GOVERNOR NAMES KNAKE NEW TRUSTEE

President welcomes former professor back to campus

INSDIEMSU STAFF // ADMINISTRATION

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has appointed Renee Knake, a former law and business professor at MSU, to the university’s board of trustees. Knake serves as a professor of law at the University of Houston Law Center and is the Joanne and Larry Doherty Chair in Legal Ethics. In addition to her teaching role, she is the director of Outcomes and Assessments and a member of the Diversity, Inclusion and Equality Committee. Prior to joining the University of Houston in 2016, Knake spent more than 10 years at MSU, receiving tenure at the College of Law and also teaching at the Eli Broad College of Business and the Honors College.

“I look forward to meeting and working with Ms. Knake and welcoming her back into the MSU community,” said President Samuel L. Stanley Jr., M.D. “Her experience in higher education, ethics and diversity issues will be great assets in supporting our efforts to build a safer, more respectful and more welcoming campus while striving to enhance student success and improve our community.”

Knake will serve the remaining term of Nancy Schlichting, who resigned Oct. 26. The seat vacated by Schlichting, and formerly by George Perls who resigned in 2018 due to health reasons, will be

Stanley sets initiatives on planning, diversity

Two committees to shape vision in inclusive manner INSDIEMSU STAFF // ADMINISTRATION

President Samuel L. Stanley Jr., M.D., recently announced the formation of two planning processes, one focused on creating a shared vision for the university and the other ensuring the university simultaneously embraces diversity, equity and inclusion as a foundation on campus.

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee, including faculty, staff and students, will serve in an advisory capacity to the president. Vennie Gore, vice president for auxiliary enterprises, and Joseph Salem Jr., dean of MSU Libraries, are serving as co-chairs of the panel.

The committee is charged with developing a process for gathering input from campus and external stakeholders, including alumni and community leaders, about the university’s vision, values and strategic direction.

“This process is less about setting a guiding direction for the future,” Gore said, “and more about setting a guiding direction for the future.”

As Winter Looms, No Break for MSU’s Farm Managers

Workers oversee 6 farms housing 6,000 animals

MADDIE CURLEY // WORKING AT MSU

Editor’s note: In Working at MSU, occasional InsideMSU stories, readers will learn more about what it means to be a Spartan and hear from MSU faculty and staff across campus who love what they do.

MSU is home to nearly 6,000 animals housed across six farms — spanning 630 acres, with an additional 600 acres dedicated to growing feed — all located within three miles of central campus. While many university employees enjoy time off during the holidays, campus farm workers are still on the clock. Farm managers and their staff are on-site seven days a week to ensure animals are fed, watered and cared for.

For Lacey Quail, farm manager for the Sheep Teaching and Research Center, the end of October to mid-December is a quiet time spent preparing the farm for winter temperatures.

“Working on the farm goes beyond just caring for the animals,” Quail said. “We also have to maintain the property and facilities to keep the animals healthy and safe. This can mean replacing an old gate or fence, pouring concrete or maintaining water lines.”

Although the farm’s 250 mature sheep (and lambs depending on the time of year) are kept indoors for the winter, only half of the barn is heated. Keeping the animals’ water from freezing is one of the biggest challenges, Quail said.

“ Sheep don’t notice the weather change all that much,” she added. “They may flock up more when it’s cold, but as long as their wool is dry, it’s easy for them to keep warm.”

Sheep typically get this treatment around this time:

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NEW ASSOCIATE VP NAMED FOR OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

President Samuel L. Stanley Jr. has appointed Tanya Jachimiak as the new associate vice president of the Office for Civil Rights and Compliance, effective Feb. 3. In this position, she will provide leadership and oversight of MSU’s Prevention, Outreach and Education Department, Office of Institutional Equity and Resolution Office.

“This is an important post for MSU, and we are pleased to have someone with Tanya’s background join us,” Stanley said. “She brings valuable experience in leading complex teams and developing successful programs. She will be a key asset as we continue to expand our relationship with the federal government and expand our work in this area.”

Jachimiak has more than 20 years of experience in higher education and compliance work. Most recently, she was the chief of the President’s Committee on the Interaction of Freedom of Expression, Bias and Code of Conduct; and a member of the President’s Committee on Race, Equity and Inclusion and the Council on Inclusion and Diversity.

“When visiting Michigan State’s campus, I felt a sense of pride,” Jachimiak said. “I hope to carry that pride into the commitment I have for leading a team that is responsible for ensuring a safe and equitable campus for all.”

Jachimiak earned a bachelor’s degree in philosophy from the University of Illinois at Chicago and a law degree from DePaul University College of Law in Chicago.

She will be replacing Robert Kent, who has served as interim associate vice president since June 2018. He will stay on in an advisory role until March 1 and then will be returning to the Office of the General Counsel.

EIGHT NATS CI FACULTY MEMBERS NAMED TO FOURTH COHORT OF STEM FELLOWS

Valene Hedges, neuroscience; Carey Henley, neuroscience; Krystyna Kijewska, chemistry; Andrew Krause, mathematics; Ryan Maccombs, mathematics; Jennifer Taylor, neuroscience; and Chrysoula Vassilieou, chemistry, were among the eight from the college to be named.
CURRENT, RETIRED FACULTY GIVING BACK

Eysters give $7.5K for scholarships for VetMed students

LOIS FURRY // ADVANCEMENT

Muhammad Ali once said of champions: “They are made from something they have deep inside them — a desire, a dream, a vision.”

George and Janet Eyster surely are champions. The Eysters, both retired from the MSU faculty, stepped up to be 2019 Give Green Day Champions to help fund scholarships for students in the College of Veterinary Medicine. The couple has contributed $1,500 and challenged the alumni and friends of the college to match (and hopefully surpass) that amount to help the next generation of veterinarians.

Give Green Day is an annual 24-hour campaign to engage Spartan alumni and friends of MSU in giving back to support students at MSU. MSU’s current and retired faculty and staff have played a significant role in the success of Give Green Day over the past three years, championing efforts in the areas of MSU that mean the most to them and, also, giving nearly 18 percent of the total dollars raised. In 2018 alone, 945 faculty and staff members gave $141,116.

Janet Eyster agrees: “Each of us found careers in this area, and we never looked back. This has been our home, and Michigan State is central to that.”

Dawn Baker, MSU’s IT chief of staff, is another Give Green Champion. Stepping up for the MSU Museum, Eyster says, “There’s so many reasons to support the MSU Museum,” she said. “Programs like Science on a Sphere make science more accessible to everyone, bringing global data, information and patterns right to your fingertips.”

WINNERS NAMED IN GLOBAL PHOTO CONTEST

Dec. 20 // REFLECT AND CONNECT:
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Dec. 18 // COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR SUPERVISORS: Learn how to communicate effectively as a leader and build trust among your team. This HR session will be held from 9:30 a.m. to noon in Nobell Building, Suite 10. Cost to attend is $175. Learn more at go.msu.edu/3ZP.

Dec. 19 // JAZZ CONCERT: A commemorative concert celebrating the birth of Martin Luther King, Jr. features jazz orchestras and special guests. Two performances will be held at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. in the MSU Auditorium, Fairchild Theatre. Free tickets are available via phone or from the College of Music main office. Learn more at go.msu.edu/ZIP.

Eyers give $7.5K for scholarships for VetMed students

DEVON BARRETT // ADVANCEMENT

Carol Vermeesch, undergraduate program coordinator and professor in the College of Nursing, said her greatest challenge has been a guiding force for more than two decades’ worth of future nurses as they fulfilled the requirements of their degrees.

And she has watched many of them valiantly balance classes and clinicals with part-time jobs. It is a struggle both Vermeesch and her husband, Joe, know all too well — each was responsible for paying their own way in college.

Now, students in the College of Nursing have support too — from Carol and Joe Vermeesch. In 2014, the couple made a $50,000 gift to create the Vermeesch Regnier Endowed Scholarship to honor Carol’s parents, Earl and Angeline Regnier, and Joe’s parents, Joseph and Esther Vermeesch. Each year, a student is chosen for an award of more than $2,500. Kendall Austin, a nursing senior, is the 2019-2020 recipient.

From childhood, Austin knew two things for sure: she wanted to become a nurse, and she wanted to attend MSU.

“I plan to take everything I have learned and make a difference in the world,” she said. “I have plans to pursue travel nursing and cross international borders to help provide healthcare in areas that may not be as advanced as we are.”

As Austin finishes out her college career, the Vermeesch Regnier Scholarship allows her to focus on her studies rather than her finances. But it has also given her something else: inspiration.

“I am so honored to receive this scholarship in tribute for the Vermeesch’s generosity,” she said. “It has inspired me to give back to other future Spartan nurses as soon as I am able.”

At left, “Vamos con Todo,” taken in Mexico by Daniel Trego, won second place in the 2019 Global Focus International photography competition. At right, “Silent Light,” taken in Japan by Mark Wilson, won first place in the Faculty and Staff category of the 2019 Global Focus International photography competition. All rights, “Silent Light,” taken in Japan by Mark Wilson, won first place in the Faculty and Staff category. PHOTOS/COURTESY OF ADVANCEMENT
Faculty, Staff Take to Stage to Become Agents of Change

KAMEY ROMAND /DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives and the Transforming Theatre Ensemble are introducing a new initiative to create equitable spaces for all who live, learn and work at MSU called MSU Forum Theatre. Forum includes theatrical games and exercises that lead participants toward writing their own play that depicts an unresolved problem inspired by the actors’ own experiences with inequity.

“MSU Forum is based on the work of Augusto Boal, who saw theater as a space for rehearsing to take action to overcome the problems we face,” said Lynnette Lammers, artistic director for the MSU Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives. “This is a chance to use your voice, be creative and galvanize others to become change agents at MSU.”

During the performance, audience members are given the opportunity to step into the play and try a tactic for responding to the problem the actors have portrayed.

“I was very happy with our finished play and the story it portrayed,” said Angela Scott, laboratory technologist for the College of Veterinary Medicine, who attended implicit bias training in February. “Everyone has something to offer, and everyone has the right to opportunities to reach their full potential and to feel valued.”

Forum’s mission is to help participents to be better prepared to analyze a situation and make choices about how to intervene for maximum impact and minimum harm in a moment. Forum’s goal is inspire productive agents of change is executed through community building, sharing ideas and preparing for nursing intervention scenarios.

This new initiative is open to all members of the MSU community. Rehearsals begin at 6 p.m. Jan. 20 and end on March 30. The final performance will be 6-8 p.m. March 31, and it is required that participants attend all rehearsals and the performance.

Applications will be accepted through Jan. 10, 2020. Visit go.msu.edu/DXP.

SEVEN WAYS SWEET POTATOES ARE GOOD FOR YOU

Sure, it may be slathered in marshmallow, laden with brown sugar or both at Thanksgiving, but undressed — sans the over-the-top sweeteners — the sweet potato is chock-full of nutrients that earn it a rightful place at the table year-round. “The sweet potato is a nutritional powerhouse,” says Robin Tucker, a registered dietitian and assistant professor of food science and human nutrition at Michigan State University.

Seven ways sweet potatoes are good for you

1. It’s packed with vitamins and minerals.
2. It’s a whole source of carbohydrates.
3. It’s a complete source of protein.
4. It’s high in fiber.
5. It’s rich in antioxidants.
6. It’s a good source of natural sugars.
7. It’s low on the glycemic index.

EVALUATION OF LEARNING IS KEY TO BETTER ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Since “2001: A Space Odyssey,” people have wondered: could machines like HAL 9000 eventually exist that can process information with human-like intelligence? Researchers at Michigan State University say that true, human-level intelligence remains a long way off, but their new paper published in The American Naturalist explores how computers could begin to evolve, learning in the same way as natural organisms did — with implications for many fields, including artificial intelligence.

Scientific Daily

Connecting Fractured Habitats Has Long-Lasting Ecological Benefits, Study Finds

Landscape corridors are strips of undeveloped or restored land that link isolated habitats. They are “the most viable path toward real conservation for biodiversity,” said Nick M. Haddad, a Michigan State University ecologist who has been studying these corridors since the 1990s. “We have the best scientific evidence that corridors work as they are supposed to do.”

The Washington Post

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

More than 30 MSU employees and their families opened their homes on Thanksgiving to provide a holiday dinner to international students and scholars. About 100 international guests took part in the second annual Thanksgiving Dinner Program, sponsored by the Office for International Students and Scholars. The program encourages cross-cultural exchange between faculty, staff and international students and scholars and provides guests with an opportunity to experience Thanksgiving dinner in an American home.

International Outreach

What is the MSU Forum Theatre and what is its mission?

The MSU Forum Theatre is an initiative by the Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives and the Transforming Theatre Ensemble. It introduces theatrical games and exercises to help participants write their own plays that depict unresolved problems inspired by their own experiences with inequity. The forum aims to prepare participants to analyze situations and make choices about how to intervene for maximum impact and minimum harm in a moment. Its goal is to inspire productive agents of change through community building, sharing ideas, and preparing for nursing intervention scenarios.

Are there any specific guidelines for applications to the MSU Forum Theatre?

Applications will be accepted through Jan. 10, 2020. Visit go.msu.edu/DXP for more information.

What are the benefits of connecting fragmented habitats?

Landscape corridors have been shown to have long-lasting ecological benefits, according to a study by Michigan State University ecologist Nick M. Haddad. These corridors are strips of undeveloped or restored land that link isolated habitats, and they are considered the most viable path toward real conservation for biodiversity. The study concludes that corridors work as intended, providing a habitat for a range of species and facilitating the movement between isolated habitats.

Who hosted the Thanksgiving dinner for international students and scholars?

Michigan State University hosted the Thanksgiving dinner for international students and scholars. More than 30 MSU employees and their families opened their homes to provide a holiday dinner. About 100 international guests participated in the second annual Thanksgiving Dinner Program sponsored by the Office for International Students and Scholars.

Is there a requirement for participants to attend all rehearsals and performances?

Yes, participants are required to attend all rehearsals and performances as part of the MSU Forum Theatre. The final performance will be on March 31, and it is essential that participants attend all rehearsals and the performance to fully engage with the initiative's goals.

What are the implications of evolving artificial intelligence for various fields?

The study published in The American Naturalist explores how computers could begin to evolve, learning in the same way as natural organisms did. This has implications for many fields, including artificial intelligence. The research suggests that artificial intelligence can evolve and learn in new ways, which could lead to breakthroughs in fields ranging from robotics to medicine, and could ultimately result in more human-like intelligence in machines.