

The CCSD Dispatch

St. Cloud State University

College Counseling & Student Development Program Newsletter



Photo of CCSD students in Fall 2021 Social Justice & Student Development class with special guest Dr. Katrina Rodriguez, SCSU's Vice President of Student Life & Development.

Introducing... The CCSD Dispatch!

I am delighted to share that we finally have a name for the CCSD newsletter.... introducing *The CCSD Dispatch!* As we continue to navigate the uncertainty of COVID-19, I hope this newsletter can serve as a grounding in, connection to, and celebration of our program's purpose and impact in the field of student affairs. To our CCSD alumni, program partners, current and prospective students: we see you and we value your steadfast commitment to employing helping skills to foster college student development and social justice in student affairs and higher education.

In community,
Dr. Aerial A. Ashlee, CCSD Graduate Director

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CCSD Alumna Serving as Cultural Ambassador at the World's Fair in Dubai

By: Dr. Dan Macari, CCSD Professor



As a student in the College Counseling and Student Development program, **Belinda Lee, CCSD Class of 2020**, was always traveling. Belinda participated in study abroad trips to China, South Africa, Malaysia, Thailand, and Laos. She finished her program with a year-long internship at Alnwick Castle in Northumberland, England. Little did we know that this was just the start of her global journey!

Belinda is now serving as a U.S. State Department Youth Ambassador and is one of 75 USA Pavilion Youth Ambassadors representing the United States at the World's Fair, Expo 2020 Dubai. As part of her duties, she welcomes visitors, U.S. officials, and international delegates to the USA Pavilion, and shares information about the U.S. history, culture and diverse populations with thousands of visitors from all around the world. The pavilion's theme is "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of the Future" and highlights the history of U.S. inventions and innovation.

In November 2021, I was fortunate to have an opportunity to travel to the United Arab Emirates as part of a delegation from SCSU. This group, including University President Robbyn Wacker and Associate Vice President of the Center for International Studies Shahzad Ahmad, was in the region to develop new partnerships with several universities in Dubai and to network with SCSU alumni in the UAE and surrounding region. During the trip, I was able to spend some time with Belinda and see her in action and I can say that she is a strong and proud representative of the US, SCSU, and the CCSD program, as well as her Hmong culture. According to Belinda, "I've had the chance to share about my Hmong history and heritage with folks who have never heard the word and have that represented in Dubai." Way to go Belinda!

Organization for CCSD Scholars



The Organization for CCSD Scholars is excited to share a few highlights from the fall 2021 semester! We enjoyed planning and implementing a welcome event in September for the new first-year cohort (see photo above). Attendees braved the rainy weather for a scavenger hunt, orienting themselves to our beautiful campus. We then took the event inside and enjoyed a couple of rounds of free bowling in Atwood Memorial Center – just one of the perks of being a student at St. Cloud State University!

As our organization's board members only serve the program for one year, we collectively decided to add a new Liaison Representative position open to the first-year cohort, in order to make transitions between boards even smoother. We have been so happy to welcome Saloni Saraf in this position; she has already shared many great ideas and added valuable insight and perspective as a first-year CCSD student.

Several students from each of the current cohorts had the opportunity to attend the 2021 NASPA Region IV–East Conference in Minneapolis, MN in early November. We as a board were happy to help others navigate funding applications and are grateful for the help that SCSU provided that allowed many of us to attend.

Lastly, we wrapped up the semester with another social in Atwood! We've definitely experienced some ups and downs this semester when getting together as a program – from navigating demanding schedules to dealing with breakthrough COVID cases. We are grateful for the support and flexibility that each member of the CCSD family has shown us. We look forward to another busy and exciting semester! Go Huskies!

– **Zoe Davis**, 2021–2022 Organization for CCSD Scholars Vice President, **2nd year CCSD student**

CCSD Alum Spotlight

An interview with Brandon Byrd (CCSD Class of 2020),
Resident Director at the University of California, Los Angeles

CCSD: Please tell us a bit about your current job and what you love most about it.

Brandon: I've recently transitioned from the University of New Hampshire to the University of California, Los Angeles. I'm currently working as a Resident Director in the Office of Residential Life. I oversee two buildings on the Hill, which houses about 900+ students. My day-to-day usually involves several administrative tasks, student conduct meetings, 1-on-1s with my student staff, and supervising a paraprofessional staff member. I also sit on the Engagement Advisory Team and Geek Week committees. My favorite aspect of my current role is working with my student staff. I was lucky to get such a great group of students. It's been amazing seeing them grow in their RA roles and meeting their personal goals. I get so much joy from them stopping by my office to tell me about passing a difficult exam or having a meaningful interaction with their residents.

CCSD: How has your CCSD education prepared you for your career in student affairs?

Brandon: I'm very thankful for the variety of courses and practical experiences that were offered during my time in CCSD. I've found myself using a lot of the skills acquired from the counseling procedures class and multicultural counseling. I think one of the most important lessons I picked up while in the CCSD program was meeting students where they currently are at. We can't expect all the students we encounter to be on the same playing field as our society is set up to disenfranchise certain populations. By learning this I've been able to really adapt my approach with students of varying backgrounds.

CCSD: In the pandemic, many student affairs educators have come to recognize (now, perhaps more than ever) the importance of self-care. How do you practice self-care? What tips or suggestions would you share with our current master's students about balancing their many commitments with their own personal wellness?



Brandon Byrd,
CCSD Class of 2020

Alum Spotlight continued...

Brandon: The best thing I've done was taking my work email off my personal cell phone. That forced me to create boundaries in my work setting as I'm not as easily accessible after leaving the office. Besides that, I've gotten into SoulCycle, exploring the greater Los Angeles area, and building a community at work with whom I can share frustrations with and not feel judged. For the current CCSDers, please make sure that you're communicating with your supervisors about workloads and your capacity. Practice having those conversations now because in the field it will be imperative for you to let your supervisor know if/when you don't have the capacity to be on two different university committees, run a week's worth of events, meet with 30+ students, and still manage three longstanding projects. You need to be able to advocate for your mental and physical wellbeing. Also, blocking off time in your work schedule to finish administrative tasks will change the game for you.

CCSD: Anything else you'd like to share?

Brandon: Take advantage of the internship experience and try to get one at a different type of institution, whether it's private, a community college, or something else. Look for an internship that will give you the opportunity to have your hands in a multitude of things.



Photo of **Brandon Byrd**, **CCSD Class of 2020**, celebrating the end of UCLA move-in with his 2021-2022 resident advisor team.

CCSD at NASPA4E Conference



Photos of CCSD students, alumni, and Dr. Ashlee at the 2021 NASPA4E conference in Minneapolis, MN.

Reflection by: **Samantha Yang, 2nd year CCSD student**

It was great to work with Mai Xiong (CCSD Class of 2020) and Tony Yang (CCSD Class of 2019) on NASPA4E presentation and to hear how their experiences were similar to and different from mine. In working on the presentation, I reflected on my own experiences as a college student, particularly my student leadership experience and using Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth to find strengths within my experiences. I found that it was very powerful to share my experience and have the language to be able to describe my experiences. It was a great professional development opportunity to present at the NASPA IV-East conference. It was a very powerful moment for me to speak about my own experiences as a Hmong college student and how that identity relates to my experience as a student affairs educator. It was important that my co-presenters and I spoke about Hmong college students because the Hmong student population is often overlooked when institutions do not disaggregate data on Asian Americans in higher education. There are many specific resources that can help Hmong college students be successful in their journey. It was also important that we presented to provide space for student affairs educators to continue the conversation on how to best support Hmong college students and other ethnic student identities.



Pursuing a CCSD Thesis

Q&A between Dr. Ashlee and **Alyssa Duncan, 2nd year CCSD student**

Dr. Ashlee: What is your thesis about?

Alyssa: My thesis is centered around students with disabilities. The qualitative study will explore students with disabilities' experiences and perceptions navigating college. Specifically, my thesis will explore how universal design is used in the classroom and students' interactions with faculty.



Dr. Ashlee: How did you get interested in this research topic?

Alyssa: I have had a passion for working with people who have disabilities for a while now, not only because of my own disabilities but also my past work experience at a day training habilitation site where I did case management and direct support for adults with disabilities. This sparked my interest in social justice work for the community. When I entered CCSD, I found a passion for continuing this work with and for people with disabilities, just in a different capacity. I was also thrilled to be able to work in a disability support office for my internship, where my thesis research is being conducted. After working with my internship supervisor, this topic was a great fit to improve the office/campus and aligned with literature I had been reading.

Dr. Ashlee: What has been the most rewarding and challenging part of your thesis experience so far?

Alyssa: Autonomy has been both the most challenging and rewarding part of my thesis experience. I appreciate my independence and how rewarding it is to complete this project, and it is challenging to motivate myself to do the work! Some days reading a ton of research hasn't been the most appealing. With the autonomy, I have learned a lot about my own internal processing and am learning when to ask for help. I am proud that I have been able to experience this self-growth and found the motivation and energy to do this project.

Dr. Ashlee: Do you have any tips or advice for other CCSD students who may be considering pursuing a thesis?

Alyssa: Talk to someone about this route! It was very helpful for me to talk to multiple people about the thesis route before committing to it. This way you can learn the pros and cons about the process as you consider whether it makes sense for your CCSD experience.

Saloni Saraf: 1st Year CCSD Student



“As a first semester CCSD student, I was honored to be accepted to present at the 2021 MN ACPA conference. In line with this year’s theme of Systemic Change in Higher Education: What’s Your Role?, I presented a session titled “How can I help?: Understanding underrepresented minorities’ STEM education journey.” In my presentation, I discussed the perceived difficulty of a STEM major, which may deterred minoritized students from pursuing a STEM degree. I also addressed the vicious cycle in which lack of appropriate resources and encouragement from higher education personnel, may serve as additional barriers for underrepresented minorities in STEM.

Through my session, I provided insights into why this happens and how we as student affairs professionals can improve admission and retention of underrepresented students in STEM fields. I am so grateful to Dr. Ashlee for her encouragement and valuable feedback, which empowered me to connect the dots in our Social Justice & Student Development class and gave me the language, conceptual knowledge, and confidence to convey my passion for uplifting minoritized student populations in STEM at post-secondary institutions.

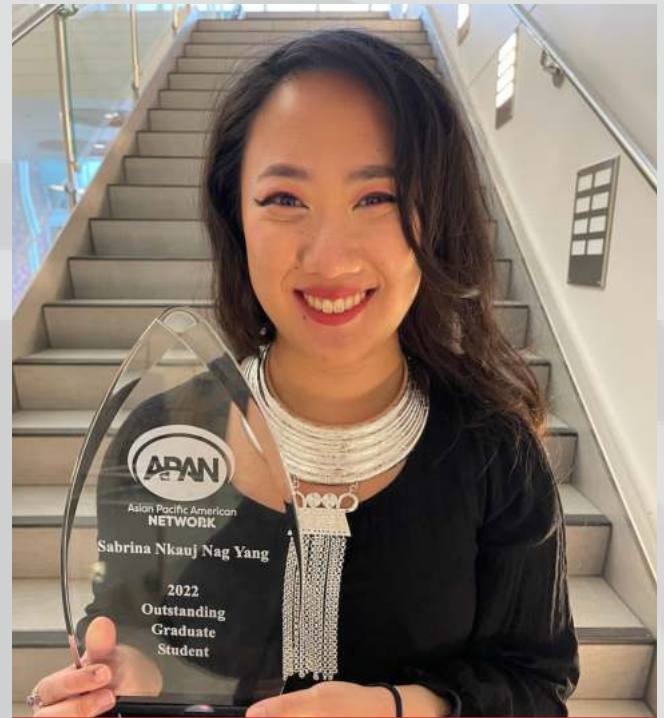
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Celebrating Our CCSD Students



Congratulations **Zoe Davis** (2nd year CCSD student) on your and Camron's engagement!

Congratulations to **CCSD 2nd year students Samantha Yang** who recently accepted an interim Resident Director position at Maclester College and **Alyssa Duncan** who has been hired as an Access Consultant at St. Kate's. We wish you both the best as you wrap up your CCSD coursework and transition into your new roles.



Congrats **Sabrina Nkauj Nag Yang** (2nd year CCSD student) on being selected as the ACPA Asian Pacific American Network's 2022 Outstanding Graduate Student. We are so proud of you!

Shout out to **Mariia Tikhonova** and **Samantha Yang** (2nd year CCSD students) for your student-mentor collaboration grants supporting your scholarly projects on *Critical Race Counter-Narratives from International Students on Navigating Neoracism in Higher Education* and *Forging Culturally Relevant Pathways for Hmong American Student Affairs Educators*.



“ Being part of the CCSD program has been an amazing journey. It has allowed me to gain more perspectives from my colleagues and professors. Being able to learn about new theories and applying them to my graduate assistantship has also been such an amazing experience and learning opportunity. Being part of a small cohort has allowed me and my peers to build closer relationships and learn from each other, as we all come from different cultures, identities, and experiences. I have grown so much already!

-**Yee Ba Lee**, 1st year CCSD student



CCSD Alumni Updates

Shout out to **Yuliia Sobko, CCSD Class of 2021**, on her six month anniversary serving as a Career Consultant at the University of Texas at Dallas. Yuliia and her husband moved to Richardson, TX last year and have been loving the diversity of Dallas, getting connected to the local Ukrainian community, and the sunshine and warm weather. We miss you!



Congratulations to **Alyssa Bergland, CCSD Class of 2021**, on the birth of her beautiful daughter, Briar Rose, and on her new position as an advisor for the College of Science and Engineering at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Go Gophers!



Congrats to **Caitlyn Nygaard, CCSD Class of 2018**, on her recent promotion to Recruiting Coordinator (previously serving as an Admissions Counselor) for the UMN College of Pharmacy on the Duluth campus and on her engagement! We look forward to seeing photos from your wedding in November 2022.

Congratulations to **Der Yang, CCSD Class of 2020**, on her new position as a Retention Specialist with the Seattle Promise Program. We are so excited for you to represent CCSD in the Pacific Northwest!



Congratulations to **Christa Hayes, CCSD Class of 2011**, on her new position as Director of Civic Engagement and Assessment in the Department of Campus Involvement. Welcome back to SCSU!



Ella Benson, CCSD Class of 2014, married her husband, André Johansson Bresson, on March 6, 2021. The happy couple welcomed their son, Leandro Bresson, on April 26, 2021 and bought a house in Harplinge, Sweden! We are overjoyed for Ella and her family.

Alumni Updates Continued...



Our very own **Michelle A. Schmitz, CCSD Class of 2005**, Executive Director of the SCSU Career Center was honored on October 15, 2021 with the 2019-2020 University Leadership Award presented by the SCSU Alumni Association. We couldn't be prouder Michelle, of you and your career of service to SCSU! [pictured left with her nominator Dr. Dan Macari, CCSD professor]

Sara (Biru) Brooks, CCSD Class of 2017, has been working in CentraCare as an Education Project Specialist and also serves as Chair of the CentraCare African American Employee Resource Group. In this leadership role, Sara has been busy creating an "Empowerment Allies Summit" scheduled for February 19, 2022. CentraCare is lucky to have you!



PUBLICATION & PRESENTATIONS

We love celebrating the contributions our CCSD alumni, students, and faculty are making to the field of student affairs and higher education. If you have recently published or presented your work, please let us know at ccsd@stcloudstate.edu.

Ashlee, A. A., Tikhonova, M., Junaid, S., & Lijadu, I. (2021, November). *Critical race counter-narratives from international students on navigating neo-racism in higher education*. Presentation at the NASPA Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education Region IV-E Annual Conference, Minneapolis, MN.

Ashlee, A. A., Yang, S., Xiong, M., & Yang, T. (2021, November). *Courageously forging culturally relevant pathways for Hmong Americans in higher education*. Presentation at the NASPA Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education Region IV-E Annual Conference, Minneapolis, MN.

Ashlee, K. C. & Ashlee, A. A. (2022). A critical praxis of interconnectivity in student affairs. In S. Marine & C. E. Gilbert (Eds.) *Critical praxis in higher education and student affairs: Social justice in action* (pp. 88-103). Stylus.

Share your good news!

CCSD student and alumni, we would love to hear from you! **Have you recently presented at a conference or published something? Do you have a personal or professional life update that you would like to share with the CCSD community?**

Email us at:
ccsd@stcloudstate.edu



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

MORE PUBLICATION & PRESENTATIONS

Ashlee, K. C., Colquitt Jr., K., & Quinn, J. (2021). Look for the helpers: Engaging college men through productive masculinity. In C.M. Reneau & Villarreal, M. A. (Eds.) *Leading the transformation of higher education institutions through social justice, equity, and inclusion*. IGI Global Publishing.

Ashlee, K.C. & Nix, J. V. (2021, May). Neoliberalism in higher education. Session presented virtually at the New England Assessment Conference (NEAC). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ua8G3bR2Tok>

Ashlee, K. C. & Ashlee, A. A. (2021, October). *Identity, community, and connection through difference: Exploring our role in systemic change*. Presentation at the MN ACPA Annual Conference, virtual.

McKee, K., **Ashlee, A. A.**, Combs, L. D., Evans-Zepeda, C., & McCollough, M. (2021, November). *Supporting women of color graduate students*. Presentation at the National Women's Studies Association annual conference, virtual.

Saraf, S. (2021, November). *How can I help?: Understanding underrepresented minorities' STEM education journey*. Presentation at the MN ACPA Annual Conference, virtual.

Yang, S., & Ashlee, A. A. (2021, October). Initiating conversations of systemic change in creating culturally relevant pathways for Hmong Americans in higher education. Presentation at the MN ACPA Annual Conference, virtual.

Yang, S. (2022, January). *A poetry facilitation: Disrupting social justice fatigue*. Presentation at the annual Power in Diversity Leadership Conference, St. Cloud, MN.

Yang, S. (2022, January). *Community Cultural Wealth as Strengths in Career Prep*. Presentation at the annual Power in Diversity Leadership Conference, St. Cloud, MN.

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