pride that I feel, a habit of wanting to do things by myself without guidance. However, every time I came across hurdles and stumbled, the faculty were always there to support me; no matter what. I have found a new appreciation for transparency, particularly with my professors. I can express myself with openness with and without clarity. I have found that open communication allows me to help my professors understand exactly where I am at, so they can best support me in getting to where I need to be.

**Lesson 4: Always forgive.** I struggle with perfectionism and critical self-judgment. This is one of my steepest learning curves, being okay with myself so that I can move past my little (and sometimes big) transgressions. For a long time, I didn't think I deserved anything; even the grades that I worked hard for. It was to the point where a cup of water to nourish my dry body was not enough until I somehow felt accomplished for doing something the right way. One day, it hit me. There is no right way to do things, it is simply doing that is right. I find that naming and creating personal space to apologize to my body, my soul, and my mind elevates my overall health. If I continue to harbor anger against myself every time I do something not to my liking, I cause unnecessary pain. I have come to realize that there is beauty in everything, and that includes me, imperfect and all. Despite my moments of uncontrollable emotions, I surpassed them because I now know my mistakes do not define me. Self-blame and self-sabotage are toxic, and they destroy me and rob me in ways I cannot explain. Holding healthy emotional and academic boundaries for myself is a piece of advice I share with everyone, knowing it may look different for each person.

**Lesson 5: Never underestimate and doubt.** Lastly, one of the most important and underrated lessons I have come to understand is to never downplay my own greatness. I'm not sure why that is so normalized in society... the acceptable notion of always needing to do more to be happy. Not believing in myself, instead believing the doubts I have of myself, and the doubts others have of me, does not help instill growth. It does not help build me into the person I want to become. Some philosophies I have started using while I journal, or talk about myself, is the belief that comparing myself with others will never help me feel enough.

So instead, I have begun to see my growth by comparing the person I was a week ago, a month ago, a year ago... to who I am today. I am not the same person, so why should my thoughts stay stagnate? Why should I continue a cycle of shame if it does not serve me? I have noticed that I often stop myself from being the best version of myself. I no longer want to be afraid of being who I am, and who I am becoming.



# CCSD End of the Year Get Together



Photo credit: Jack Vang

Back row: Dr. Kyle C. Ashee, Nate Duncan, Dylan Koenig, Dr. Dan Macari, Lucas Vetsch, Zoe Davis, Ibukunoluwa Lijadu

Middle row: Azaelea Ashlee, Dr. Aeriell Ashlee, Yuliia Sobko, Summaiah Junaid, Emily Hennes, Alyssa Bergland, Taryn Hersch, Virginia Sumihi, Kacey Bostrom

Front row: Sabrina Yang

**Thanks, Dr. Macari for hosting!**



*Shifting to distant learning was challenging for me; however, I'm grateful to be a part of the CCSD program. My cohort mates, professors, and supervisors have supported me throughout my journey; lots of opportunities to learn regarding personal and professional development. Thank you for all the in-person and online class memories. I will always cherish them.*

**Virginia Sumihi, 2nd year CCSD student**

## Reflections on Spring 2021 from Current CCSD Students

*St. Cloud State and our College Counseling and Student Development program provides me with a transformative learning experience! My insight from the spring semester is that being vulnerable promotes learning! I am looking forward to spending my summertime doing my internship with the Advising and Student Transitions office and I am so excited to discover Minnesota with my baby husky!*

**Mariia Tikhonova, 1st year CCSD student**





# Reflections on Learning with CCSD from a School Counseling Student

By: **Jordy Ildvad**, School Counseling graduate student

This past semester was possibly one of the most challenging semesters I have had in my college career. I had just taken on a new role as a father figure to a beautiful little girl as well as had a baby boy of my own. My girlfriend had begun a new job working overnights, and I was in my second semester of grad school, taking more classes than I had taken in a very long time. Even with all of this going on, there was one class I could look forward to every week, and that was Group Process and Dynamics. Dr. Ashlee did a great job making me feel welcomed; she would encourage everyone to participate in their own way and to the best of their ability. My classmates all were also incredibly welcoming, this truly was my favorite class of all time! I owe everyone in it a genuine thank you for being so great! If I wasn't set on School Counseling, the CCSD program would be at the top of my list!



## Gaining Presenting Experience at PDC

By: **Samantha Yang**, 1st year CCSD student

In January 2021, I presented a workshop on mental health as a social justice issue at the Power in Diversity Conference (PDC) at SCSU. In the workshop, I presented a summary of previous research on the relationship between poverty and mental health with a panel of three Hmong American women currently working in the mental health field. This was a great opportunity and learning experience for me to be able to plan a workshop and talk about a current issue in society. In creating this workshop, I had to network and find guests for the panel. I was able to plan this workshop through the knowledge and support that I gained



from my Graduate Assistantship with Health Huskies. In presenting this workshop I was able to improve my public speaking skills. I received feedback from session participants who expressed their gratitude for hearing Asian American women's voices and experiences. I am proud of the work I accomplished through this workshop and that I was able to create space for Asian American women to share their personal and work experience in the mental health field.

# Alumni Updates



Above: Congrats to **Mai Xiong** (CCSD Class of 2020) on your new role as a Career Coach in the Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Go Gophers!



Above: Happy two-year work anniversary **Nathan Bambenek** (CCSD Class of 2019). You continue to do great things as an Academic Advisor at the University of Illinois Chicago!

Congratulations **Jaz Hofbauer** (CCSD Class of 2020, not pictured) on your new position as Assistant Registrar at Dunwoody College of Technology. Movin' on up!



Above: Congrats to **Bruno Xue** (CCSD Class of 2020) on your new role as a Guided Pathway Academic Advisor at North Hennepin Community College. We are so proud of you!



Above: Congrats to **Taryn Hersch** (CCSD Class of 2021) on your new position as a Career Coach at Auburn University. Best wishes with your move to Alabama!

**If you have work or life updates to share with the CCSD community, please send them to [ccsd@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:ccsd@stcloudstate.edu)**



## PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

**Ashlee, A. A.**, Diaz, T., Failing, K., & Owens, J. H. (2021, May). Racism and bias in higher education and beyond. Invited panelist for Gwynedd Mercy University's Educational Conference on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

**Ashlee, A. A.**, (2021, April). Invited speaker for the University of Minnesota Twin Cities' Leadership Enrichment Programs Lunch with Leaders Series.

**Ashlee, A. A.**, Blair-Medeiros, S. L., Dos, D., Jackson, S., Pheneger, C., & Sellers, A. (2021, March). Both/And: Story-sharing and solidarity building for transracial adoptee and multiracial student affairs educators. Pre-conference presentation at the NASPA Student Affairs Educators in Higher Education Virtual Conference.

**Ashlee, A. A.**, Combs, L., Bettencourt, G., Olson, A., Prieto, Alvarado, A., & Cepeda, R. (2021, March). Exploring identity interconnections: A practical approach to facilitating empathy & connectivity in a time of division and pain. Presentation at the NASPA Student Affairs Educators in Higher Education Virtual Conference.

Combs, L., **Ashlee, A. A.**, Prieto, K., Cepeda, R., Bettencourt, G., Campa, K., Olson, A., Sasaki, W., Ashlee, K. C., & Duran, A. (2021, March). Identity interconnections: Facilitating empathy and connectivity across and between identity experiences. Presentation at the ACPA21: A Virtual Experience.

Hyun, H. W., Kurland, W. M, **Ashlee, A. A.**, Beltran, B., Cabrera, J., Owen, C., & Christensen, R. (2021, March). Navigating borderland communities in a monolithic paradigm. Presentation at the NASPA Student Affairs Educators in Higher Education Virtual Conference.



# Share the good news!

Attention CCSD alumni, we would love to hear from you! **Have you recently presented at a conference or published your work? Do you have a personal or professional life update to share with the CCSD community?**

Email your updates to [ccsd@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:ccsd@stcloudstate.edu)

**Special thanks to our CCSD newsletter editorial team:** Sabrina Yang (CCSD GA) & Dr. Aerial A. Ashlee



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**facebook**

Be sure to join our [CCSD Facebook Group](#) to stay up to date with all the latest happenings in the CCSD community!

#SApro #SAGrad  
#studentaffairs #CCSD

## MORE PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

**Bambenek, N.** (2021, February). Becoming today's advisors: A look into the journey and future of advising. Presentation for the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Academic Advising team at the University of Illinois, Chicago, IL.

**Bambenek, N.** (2021, February). Advising as a scholarly field: How far have we come & where should we go? Presentation for the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Academic Advising team at the University of Illinois, Chicago, IL.

**Bostrom, K.** (2021, January). *Allyship: A journey*. Presentation at the annual Power in Diversity Leadership Conference, St. Cloud, MN.

Witkowsky, P., Starkey, K., Clayton, G., Garner, M., & **Andersen, A.** (2020). Promises and realities: Academic advisors' perspectives of dual enrollment credit. *NACADA Journal*, 40(2), 63–73. doi: <https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-19-24>

**Yang, S.** (2021, January). Mental health is a social justice issue: Relationship between poverty and mental health. Presentation at the annual Power in Diversity Leadership Conference, St. Cloud, MN.

## CCSD Rolling Admissions for F21!

CCSD is accepting rolling admission applications for our fall 2021 cohort. Please help us recruit the next generation of CCSD students by submitting a nomination or sharing our e-flyer (see next page).

<https://tinyurl.com/CCSDnomination>



# FAST FACTS

COLLEGE COUNSELING & STUDENT DEVELOPMENT M.S.  
ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY



CCSD prepares graduates for careers in **student affairs** by grounding our curriculum in **student development**, **social justice**, and **helping skills**.

## STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Our program features a critical examination of student learning and development theories and their application in student affairs.



## SOCIAL JUSTICE

Our program examines power, privilege, and oppression in student affairs, emphasizing self-reflexivity and agency to advance justice and inclusion.

## HELPING SKILLS

Our program foregrounds helping skills, advising and support strategies to facilitate holistic wellness for our graduates and their students.



## COHORT MODEL

Our small cohort size enables students to develop strong personal and professional relationships with classmates and faculty.

## ASSISTANTSHIPS OPPORTUNITIES

Graduate Assistantships are available, providing valuable practical experience in student affairs, in addition to a stipend and tuition waiver.



**Please share widely!**  
**#CCSD #SAgrad**  
**#studentaffairs**

Now accepting rolling admissions applications for Fall 2021.

[HTTPS://WWW.STCLOUDSTATE.EDU/GRADUATE/CCSD/](https://www.stcloudstate.edu/graduate/ccsd/)