

## MCCORMACK GRADUATE SCHOOL MERGES WITH THE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS



Augna Lemi,  
Interim Director, MGS

### MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Congratulations to the Class of 2024!

On behalf of the McCormack Graduate School's Director's Office, I would like to congratulate the graduating class and share my appreciation for the contributions of faculty, and staff, as well as the support of the centers and institutes for the productive academic year.

The AY23/24 passed as the most eventful and productive year for our School. The MGS reached a milestone by graduating 79 students, the largest graduating class in the history of the School. Of the 79 graduates, 13 earned PhD degrees in Global Governance & Human Security and Public Policy, 46 earned MA degrees in Conflict Resolution, Public Administration, and International Relations, and 11 students received graduate certificates in Conflict Resolution and Gender Leadership in Public Policy. The remaining nine students graduated with a BA degree in Global Affairs. On the research front, the School was equally successful. During the AY23/24, faculty and researchers in the two departments and the five centers submitted 29 funding proposals and received close to \$1.5 million in research grant awards.

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The academic year was a special year for the School and the graduates. The School was successful in terms of the number of graduates and grant money awarded despite going through the merger with the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) and the transition uncertainties as well as staff turnovers that came along with it. For students who graduated with a PhD degree, the period of uncertainty was even longer as they went through the COVID-19 crisis and its ramifications, at least for part of their graduate work; in the end, patience, dedication, and determination paid off. The fact that students succeeded and graduated on time despite the challenges gives another reason to celebrate and reflect to chart the year ahead. I am proud of your work and grateful for the support network you have relied on to reach this milestone. Congratulations again!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the faculty and staff members of the MGS who have supported the students during the challenging transition period that the School went through. For faculty and staff, the record number of graduating students, the amount of research funding, and the smooth transition of the School are the result of your hard work. Each of you contributed your share not only to support your students but also to help the transition team as we merged with CLA. Without your support and trust in the transition team, we would not be where we are today. The support of the MGS-CLA merger design team, chairs and administrative staff members of the two MGS departments, and center directors has been critical for the smooth conclusion of the merger process. During the merger, we haven't compromised on our missions and values; we expanded our collaboration opportunities for research and our community outreach capacity. I am fortunate to be part of this transition process and happy that we made the necessary changes to make the School better off in many aspects. I am grateful for their continued support and commitment to ensure that the School maintains its missions and values in providing quality training and engaging in impactful research.

The School's mission continues to be the delivery of quality public service education for social justice and equity. By striving to build on our existing regionally and globally recognized programs and expand our capacity to engage in community-centered as well as policy-focused interdisciplinary and impactful research, the School forges ahead with a renewed commitment and strong partnership with the College of Liberal Arts Dean's Office.

This newsletter is our year-in-review publication. You will find activities that our departments, centers, and special programs accomplished during the academic year. I encourage you to take a look and explore the opportunities that the School offers to students, community, and scholars. You can also find more about the School on [our website](#) and on our social media accounts: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [X](#).

Adugna Lemi

Interim Director of the McCormack Graduate School of Global and Policy Studies

## MGS WELCOMES TWO NEW FACULTY AND SENDS FOND FAREWELL TO PROFESSOR DARREN KEW

For the Fall 2024 semester, the McCormack Graduate School is welcoming two new faculty hires, Dr. Trevor Memmott and Dr. Catriona Standfield, as well as saying farewell to long-time faculty member, Darren Kew, as he transitions to a new position as the new Dean of the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies at the University of San Diego.



*Prof. Darren Kew (left), leaves UMass Boston after 23 years of service. Trevor Memmott (center) and Catriona Standfield (right) join the MGS faculty.*

**Dr. Trevor Memmott**, PhD, arrives this Fall eager to teach UMass Boston students about the wonders of statistics and leave his stamp on the classroom. In his own research, statistics play a major role in demonstrating the quantitative scale of the issue, though his interest has recently leaned toward qualitative information in order to emphasize the practical and experiential stakes. In his dissertation, “Intersections and Insecurity: Measuring the Determinants and Mitigators of Material Hardship”, Memmott dedicated the first chapter to illustrating how intersectionality impacts the ways people experience material hardships. Throughout his well-published career, Memmott has focused primarily on a specific type of material hardship: energy insecurity. Part of his interest in coming to the Northeast is working at the local level to address energy insecurity, in the hope that “influenc[ing] informed decision making at the local level” will lead to productive conversations and drastic improvements at the state and national levels. At Indiana University, Memmott discovered his passion for energy inequality and justice:

I knew I wanted to do research, but I did not want that research to be impersonal. I didn't want to just, you know, sit around and just study topics for their own sake. I wanted to focus on inequality, which is what I've always cared about. And this was a great way I found to do it.

One of Memmott’s goals this semester, aside from encouraging students to understand the relationship between statistics and equality, is to provide a “corrective [for the typical] grad school experience” by prioritizing collaboration in his pedagogy. This collaborative approach will not be limited to his teaching, for he also plans to develop collaborative networks in his department and across the School and University. He welcomes connections that “challenge the things that [he thinks]” and inspire him to “try new things and dive into new fields”. He advises his students and colleagues to do the same. This is especially meaningful to Memmott because one of the reasons he chose to come to UMass Boston was the diversity of the student body and UMB’s “commitment to what diversity means.” When asked what attracted him to the McCormack Graduate School, Memmott had his answer right away: the justice component. He was “blown away by how passionately folks in the McCormack school talked about justice; how clear it was that it was an authentic commitment. The idea of justice is sort of in vogue, and so everybody says it. And [he] found [that] the McCormack School ... was authentic [and] forward thinking.”



**Dr. Catriona Standfield**, PhD, is set to join the Department of Conflict Resolution, Human Security and Global Governance this Fall 2024 semester. Standfield was originally drawn to MGS because, upon seeing the job posting, it was the “first time ever [she’d] seen...a feminist critical security studies job advertised” and “was really pleased to see a job that is expressly about [strengthening] critical perspectives in the department with the expertise that’s already there.” She looks forward to collaborating with the Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights and other various centers on campus. She is excited to continue working in public education after four years of teaching at Worcester State University, though her stand-out enthusiasm for research makes her appreciate the chance to do more research-focused work starting this academic year. Standfield joked that she “always warn[s] people about the gateway drug of undergraduate research experiences because that’s” how she became wholeheartedly interested in gender and mediation.

From early experiences as a first-generation university student working in environments that embodied a “patriarchal, militaristic” view of security, warmaking, and peacemaking, Standfield was motivated “to create gender-responsive, gender-just mediation practices and then try to package those in ways that practitioners can use and understand.” With clear awareness of her privilege, her scholarship and fieldwork aim to spread a consistent message that “local women [of the Global South] aren’t there to just take instructions on how to do peacebuilding. They have agency and ideas, and these, unfortunately, are things people need to be reminded of.” Her upcoming book, [The Politics of Women, Peace and Security in UN Mediation](#), started with her undergraduate experience “volunteering in the nuclear disarmament space” and interning with the UN’s chief mediator in Cyprus which later led to Standfield’s doctoral research on women’s roles in the peace process and how mediation work is often gendered and racialized.

In her work at UMass Boston, she desires to create opportunities for students like she had and foster an investment in the “practical implications of ... research.” She aligns her work in the classroom with her work in the field, especially when discussing her perspective of mediation as an art, focusing on genuine conversations and listening to “understand peoples’ capacities or lives or needs”. Students can expect to see this eagerness with her in the classroom, but they will likely also get the chance to work closely with Standfield as research assistants and co-authors. This self-proclaimed “research nerd” looks forward to MGS’s “stimulating intellectual community because graduate students are right at the cutting edge...leading our discipline forward.” In her discussions with students, she hopes to critically explore how scholars produce knowledge through the research process in order to create more conscious engagement, accountability, and meaningful action.

(While her work is on the serious side, Standfield still loves a laugh and welcomes a good joke: “I’m Australian, so we make an art form of not taking anything seriously.”)

**Dr. Darren Kew**, PhD, stepped away from UMass Boston this summer after twenty-three years of teaching, research, and university service. Professor Kew, in a statement to faculty and staff, shared this heartfelt message: “I’ve been privileged to be part of building so much of our department, programs, and centers that I feel like I am leaving some of the best parts of my heart behind in your keeping, so I ask you to continue to give your best to our colleagues and the work that we all hold dear.” One of Kew’s major roles in MGS was Executive Director of the Center for Peace, Democracy, and Development. Over his fifteen years with the Center, Kew celebrated many successes with his colleagues and graduate students. This includes one major project, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, that supported Muslim-Christian dialogue in Nigeria, where Kew has done much of his own democracy building and scholarly work. He now brings these experiences and learning opportunities to his work as the new Dean of the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies at the University of San Diego. In the Department of Conflict Resolution, Human Security, and Global Governance, he was an Associate Professor, Graduate Program Director, and former Chair.

Grateful for the mentorship of his peers, for most of whom he played a part in the hiring process, he encouraged faculty and staff to “remain committed to [their] success” and that they are welcome to call on him as a resource in his new role. A firm believer in the impact of the work done at MGS to the world, Kew praised the contributions of his colleagues and characterized their “work – and success ... [as] essential for the world.” In his new position as Dean of the Kroc School of Peace Studies at the University of San Diego, Kew is excited for the next level opportunities this “dream job” provides “in terms of [his] own growth, of things [he’d] hope to accomplish.” Not only does the San Diego weather take him away from Boston winters and soggy springs into year-round sunshine, but the university there offers one of the only college-level peace schools where Kew feels he has “the bully pulpit, so to speak, ... to encourage more action on peace and democracy issues worldwide.” San Diego, located in a diverse area facing the daily impacts of immigration issues and climate change, also situates Kew at “a microcosm of what's happening around the world,” giving him access to local and global crises at his office step. The Kroc School of Peace Studies additionally offers a Social Innovation Master’s Program, bringing together peace building and the private sector, which Kew believes is becoming a crucial area of peacebuilding work, especially when funding is one of the hardest hurdles of the democracy building field.

Inspired by his work with DemNet, a state-funded student-organized network spanning ten different African countries, Kew wishes to continue working with folks at UMass Boston and connect with other schools with peace initiatives: “As academic institutions, we have that kind of convening power. We're not the ones that are on the front lines, so I think we need to be in support roles from the back. ...one of the ways we can be especially supportive is trying to help activists develop a larger grand strategy.” Kew described the field of Conflict Resolution as “one big family”, one that though there are not enough members of this family in the field but plenty of threats the world faces, they are all driven by a “common sense of mission.” Part of this family includes Eben Weitzman, Associate Professor of Conflict Resolution and Public Policy, who reminisced how

Darren joined us in 2001 after his advisor [at Tufts University], Eileen Babbitt, called us and said she had this kid who was almost done with his dissertation. Our first conversation pretty much sealed the deal. In the years since, we've collaborated on writing starting that first year, worked in the field together in various communities in Boston, traveled and worked in Nigeria, Japan and Northern Ireland. His contributions are impossible to list, and hard to overstate. As a colleague and a friend, Darren is kind, open, considerate, creative and flexible.

Though he is now making efforts for peace apart from his UMass Boston family, Kew is “thrilled at all the new possibilities of continuing our work together on the goals of peace, human security, and global governance to which we are all dedicated.” Kew will continue to work with his dissertation committees and doctoral candidates until their graduate work is completed. His role of Graduate Program Director is now passed on to Professor Stacy VanDeveer (CRHSGG) for Human Security and Global Governance programs this Fall. During his 23 years with MGS, Kew has crossed paths with most, if not all, graduate students of the School. Kew’s own human rights work in graduate school brought him to questions about the deeper structures of injustice and the systemic ways it is perpetuated. The field of peace and conflict resolution provided Kew “analytical approaches and methods for really trying to transform people.” An essential lesson you learn, to put Kew’s explanation simply, is the cyclical nature of injustice and the work to break the cycle that involves understanding the roots of an oppressor’s experience and transforming them into advocates. Only then, a better solution for all can be crafted.

# STUDENT SUCCESS

## 2023 CIVIC ACTION PROJECT AND LOPORCHIO SUMMER INTERNS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES IN GOVERNMENT AND POLICY-MAKING SPACES

Every year, two McCormack graduate students are selected for the Loporchio Summer Legislative Internship on Beacon Hill. This award and experience are made possible by generous funding from the Loporchio family, including MGS alums Robin and Vincent Loporchio. For the 2023 summer, Leena Maqsood and Tissiane Pinto de Souza were selected for two paid internships working with the Massachusetts State Legislature. Their summers were spent honing their skills and gaining real-world experience related to their studies in public policy and government management.

Leena Maqsood, a doctoral candidate of the Conflict Resolution, Human Security and Global Governance program, worked as a legislative intern for the Office of Representative Aaron Saunders. In her role, Maqsood supported Saunders's team by conducting research related to constituents' concerns "ranging from public-private partnerships for strengthening of education to the installation of solar energy panels at the community level and its impact on the conservation [of] forests and lands". No matter the issue, Maqsood felt her placement was fitting for her internship: "As my dissertation is on the global governance of informal economy workers and Massachusetts is among the US states that protected the domestic workers, I was enthusiastic to learn about policy advocacy and legislation." Part of this learning process helped Maqsood better understand what it takes to pass a bill and for that bill to truly impact citizens' welfare.

Masqood's investment in addressing the needs, concerns, and opinions of working-class people starts from an investment in quality university experiences. In reflecting on her internship, Maqsood thanked the

"McCormack Dean's Office for the implementation of student-centered initiatives that help them in their academic and professional growth. Of the number of awards and grants that I received from McCormack School, The Loporchio Legislative Internship on The Hill is one such valuable resource that helped me connect with state legislators."



*Leena Masqood, GGHS*



*Tissiane Pinto de Souza, MPA*

Tissiane Pinto de Souza, a graduate student of the Public Administration program on track to get her Master of Public Administration degree, interned at the Office of Senator Paul Feeney. This internship gave Pinto de Souza a clearer perspective on the legislative process, particularly because she worked directly "in the place where laws are made". This closeness made her feel more engaged with the political environment of Senator Feeney's office. Not only did this experience stimulate Pinto de Souza intellectually, but it also showed her the "big picture of how Massachusetts organizes its Legislative Branch and works with the public interests."



While on Senator Feeney’s team, Pinto de Souza conducted research for bill proposals, including gathering “materials and written communications about housing Bill S-874 (public fund for starter homes) and Bill S-131 [‘adoption of smart growth and starter home zoning districts’].” This opportunity not only allowed Pinto de Souza to develop her skills in navigating political spaces but also led to significant networking, including meetings with Attleboro Mayor Cathleen DeSimone and Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll.

The [Civic Action Project \(CAP\)](#) was first established in 2019 by former MGS Deans, Steve Crosby and Ira Jackson, and former State Senator George Bachrach. The purpose of CAP is to provide foundational experience for graduate students aspiring to work in policy-making spaces. The program focuses efforts on learning effective and creative strategies for achieving public goals. As their mission states, “With national leadership divided, cities and states must become incubators for innovation and leadership in public policy,” and their best place to start is by diversifying public and private, government and corporate, environments with the leadership and teamwork experience attained through CAP fellowships. During the fellowship program, graduate students spend ten paid weeks of their summer in a specialized placement that allows them to explore their academic interests while engaging in the worlds of practical strategy and policy-making.

During weekly meetings students get the opportunity to network at their public or private placements, and discuss their experiences with board and staff members as well as “prominent leaders and practitioners involved in public policy and civic engagement: reporters, editors, pollsters, advocates, corporate and government leaders.” This is where a lot of the magic happens because the interns get to learn from each other along with the professionals. Of the twenty graduate students selected to be 2023 CAP Summer Fellows, six were UMass Boston students: Alina Bischof (International Relations), Janelle Fassi (Gerontology), Nadeem Hussain (Public Policy), Beimnet Kebede (Public Policy), Satwika Paramasatya (GGHS), and Lilian Sibanda (GGHS).



*Left to right:  
Lilian Sibanda  
(GGHS), Janelle Fassi  
(Gerontology),  
Professor Rita Kiki  
Edozie (Chair of MGS  
CAP Committee),  
Alina Bischof  
(International  
Relations), Nadeem  
Hussain (Public  
Policy), and Satwika  
Paramasatya (GGHS)*

In reflecting on their internships, participants shared the following insights and achievements.

Janelle Fassi (Gerontology) interned at Boston AgeStrong’s Age-Friendly Unit, where she worked “on their older adult economic security plan, which includes action items on income, housing, transportation, and food security. One of [her] main projects [was] forming a coalition of partners, specifically in services that help grandparents raising their grandchildren, which is [her] research specialization.” Fassi continued working with AgeStrong during the Fall 2023 semester “to create a comprehensive resource guide that will include all the services from our partners.” Fassi “loved the experience” and plans to use the professional connections she’s built over the last year to “connect constituents to the services they need and improve the transparency of these services.”

Nadeem Hussain (Public Policy) was a CAP Fellow at Commonwealth Magazine, where he “had the privilege of immersing [him]self in the world of journalism and gaining invaluable insights into the intricacies of political and social discourse.” Working with the podcast team and attending in-person newsroom and public events, Hussain refined his research and writing skills, engaged in a wide variety of topic discussions, and “deepened [his] understanding of the importance of responsible journalism in a democracy.” Hussain, grateful for what he has learned of political reporting during those ten weeks, plans to implement these developed skills and strategies in future journalistic endeavors.

Beimnet Kebede (Public Policy) interned at Boston City Hall in the Intergovernmental Relations Department, taking his first step into Boston government management to really understand “how the city operates.” While working in the department during budget season, Kebede gained “a nice perspective on what a city budget looks like. [He] compared the budget with previous years and explored how the budget has changed with different administrations and what the priorities were.” Kebede especially appreciated the CAP roundtable discussions, where he found the elements of community and the experiential knowledge of others rewarding.



*Beimnet Kebede, Public Policy*

Satwika Paramasatya (GGHS) was placed with the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, where his supervisor tasked him with “develop[ing] strategic recommendations for Massachusetts-specific policy considerations action[, prioritizing] mandatory coverage for biomarker testing for cancer treatment.” Through assessment of current legislative, political, and clinical policies and policy discussions as well as attending healthcare workforce hearings in the State House, Paramasatya came to better understand policy-making frameworks for healthcare. He also took full advantage of his networking opportunities, connecting with folks from the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission (HPC), the Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA), Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rhode Island, Elevance Health, and the National Conference of Insurance Legislators (NCOIL).

Lilian Sibanda (GGHS) worked as a Legislative Intern in the office of State Senator Brendan Crighton at the Massachusetts State Senate. Sibanda’s responsibilities were situated in policy research and analysis, focusing on implementation and impact for 3rd Essex District residents. A highlight for Sibanda was when she participated “in a simulation of the US SENATE at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate” right here on UMass Boston campus.

## ‘23 DOSS SUMMER ENRICHMENT AWARD (SEA) RECIPIENTS REFLECT ON THEIR EXPERIENCES

During the 2023 summer, eighteen students of the McCormack Graduate School received summer support awards designed to give students an opportunity to use their academic and interpersonal skills in settings suited to their research interests and dissertation pursuits. The Director’s Office Student Success (DOSS) program’s Summer Enrichment Award (SEA) placed the students with faculty of their choice to conduct research and provide community outreach that focused on the issues and topics explored in their written academic work. After completing their summer programs, the awarded students reflected on their experiences and contributions to their and/or the faculty member’s research. The students shared insights and achievements in their responses, showcasing how their time and effort spent met SEA’s mission.

The DOSS Summer Enrichment Award is a competitive employment opportunity for students of the McCormack Graduate School who are in the first three years of their doctoral program. As recipients of the award, students work as Research Assistants with a McCormack School faculty member, often the doctoral candidate’s dissertation advisor or academic supervisor. Each recipient receives a stipend of up to \$3,500 during their time as a Research Assistant.



SEA recipients are MGS students in good academic standing, who justify in their application a strong research objective and how the fund will advance their doctoral study. This can include dissertation development, data collection and assessment, primary and secondary research, and countless other processes that culminate in the student's completion of their doctoral work and PhD conferral. Ultimately, the awarded students determine what their summers will look like and how the Summer Enrichment Award will help them achieve their goals as doctoral candidates.



*Augustine B. Aboh, GGHS*



*Adebobola Omowon, GGHS*

## **Collaboration with Faculty**

The Summer Enrichment Award gives students the special opportunity to work alongside faculty on projects where their research interests align.

Augustine B. Aboh, a student of the Global Governance & Human Security (GGHS) doctoral program, spent the majority of his summer “working on [the] Democracy and Civic Engagement Project[, DemNet,] ... with Prof. Darren Kew.” This project involved Aboh working with ten African countries, of which he was specifically responsible for coordination of the DemNet Zimbabwe Team. Aboh proudly shared that the Zimbabwe team “achieved great results in civic education, awareness campaigns, and advocacy for free, fair and peaceful election in the recent 2023 General elections.”

Adebobola Omowon (GGHS) was another member of the Democratic Network team with Professor Kew. Omowon explained, “I was the coordinator for the country Sierra Leone, and I was responsible for guiding them in terms of sensitization of the public, orientation, and mass mobilization. The electioneering process was a success, and I am glad to be part of it.”

Sohyon Pak’s (Public Policy) work focused on knowledge economy and the racial wealth gap. Pak “had such a great summer working with [her] professor,” with whom she had a “progressive” time.

Jeein Jang, a Gerontology student, “worked with Dr. Jaqueline Avila last summer[, with whom she] conducted new research about the impact of future outlook on the level of social engagement among older adults in the United States.” Jang was confident about her research and its prospects for an abstract presentation at last year’s Graduate Student Assembly. Exploring another facet of her research, Jang assisted Dr. Elizabeth Duncan with her New England Healthy Aging project. By working with Dr. Duncan, Jang honed her skills pertaining to developing a literature review and statistical practices.

## **Real World Impact**

A running theme in the SEA students’ responses was seeing the impact of their work and research interests on the ground.

Abiodun Baiyewu (GGHS) reflected that “despite having worked on similar issues in the past, this experience was very enriching for [her] in so many ways. It was eye-opening interacting and strategizing with activists on the ground.” Working with Professor Kew, “on his ongoing project on mentoring groups

that foster democracy in Africa,” learned firsthand from activists, “particularly in Kenya and Nigeria,” how they were emboldening disenfranchised populations to vote and speak out against abuse of power. Activists in Gabon and Zimbabwe shared their response tactics to “recently botched elections.” Baiyewu plans to write an article about her experience and is eager to share more of her experience with the DOSS program.

Weichun Yan, a student in the Public Policy program, described not only how her work was impactful to others, but especially how it fostered growth for herself:

Working closely with diverse individuals in this placement enhanced not only my research skills but also my teamwork, communication, and problem-solving abilities. Engaging in discussions and collaborating with my teams allowed me to see areas where I needed improvement and provided valuable insights for my personal growth.

In collaboration with Professor Susan Crandall, Yan completed “a report on a research project focused on the Asian American community and subsequently engaged in an applied project involving DCF evaluation.”

Amadou Jallow (GGHS), who spent his summer in The Gambia, “had the opportunity of discussing with some officials of different civil society organizations about diaspora voting, specifically for Gambians living in the diaspora who do not have the opportunity to vote during elections.” Jallow benefitted from direct conversations with Gambian officials, providing vital research points and informing his work on his dissertation.



*Abiodun Baiyewu, GGHS*



*Weichun Yan, Public Policy*



*Amadou Jallow, GGHS*



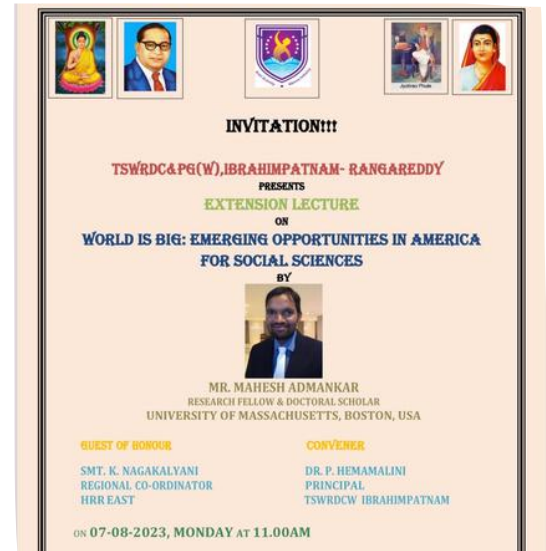
*F. Dermmilla Obare, GGHS*

Another GGHS doctoral candidate and Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution student, F. Dermmilla Obare, emphasized the cruciality of addressing systemic problems directly: “I sought to understand these issues in a real-world context.” The field program that Obare participated in “focused on Ethiopia’s national identity challenges and how women overcame them through self-help groups [(SHGs)]. These groups aimed to empower women by granting them access to knowledge, resources, and decision-making autonomy.” Obare worked with women through administering surveys, guiding group discussions, and interviewing SHG participants to get a sense of how the self-help groups were benefiting the community. Obare found the outcomes to be “inspiring, revealing significant progress” for women, and consequently their families, living in poverty. This work was obviously not without its challenges and required further investigation and discussion. In the end, Obare witnessed women taking “on leadership roles, advocating for their rights and demanding spaces in policy arenas to ensure a possibility of permanent empowerment of women in Ethiopian culture. Witnessing their dedication and determination was truly transformative.” Through this program, Obare shared, she was able to bridge her MA and PhD research as well as implement methods she plans to use for future research and study. She also gained “deeper insights into contemporary international issues, policies, and debates.” For Obare, this program solidified her “passion for promoting sustainable peace and empowering marginalized communities.”

## Papers and Presentations

Students used this opportunity to hone their writing skills and take to the stage for presentations. In action, they used their voices to amplify the voices of others.

Mahesh Admankar, a Public Policy student, DOSS intern, and research assistant to Professor Mark Warren, enjoyed meeting the participants of his research and “happened to visit [their] colleges and deliver an invited guest lecture in the ‘emerging opportunities in social sciences in the USA’”. DOSS SEA not only gave Admankar the opportunity to research and present work for which he shows great enthusiasm but it also allowed him to travel home to India during a portion of the summer.



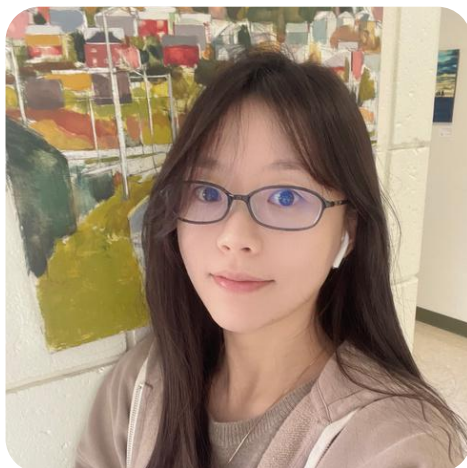
Above: Event Invitation for Mahesh Admankar’s lecture, “World is Big: Emerging Opportunities in America for Social Sciences”

Left: Admankar with students and faculty at the entrance of Telangana Social Welfare Residential Degree College for Women (Osmania University) in his home country of India.

Sayed Mohammad Ashraf Amiri (GGHS) reported that his SEA time spent productively in Canada “was a great opportunity ... to conduct exploratory research for [his] Ph.D. dissertation proposal, co-present a keynote at an international conference, and build great networks.” To round off this list of SEA accomplishments, Amiri also got the chance to prepare for PhD qualification exams.



Sayed Mohammad Ashraf Amiri, GGHS



Wuyi Dong, Gerontology

Wuyi Dong, a student in the Gerontology program, “collaborated with Professor Song on a project exploring the relationship between living arrangements and health outcomes in older adults.” Dong was grateful to become immersed in the nuanced work of collecting and analyzing secondary data. She found the SEA process to be enriching and “successfully crafted and submitted an abstract for presentation at an academic conference, reaffirming my dedication to scholarly pursuits.”



Hina Khurshid (Public Policy) worked with Professor Michael Johnson “on starting an evaluation study for the Practitioner Scholars Program (PSP) organized by UMass Boston’s Office of Community Partnerships (OCP) from 2018-2021.” By the end of Khursid’s first year in her program, her and Johnson’s work was published. Their plan is to continue their evaluation and publish further results. Clearly excited by this success and the agency of her role, Khursid shared that “it has been a great learning opportunity for [her] because [she has] the chance to work on the project from the very beginning, play an important part in shaping the study and taking a lead in the necessary planning and analysis.”



*Hina Khurshid, Public Policy*

Pryanka Peñafiel-Cevallos (GGHS), whose dissertation focuses on “Latin American migrants’ nonviolent resistance in transnational spaces,” was placed in Ecuador to conduct fieldwork, secondary research, and develop her “conceptual framework.” In pursuing her inquiry, Peñafiel-Cevallos “had the opportunity to meet, interview, and organize focus groups with Venezuelan migrants, local politicians, and NGOs, [with an overall goal] to make sense of” their responses. Peñafiel-Cevallos is confident that this engagement with these groups will significantly contribute to her empirical chapters.

## **Gratitude for DOSS**

In every student’s response, gratitude to the Director’s Office Student Success (DOSS) program was enthusiastically shared.

James Kintu (GGHS), who was placed with Professor Stacy VanDeveer, remarked that he couldn’t thank DOSS and the UMass community enough for their support.



*James Kintu, GGHS*

Not only do these awards fund research directly but they also support students while they are pursuing their studies and conducting fieldwork by covering rent, groceries, and other necessary day-to-day expenses. These concerns taken care of by the award’s funds, Kintu could focus on preparing for qualifying exams, participating in weekly graduate writing groups, and reviewing literature for his “research proposal on ‘Governing Climate Change for Sustainable Food Security in Uganda: the case of Busoga region’.”

Other recipients of the 2023 DOSS Summer Enrichment Award included Alex Hara (Public Policy), Elham Hesari (Public Policy), Dongfang Hong (Gerontology), and Shan Qu (Gerontology).

The Summer Enrichment Award not only places students in positions where they can put their skills and knowledge to impactful use but it also prepares them to be improved, more world-conscious researchers, scholars, activists, and ultimately, people.

## LISTEN AND LEARN: SPRING 2024 MOAKLEY CHAIR WEBINAR SERIES HOSTS CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS ON ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

During the second Moakley webinar event, Adujna Lemi mentioned how Pádraig O'Malley's book, *The Two-State Delusion: Israel and Palestine--A Tale of Two Narratives* (2015), predicted what has happened in Palestine and Israel in recent months. In a one-on-one interview, the Moakley Chair clarified, "The only sentence I italicized in the whole book was in the chapter on Hamas: 'This war is waiting to continue.'" In conversation with distinguished speakers, O'Malley's mission for this iteration of the webinar series aimed to bring voices together in the hope that well-informed, open conversations will yield a realistic and restorative solution to this long-time conflict.

The Moakley Chair's work never ends, and Pádraig O'Malley wouldn't have it any other way. A busybody in the conflict resolution and public policy worlds, O'Malley is rarely without a project...or half a dozen. This past year, amongst talks for his book, [Perils and Prospects of a United Ireland](#), and starting another book, he's been overseeing and editing the 36th volume of the [New England Journal of Public Policy](#), a publication which accounts for not only 10% of papers published on UMass Boston's Scholarworks page but also for 25% of all downloads, making the journal the most read journal by two and a half times compared to any other journal publications hosted on Scholarworks. O'Malley will attend and present on "The Changing Character of War and Peacemaking", a special issue of the journal (vol. 36, iss. 1) at the Conference on the Resolution of Intractable Conflict (CRIC) at Oxford University this September, where he presented on his most recent book last year. This special issue was based on the presentations from CRIC's 2023 paper presentations and features an introduction from Lord John Alderdice. For O'Malley, producing the journal continues to be "core work on the part of the Chair." This critical work branched out in December 2022 with the creation of the Moakley Chair Webinar Series and episodes on the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In Spring 2024, O'Malley took on another major conflict with special guests: the Israel-Hamas War.

The Moakley Chair Webinar Series dedicated its second year to holding space for constructive and receptive conversations about the ongoing Israel-Hamas War. O'Malley's motivation was "to find a balance between two opposing points of view, but with participants who were knowledgeable and fact driven, in the hope of spreading a message that coexistence between Palestinians and Jews is, in fact, possible." The first webinar of this year, "Standing Together", put O'Malley in conversation with Sally Abed and Alon-Lee Green, co-founders of [Standing Together](#), a Jewish-Palestinian Grassroots Movement within Israel. Sally Abed, a Palestinian citizen of Israel, is Standing Together's elected national voice and Head of International Development. Alon-Lee Green, a Jewish Israeli citizen, is the movement's National Co-director.

Since its creation eight years ago, Standing Together has focused its efforts on organizing citizens, deconstructing dichotomies, and envisioning life with Palestinians and Israelis beyond peaceful coexistence. "Our message [and] mission [have] never been clearer," Green pointed out. Much of Standing Together's work involves reframing how people think because citizens have been under the control of the Israeli government for so long. For citizens, Jewish and Palestinian alike, "this dialogue is not a common thought." There is "no space in their life to think of the other" amidst the daily traumas of assimilation, poverty, persecution, militarization, and basic survival. What Abed and Green propose instead is "a third space" in which Palestinians and Jews can consider the other and the possibility of a whole. Green and Abed declared that the members of Standing Together are "in a position to lead that alternative," guiding the people in navigating "the complexity" of co-leadership and building "political will and intention." Abed and Green want to help other Israeli citizens break free of generations of injustice and disrupt the idea that "Israeli safety [necessitates] Palestinian oppression." O'Malley, in conversation after the webinar, observed, "In one sense, before Israel is able to resolve its problems with the Palestinians, it will have to be able to resolve the problems with the Palestinian citizens of its own country."



*Padraig O'Malley (top left), in conversation with Sally Abed and Alon-Lee Green, co-founders of Standing Together*

During the [second webinar in the series, “Perspectives on the Israel– Hamas War”](#), webinar speakers Samer Sinijlawi and Dr. Gershon Baskin broke down how, though Israel and Hamas are mutually destructive beyond the dichotomy of their conflict, a collective moral responsibility is still on the table. Samer Sinijlawi, most frequently the Palestinian voice on Israeli media, is Fatah’s Head of Diplomatic and International Relations and the Founding Chair of the Jerusalem Development Fund. Sinijlawi framed this conflict as one that

has taken us to a level, both sides, that we started acting as if everything is permissible. We need to put some more red lines in this conflict. If we cannot solve this conflict now, we need to put some more red lines and we need to do it as good as possible because we are losing our humanity before being Israelis or Palestinians.

Baskin serves as the Middle East Director for the International Communities Organization, a UK-based NGO that operates in conflict zones where peace processes have failed. An experienced Israeli peace activist, Baskin has provided counsel to Prime Ministers, has been involved in negotiations with Hamas for 17 years, and has been an integral player in back channel negotiations for prisoners across conflict lines. Sinijlawi and Baskin lamented and condemned the catastrophic loss of life and humanity while retaining a nuanced perspective. Baskin shared, “as my good friend Samer says, ‘we Palestinians will continue to look backwards with one eye and remember what they did to us. But maybe we can also begin to look forward with our other eye to new possibilities.’” Sinijlawi continued this line of thought with another way to start recovering that sense of humanity: “The challenge is how to be able to see this conflict from the eyes of the others. If we start each side feeling and learning.”



*Padraig O'Malley (top left), in conversation with Samer Sinijlawi (top right), and Dr. Gershon Baskin (bottom) on the Israel-Hamas war*



A major success of this year's webinars is that they centered nuance and context, historical and present, as essential to discussions of peacemaking. Across discussions, certain themes remained consistent. For one, this conflict is not simply about bringing peace; there needs to be liberation, prosperity, and dignity for Palestinians and Israelis alike. Ending the war is the first step, so to speak, and much must follow that end. In conversation with O'Malley, he elucidated

We do understand that the only way forward that would work is one that is nonviolent, and that eventually the two sides must come together at a negotiating table. And that the occupation must end and a Palestinian state established. And this may be long term. But it should be the stated goal, particularly of the Israeli government, and their feet should be held to the fire with regard to the interim steps before that happens. And there'd be a lot of interim steps. And I'd like to see something happen, and I think I could even arrange it.

O'Malley shared his enthusiasm for starting these conversations on UMass Boston's campus, bringing in Islamic and Jewish organizations from Boston to collaborate on realistic solutions. One of these solutions would be an alternative to the Two-State Solution, a route that the webinar speakers concur is not the way to go. Gershon remarked "there is no possibility for peace if a two-state solution will be built on walls and fences and on limiting people's ability to move freely and to engage with each other". O'Malley, outside of the webinars, posed the question, "if not two states, then what?". Abed and Green's answer to this is that, because the Israeli society "[lacks] the intention [and] political imagination" beyond a two-state solution, a complete cultural shift is imperative.

O'Malley returns to Israel this September to start a new book on the conflict. His primary purpose is to listen to people: "I like my books to evolve from the conversations I have rather than going in with fixed ideas." Other plans for this academic year (AY24-25) include another set of webinars and a conference hosted by UMass Boston focusing on the conflict. O'Malley adamantly invites "teachers [of] Middle East studies [to] make it incumbent upon their students to watch [the webinars] and to discuss them afterwards. And the more they are exposed to in different points of views, and understand that nobody is in the absolute right, the better, and the better would be their preparation to participate in society in a meaningful way."

## TWO HALVES OF THE MISSION AT WORK: MCCORMACK SCHOOL CENTERS DISCUSS ONGOING PROJECTS AND PROSPECTIVE IMPROVEMENTS DURING MGS CENTERS AND INSTITUTES SEMINAR SERIES

In March of this year, the McCormack Graduate School held its annual MGS Centers and Institutes Seminar to discuss with center directors their ongoing and future projects along with concerns and prospects. This year, two centers presented at the seminar: The Center for Social Policy (CSP) and The Center for Peace, Democracy, and Development (CPDD). Director Adugna Lemi led the seminar with McCormack faculty and staff.

The McCormack Graduate School's Director's Office organizes the MGS Centers and Institutes Seminar Series, formerly known as the MIPPS Brown Bag Series, which highlights the work of select centers each Spring. Centers are prompted to share their current activities and projects, challenges faced, and future plans, activities, and prospects. According to MGS Director Adugna Lemi,

All of [the centers] work in the area of socioeconomic, sociopolitical policy issues that affect local, regional, and international aspects that covers all these areas and those topics are in line with the mission and the values of the McCormack Graduate School, and that's why we want to encourage the centers' activity, encourage the professorship activities and anything that they address in terms of touching topics that's not only the McCormack School's mission but also the University's mission.

The MGS Director's Office's motivation for the seminar was to host a space for ongoing conversations about the projects and difficulties centers are encountering, hence this Spring's theme "Updates, challenges, and future plans".

First up to present their center was Professor Susan Crandall, director of the Center for Social Policy (CSP), an applied interdisciplinary research center looking into "the root causes of economic hardship and [examining] the combined impact of public policies and employer practices." CSP's focus is on understanding and ensuring equitable opportunities and access through community outreach. Working closely with local communities, the CSP team performs programmatic evaluations and provides training, guidelines, and program design for local partners. CSP relies heavily on student work, including [Elaine Werby Public Service interns](#), to develop projects with community partners, with the experience students gain as the payoff.

Ongoing CSP projects included:

- Analysis of Racial Disparities in SNAP Access for Asian Americans
- Evaluation of the City of Somerville Universal Basic Income for housing unstable families
- Analysis of informal workforce, with financial support from Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)
- Evaluation of Dorchester Food Cooperative
- Content analysis of equitable workforce development for Offshore Wind

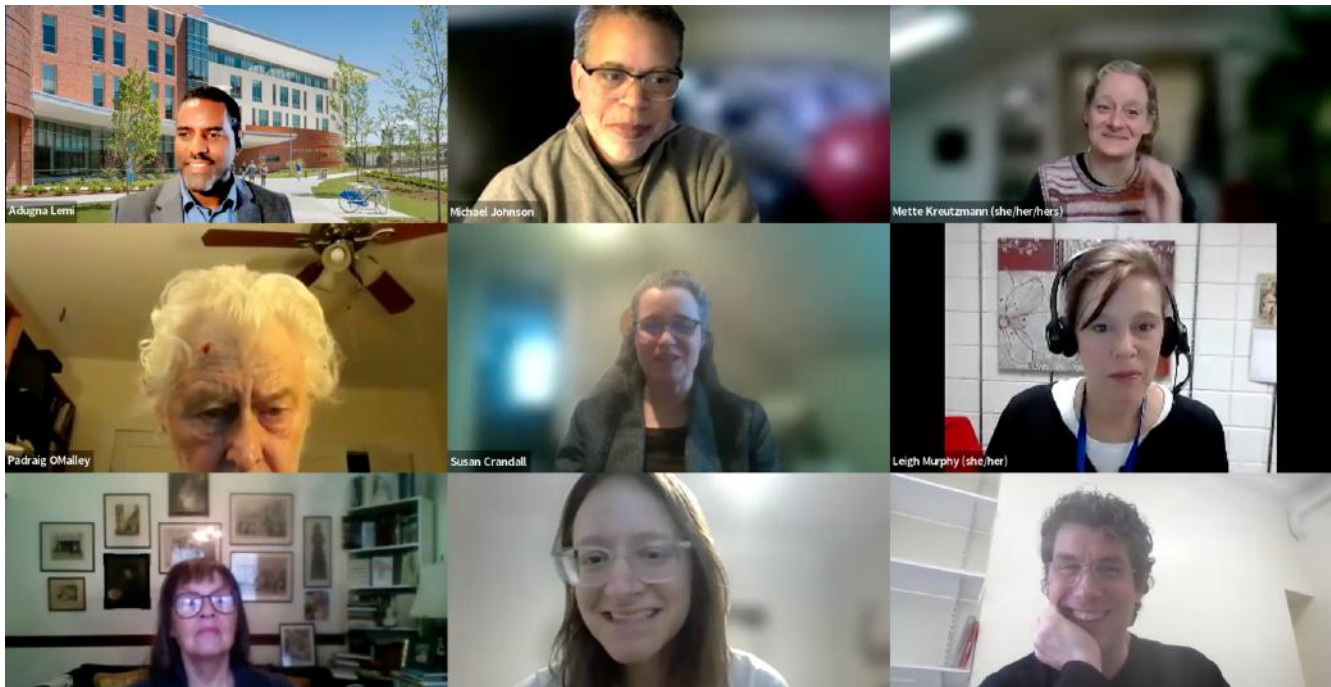
With these ongoing projects, Crandall applauded a few of the graduate student workers for their sustained efforts:

Amrith [Fernandes Prabhu] has been doing an incredible job for the Dorchester Food Cooperative. She's just got some fantastic skills in thinking about data, in thinking about survey design, and ... is really leading those efforts. And then,... Meg [Hassy] has come along, actually, through ... the Center for Governance and Sustainability, and she brings an incredible wealth of experience, especially in thinking about this on the ground work we have to do. We're trying to get 200 surveys ... done on the ground in Somerville, in three locations using ... McCormack graduate students for the most part. And so Meg's just been fantastic helping us figure out [the] operational challenge.

Upcoming projects included an Evaluation of Cliff Effect Project (Springfield Works), HUD Community Planning and Development Technical Assistance (unhoused/gender equity), and Expansion of Offshore Wind workforce development equity projects (in collaboration with the Center for Sustainability and Governance in MGS).

Crandall expressed concern when it came to the challenges of limited capacity and staff, raising and managing funds, and maintaining student employment through hiring and payroll management. Since the Center for Social Policy is "primarily grant-funded," Crandall expressed the need for an experienced grant writer. However, Crandall noted with pride that though the center has less money coming in than other centers, CSP has "one of the highest return on investments" based on previous years' data.

Next to the virtual podium was Professor Darren Kew, Director of the Center for Peace, Democracy, and Development. The CPDD, as Kew characterized it, is the "practice side of the Department of Conflict Resolution, Human Security and Global Governance" and works together with the Center for Governance and Sustainability to provide a "supporting role" to local partners.



*Presenters and Participants attending the Spring 2024 MGS Centers and Institutes Seminar Series*

A center dependent on the work of part-timers, the CPDD “was designed to try to help our faculty work together more, in addition to providing them [funding and] field outlets for the work that they do.” And it is not only faculty for which the center sets up field experience opportunities. Graduate student fellows are at the forefront of this work and gain significant knowledge from it. Currently, CPDD graduate fellows are working on two critical projects. The first project, Democracy Network (DemNet), entails five doctoral fellows collaborating with election reform activists in ten African countries, “connecting democracy and peace building skills”. DemNet is up for “round two funding with [their] Nigerian [NGO] partners.” Prof. Kew, the graduate students’ “tour guide,” is pleased to see their Nigerian partners adopting more of “the leadership roles in running the network.”

The second project has fellows working closely with Madhawa "Mads" Palihapitiya, associate director of the Massachusetts Office of Public Collaboration (MOPC) and engineer of early warning system infrastructure, to create a “hate crimes data platform [that will be put in] the hands of civil society and government actors to try to get early action moving to try to ... stem the tide of this growing ... white supremacist militia activity across the nation.” The project extends to community outreach and training on this system as well as hate crime and extremism prevention in at-risk communities. The grant will also allow this team to collaborate with another local partner to create an app which will make reporting far more accessible for civil society actors. The program, Kew suggested, is attractive for its transferability to other parts of the world and he hopes for further work to expand its reach and application.

A third piece of ongoing work involves Pádraig O’Malley, our Moakley Chair for Peace and Reconciliation, who was integral to CPDD’s establishment, both back in 1993 when it was founded as The Center for Democracy & Development (CDD), and more recently in 2011, when CPDD was formed and absorbed the CDD. O’Malley was asked to do dialogue work in Northwestern Cameroon “that’s seeing an independence movement fight there.” The CPDD’s involvement there has been focused on conversations with “local civil society and government actors ... across those conflict divides.” Kew regarded the partnerships as most beneficial to the center and its fellows. When collaborating with local partners, the faculty or students working with them learn valuable insights, strategies and models for engaging with certain areas, populations, or conflicts.



Kew agreed with the challenges Crandall laid out and more specifically identified pressures on graduate students and faculty in terms of administrative support and funding. The center is funded through its own entrepreneurial efforts, so Kew expressed interest in developing better channels for securing private donors and receiving financial support from offices on campus including the Provost's and President's Offices. Kew recalled how

the Provost has made very clear that it is a priority for him to try to improve our fundraising capacity. So I think ... although that's moving along slowly, ... it's something that's in the works ... the President's office is also ... an undertapped resource that we may want to think about how we can sort of better improve our interface there, I mean, I think you know, certainly, global engagement is a priority of the President's office. So, ... once we have a better sense of our strategy, I think it'd be important for us to maybe bounce that off the President's office at some point and see...how we can better partner with his office, too.

At the end of the seminar, Director Lemi highlighted that the Center for Social Policy and the Center for Peace, Democracy and Development make up two halves of the McCormack School of Policy and Global Studies. "Global issues make a complete list of what we do and what our mission and values are in the McCormack School," he surmised. Overall, he expressed accomplishment on the part of the McCormack School for the number of centers it boasts and the level of activity they achieve. The Director's Office plans to highlight different centers each Spring going forward.

## EVENTS AND ENGAGEMENTS

### 26TH WOOD PROFESSORSHIP HONORS FORMER MAYOR KIM JANEY AND THE LEGACY OF DESEGREGATION IN BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

On April 23, 2024, the McCormack Graduate School hosted the [26th annual Wood Professorship ceremony](#) during which faculty, donors, and community members honored former Boston Mayor, The Honorable Kim Janey as the 2024 Robert C. Wood Visiting Professor in Public and Urban Affairs. During the event, Janey delivered her lecture, "Yellow Buses, White Flight, and Black Resistance: 50 Years After Boston's Efforts to Desegregate Schools". This was also marked a special event because June 21, 2024 was the 50th anniversary of the desegregation of Boston Public Schools.



*The Honorable Kim Janey, former Boston Mayor and the 2024 Robert C. Wood Visiting Professor in Public and Urban Affairs*

In her opening remarks, Interim Dean and Wood Professorship Committee Chair Rita Kiki Edozie characterized the Wood Professorship as "linking [the recipient] to the scholarly and applied pursuits of the McCormack School with policy challenges facing the wider society." Named for former UMass System president [Robert Coldwell Wood](#), known for being "an avid public servant" and "[\[epitomizing\] the engaged academic through a career that connected the worlds of scholarship, politics, and public policy.](#)" this honor represents a multifaceted investment in the intellectual and practical pursuits of today. Established in 1998, the Robert C. Wood Visiting Professorship in Public and Urban Affairs brings a special guest of the McCormack Graduate School

of Policy and Global Studies to lecture our community “on topics such as race, education, and government efficiency”. What follows are productive conversations with the award recipient, faculty, students, and community members about putting scholarly studies into practice in our public policy and public service. Aduagna Lemi, Director of MGS, said “the Wood lecture raises the profile of not only The McCormack Graduate School but also the university. We're not just bringing people together to discuss the legacy of Mr. Wood; we are bringing people together to discuss policy that matters for Mr. Wood.” Interim Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Pratima Prasad, revered the Wood Professorship ceremony as

one of our signature events as we move forward because...celebrating [the late Professor Wood's] legacy and his life's work seems very fitting for who we are and what we do in CLA. Equity and social justice [are] part of our core values and they are woven into everything that we do whether it's our pedagogical practices, our research, our community work, [or] our service.

Joseph Berger, Provost and Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, reminded attendees that “UMass Boston was created so that Boston would have a public research university that could serve the great city of Boston,” but clarified that there remains significant work to do. Provost Berger held on to the hope, though, that through the collaboration of various groups of expertise, positive policy changes can be achieved, especially when flagship events such as the Wood Professorship take place.



*From left: Franny Wood, Robert Wood's eldest daughter; Rita Kiki Edozie, Wood Professorship Committee Chair; Peggy Wood, widow of Robert Wood; Aduagna Lemi, Director, MGS; Pratima Prasad, Dean, CLA; and Joseph Berger, Provost and Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs*

This year's theme was "50 Years of Desegregation in Boston's Schools: Today's Challenges, Legacies, and Opportunities" and marked the 50th anniversary of U.S. District Court Judge W. Arthur Garrity's ruling in *Morgan vs. Hannigan* (June 21st, 1974), “a case that brought the national struggle for civil rights to the streets of the city of Boston,” according to Edozie. With that history in mind, the Wood Professorship Committee chose an exemplary recipient for the McCormack School's Robert C. Wood Visiting Professor in Public and Urban Affairs. Former Mayor The Honorable Kim Janey was at the front lines of Boston's desegregation and busing initiative as an eleven year old student whose mother, who accompanied Janey to the ceremony, advocated, organized, and “paved the way for a little Black girl from Roxbury who would grow up to lead her city” as the first Black woman to hold Boston's mayoral office.

Janey took a moment to thank and honor not only her mother but all of the Black women and parents for their tenacious and impactful efforts. “This is American history,” Janey distinguished, as she discussed the Independent School Movement organized by parents later during the keynote panel. This history was a motif Janey highlighted in her keynote speech as well, citing personal, Boston, and national history, urging attendees that “it's important that we lift up, that we understand, that we reflect, that we dissect

this history, that we promote it in current day classrooms.” Janey herself comes from a family of educators and celebrates the work of school leaders, teachers, parents, and students. The long history of her own “ancestors’ resilience,” Janey related, lends validity to the reflective approach this event focused on, that we must look back in order to link our history with today’s reality. Apart from locating, uplifting, and centering voices that have been excluded from the historical narrative, recognizing how history informs the present, Janey insisted we must

lift up our most vulnerable children, the children who are most disproportionately impacted by all of the decisions we make. ...If we're not looking at policy through the lens of “What does this mean for students with disabilities? What does this mean for students who have experienced trauma? What does this mean for students who are homeless? What does this mean for any, whatever that lens is,” you've got to lift up the most vulnerable. If you do right by them, you might make it.

Janey also praised young people for their resilience, but warned that we should avoid distracting headlines, the scarcity mindset, and the influence of supremacy to instead focus on preparing children for critical discussions and engagement, tying back to Edozie’s message that “at the McCormack Graduate School, we prepare students to advocate for the public interest.” And in listening to the narratives of children who experienced desegregation and busing in the 70s, we can learn and “do something for the children now in the schools to create more opportunity for them and those children to succeed them,” as community organizer and BDBI co-chair Lew Finfer noted during the panel discussion. Otherwise, commemorating the ruling's anniversary would not respect yesterday's struggles and successes and today's experiences.



*Keynote panelist discussion with (from left): Professor Lorna Rivera, Lew Finfer, Kim Janey, Karilyn Crockett and Professor Nick Jurovich*

The Keynote panel discussion, “Educational Equity and the Legacies of Busing,” was moderated by Professor of Education Lorna Rivera and Professor of History Nick Jurovich. The participants included The Honorable Kim Janey and the Co-Chairs of the [Boston Desegregation and Busing Initiative \(BDBI\)](#), Lew Finfer and Karilyn Crockett. Lew Finfer, a long-time community organizer who saw the benefits and challenges of school desegregation and busing in 1970s Boston firsthand is now the Director of [MA Action for Justice](#). Karilyn Crockett is Assistant Professor of Urban History, Public Policy, and Planning at MIT and author of [People before Highways: Boston Activists, Urban Planners, and a New Movement for City Making \(2018\)](#). Crockett emphasized the necessity to “call out [the 1974 ruling and the present state of things] so that we can really understand what it means to move our city not just forward but deeper into intention.” Again and appropriately, the conversation during the panel discussion and Q&A used the historical lens in order to project possible future efforts and outcomes.



Crockett told the story of her grandmother’s integration in 1966 West Virginia as “something peaceful, something easy” which did not happen here in Boston. The key, according to Janey, is to acknowledge the mistakes and miscalculations that were made and challenge our current mindset to effect real change. The panelists agreed that organizing is still the way to go to sustain effective change because, as Finfer phrased it, “organizing can get stuff done.” Janey expressed her full confidence in Boston’s ability to let go of exceptionalism and meet this issue head on: “This is a city that's going to fight, it's going to organize, it's going to ... put forth its ideals and try to actualize them.”

Toward the end of the event, Peggy Wood, widow of Robert Wood, in attendance with their daughter Franny Wood, presented undergraduate student Olivia Dannenberg with the first ever Robert C. Wood Student Internship and Award in Public Affairs. This award was created to honor the 50th anniversary of Judge Garrity’s 1974 decision declaring Boston Public Schools unconstitutionally segregated and Robert Wood’s active engagement in desegregation and public education as the head of the Citywide Coordinating Council (CCC) following the ruling.



*Olivia Dannenberg, the Robert C. Wood Student Internship and Award in Public Affairs Recipient*

Olivia Dannenberg, a junior Labor Studies major from Wakefield, MA, is very active on campus in promoting labor advocacy and resources through several offices and organizations. Her noteworthy contributions also involve uplifting and mentoring young girls and women in Boston through the Strong Women, Strong Girls program. Academically, Dannenberg has studied “the history of school desegregation and creating fair and equitable spaces, reflecting her commitment to social movements,” as Professor Michael Johnson remarked during the award presentation. By Mrs. Peggy Wood’s suggestion, the award went to a student who would work with the Boston Desegregation and Busing Initiative (BDBI) during the summer, contributing to BDBI’s research and content creation to reflect on the legacy of Boston’s busing program. Mrs. Wood praised Dannenberg for her work with the Wakefield Human Rights Commission:

She has some of the experience of working with people and knows what that's about but [what] she will bring now to her work with people, under the guidance of Karilyn and Lew, [are] study and scholarship and this will help us not only do the work but perhaps understand it better and understand how to make it better.

Earlier in the ceremony, Edozie read out some prepared remarks for Dannenberg from Peggy and Robert Wood’s daughter, New Hampshire Senator Maggie Hassan (not in attendance):

I am so glad that you are being recognized with the Wood Student Internship Award. You clearly have a deep commitment to the person-to-person work informed by the study and scholarship that makes a difference for all of our people and builds stronger communities, a stronger democracy, and a vibrant and inclusive society.

Senator Hassan, in her written statement, thanked The Honorable Kim Janey for her “work at the community level to make Boston, family by family, street by street, and neighborhood by neighborhood, a more inclusive, just, and thriving society and city.” She also expressed gratitude to the Wood Committee and panelists for honoring her father’s legacy and “for the work that you have done to integrate policy politics and implementation to make our cities and our democracy places where democracy matters because it delivers.”

## FOSTERING DEMOCRACY AND CELEBRATING AFRICAN HERITAGE: A YEAR IN REVIEW WITH THE AFRICAN SCHOLARS FORUM

Across events from the 2023-2024 academic year, the Africa Scholars Forum hosted speakers and community members in celebration and collaboration, culminating in thoughtful action steps and a brighter outlook on African futures.



*From left: Africa Scholars Forum (ASF) faculty advisor, Professor Rita Kiki Edozie; ECOWAS Ambassador Kinza Jawara Njai; Director, Africa Program at The Wilson Center, Oge Onubogu; and ASF Chair Cecilia Idika-Kalu*

The African Scholars Forum (ASF) held several events during the 23-24 academic year, including the Winnie Mandela Speaker Series and Kwanzaa Celebration as well as the 6th Annual Africa Day, which this year was celebrated in conjunction with hosting the Northeast Regional WARA (West Africa Research Association) Academic Conference. The day was co-sponsored by WARA and featured three keynote speakers: ECOWAS Ambassador Kinza Jawara Njai, Director of the Africa Program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholar Oge Onubogu, and Dr. Gilles Olakounle Yabi, Director of the West African Think Tank Institute (WATHI) in Dakar, Senegal. With the goal of spreading awareness about West African efforts in scholarly and public circles, the conference, titled “Democratic Backsliding in West Africa,” fostered discussions about the challenges to and potential for secure democratization in West Africa.

Catalyzed by the coup in Niger and “unconstitutional changes in government,” the theme of democratic backsliding was set into plan in the hope that intellectual conversation and critical scholarship would translate into practical action. Faculty Advisor of the Africa Scholars Forum, Professor Rita Kiki Edozie, in her opening remarks, emphasized that “extremely important to our discussions of Africa at the Africa Scholars Forum at UMass Boston are two things: amplifying African voices on African issues and ... centering practitioner and policy expertise in our academic discussions.” Africa Day’s program, apart from the keynote lectures, hosted two panel discussions. The panels examined how scholarship identified causes for democratic reversal in West African, citing socioeconomic and environmental theories and studies to tackle this issue. While the day prioritized conversations of democratic policy efforts, the event also played host to exhibitions of African music, food, and cultural activities, and allowed time and space for cross-cultural, cross-national, and cross-disciplinary networking.

[Ambassador Kinza Jawara Njai, the Permanent Observer for the Economic Community of West African States \(ECOWAS\) to the United Nations, delivered the first keynote address](#), setting the tone for the conference stating it would “focus on why West Africa democracy is on the right path despite challenges.” The democratic backsliding in West Africa, she posited, “presents an opportunity to collectively rethink how democracy and democratic institutions can be reformed to better deliver democratic dividends to the teeming young population of Africa.” She underscored throughout the address that there have consistently been opportunities, and successes, to transform an “ECOWAS of states [into] an ECOWAS of peoples,” but the essential part to kickstart community relations is proper mechanisms and instruments to ensure effective and people-minded governance. [Ms. Oge Onubogu, in the second keynote address](#), echoed this emphasis on citizen-focused organizing:

elections do not make a democracy but for many Africans across the region they see elections as a benchmark for accountability and a functioning democratic society ... while African citizens clearly aspire to democratic accountable governance and freedoms, they perceive an inadequate level of delivery of these goods by their government.

Onubogu stood firm that in order to achieve peace, we must “try to bridge the gap between African knowledge and ensuring that African knowledge informs US policy towards the continent.”

In a generous gesture, Ambassador Jawara-Njai donated her travel fund to graduate students Rebecca Yemo and Dennis Jjuuko, both of whom completed their doctoral programs this year.

In June 2024, the Africa Scholars Forum of UMass Boston, in partnership with the ECOWAS Group, commemorated “ECOWAS at 49” at the United Nations in a high-profile event featuring dialogue with leaders and scholars about “Regionalism, Democracy and Development in West Africa: Building Blocks to Strengthening Multilateralism”.

Earlier, in December of 2023, the Africa Scholars Forum celebrated Kwanzaa and honored the legacy of the late Winnie Mandela, elevating “the fight for democracy, the fight for a thriving Africa community which she embodied in her work against apartheid” as ASF Chair Cecilia Idika-Kalu introduced the Winnie Mandela Speaker Series event. Prof. Jemadari Kamara, faculty of the Africana Studies department, described Kwanzaa as a “cultural and spiritual celebration that was created by African Americans to reflect our linkage as part of the global African community”. This celebration, represented through the harvest of fruits and vegetables, more significantly lauds efforts in the community: “our work, our energy, our creativity of the year, ... our knowledge and our commitment to one another.” Assistant Professor of Philosophy Dana Miranda, along with Kamara, stressed the importance of community in Kwanzaa’s collective practices:

moving from Kwanzaa to democracy and the way I conceive of it [is] really integrating and maintaining community in the midst of struggle. These seven principles as fruits, as something that are given but have to actually be produced, [are] grown within the community, [only] then you get to taste the sweetness of it.

The event itself was scheduled on Rosa Parks Day, honoring the anniversary of Rosa Parks’s refusal to give up her bus seat, an “action which culminated in the victory and the breaking down of the barriers of segregation,” setting into motion transportation boycotts, mass demonstration, and “implementation of justice and civil rights in this country,” according to Prof. Kamara. Similarly, the Winnie Mandela keynote speaker and experienced community organizer and development practitioner, Samson Itodo, in his address, “Democracy in Africa: Contemporary Challenges and Aspirations,” said “reclaiming our democracy will begin with the streets because the street symbolizes ... an arena of political competition. But, more importantly, it's the streets [that] represents where citizens are reclaiming their power.” Itodo made another crucial point with a callback to former



President of Gabon Ali Bongo Ondimba’s viral plea that “ we [all] need to make noise for Africa, for the retention of Africa's democracy.” Across ASF events, the message of collaboration, open exchange, and shared responsibility trended as key to African democratization. Specifically, Idika-Kalu expressed her appreciation for “the time and energy [graduate students] put into the African Scholars Forum,” hoping the work is just as rewarding for them.

**UMASS BOSTON ALUMNA MARIA FARRAH HOWELL,  
PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER OF THE FARRAH CONSULTING GROUP,  
SHARES PROFESSIONAL INSIGHTS WITH MGS STUDENTS**

On October 26, 2023, the John W. McCormack School of Policy and Global Studies hosted a talk with PR expert Maria Farrah Howell, where she spoke to students and faculty about the realities of public affairs and consulting work. In conversation with Marlene Kim, professor of Economics, Farrah Howell shared advice and anecdotes with students, bolstering their faith in the rewards of a rigorous work ethic and good attitude.



*Maria Farrah Howell*

Maria Farrah Howell graduated from UMass Boston with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1984. Despite graduating during a tough job market, she has over twenty years of experience in corporate and government communications, particularly in state government public relations. Early in her career, she worked unpaid at Curt Gowdy Broadcasting to build her network and experience, eventually becoming the Promotions Director. She later worked in various government roles before founding the Farrah Consulting Group in 2000, a public affairs firm in Boston. Her work in public relations and communications earned her recognition from the Publicity Club of New England, winning her the “Bell Ringer Award”. Farrah Howell values her time at UMass Boston, where she appreciated the dedication of her peers and the

opportunities the university provided. She proudly marveled that “There’s hard work in the air ... [the students] want to get ahead”. A theme throughout the talk, Farrah Howell affirmed to attending students that their position as UMass students gave them an edge when it comes to employment opportunities:

Coming from UMass Boston, I think you can use this degree to your advantage in a job situation, right? You, by definition, are gonna work harder, you're gonna bring with you a lot more experience with diverse populations, you’re gonna have a grit that they are not gonna find in a kid whose parents...put them through four years of school and they never had to work, and they don’t know what it’s like to juggle except for their classes. That’s a gift.

Farrah Howell encourages students to seize every opportunity and work hard, regardless of fear or feelings of inadequacy. She advised saying “yes” to everything, seeking out mentors, and maintaining a positive attitude. Specifically in public relations, she emphasized the importance of understanding and humanizing the audience, conducting thorough research, and framing issues effectively. She warned against neglecting PR early on, as it leads to reactive rather than proactive strategies. Farrah Howell highlighted the importance of empathy and authenticity in communications, especially in diverse settings and during challenging times like the Covid pandemic. Farrah Howell encourages new and soon-to-be communications professionals to employ empathy and authenticity as key parts of their skillset. Whether it’s working in a diverse setting or navigating the ever-evolving media landscape, one needs to collaborate with others, understanding one another in order to put their best voice forward. Even when working with less resources, Farrah Howell maintains that people can be your best source for the best result.

## MRET'S INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE WORKSHOPS WITH STEVEN THOMAS EQUIPS EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS TO OPTIMIZE GRADUATE STUDENT EXPERIENCES

Across two days in April 2024, faculty and graduate students of the McCormack Graduate School and across UMass Boston participated in a workshop series with Steven Thomas, Coordinator for Inclusive Strategic Partnerships for The Graduate School at Michigan State University. This workshop series, organized by M-RET, focused on elevating BIPOC and international graduate student and faculty experience in order to better achieve inclusive excellence at UMass Boston.

Founded in 2020 as a response to the murder of George Floyd, the [McCormack Racial Equity Task Force \(M-RET\)](#) represents and advocates

for the needs of all, not just in McCormack and not just in the College of Liberal Arts, but anywhere in the university, who wants to ensure that their education experience and work experience recognizes and values their own identity and is consistent with UMass Boston's pledge, this aspirational goal, to be anti-racist and health promoting.

Over the years, M-RET has worked with its team and community partners to organize events and training sessions, establish and assist affinity groups on campus, enact DEI measures, and more for the benefit of BIPOC students, faculty, and staff. M-RET's team planned "Integrating Diversity into Graduate Student Success: An Inclusive Excellence Framework Workshop" out of "a recognition that our units and programs and organizations needed to do a better job of identifying and recognizing and responding to needs of people in our organizations, or people who we serve or in our surrounding community [who are] underserved or not recognized or marginalized in many ways," according to M-RET Co-Chair and Professor Michael Johnson. Laurie Nsiah-Jefferson, M-RET Co-chair and Director of both the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy and the Gender, Leadership and Public Policy Graduate Certificate Program, along with Rita Kiki Edozie, the Deval Patrick Endowed Chair of Political, Economic, and Social Innovation and Professor of Global Governance, selected Steven Thomas to run the workshop for his investment and expertise in inclusive excellence and culturally-responsive faculty training on college campuses. Along with his work as an inclusive excellence coordinator and diversity recruiter at MSU, Thomas is the Program Director for the Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP) and the Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP). Attendees of Thomas's workshops included Provost Joseph Berger, Dean of Faculty Rajini Srikanth, and Director of the McCormack Graduate School Adugna Lemi.



*Steven Thomas led the MGS workshop on Inclusive Excellence, which was organized by M-RET*

When it comes to inclusive excellence, "basically the goal is that we're being intentional and we're being thoughtful that it is not one size fits all...about meeting people where they're at," explained Thomas. Inclusive excellence involves developing social cohesion where "people are thriving and shining," where they have access and visibility through collaboration, pedagogical awareness, and support systems. Thomas's work in inclusive excellence with the UMass Boston community is a response to the [2022 National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates \(NACCC\)](#) where survey analysts at the Race and Equity Center of the University of Southern California identified areas in

UMass Boston students shared their concerns: mattering and affirmation, cross racial engagement, racial learning and literacy, and encounters with racial stress. After receiving the results of the survey, university leaders held community sessions to discuss the findings and how to innovate resources and relationships to improve our campus ecosystem and allyship for BIPOC students. Nsiah-Jefferson, in her opening remarks, expressed M-RET's "intent ... to institutionalize inclusive excellence in all our work at UMB as it relates to student support, teaching and pedagogy, initiatives and policies." Through highlighting often-overlooked graduate student struggles specifically, M-RET's purpose, in collaboration with Steven Thomas, was to instruct and advocate for outstanding experiences as students and leaders on campus.

Thomas, in conversation with workshop participants, guided them through strategies to embrace cultural norms and break down barriers to student engagement, including designing courses with students' cultural diversity, lived experiences, and learning backgrounds in mind. Faculty shared concerns about how demands for research and publication are often prioritized, overshadowing and inhibiting their ability to investigate and meet students' needs. Inclusive excellence in course design not only accommodates students in the classroom, but also enables faculty to show up for their students and set up critical conversations about their and others' experiences.

The other key part of this antiracist and intersectional approach is to prepare students to engage with each other more frequently and mindfully. This workshop's aim was not only to provide resources for the McCormack School and CLA, but for the university at large and with a look toward students' "preparation for living [and working] in a racially diverse society," skills and perspectives that begin when students feel not only welcome but also included in their campus's and programs' objectives and outcomes. To avoid and disrupt well-meaning but ineffective initiatives for helping marginalized students and faculty access their best experience, participants discussed their collective responsibility in creating and sustaining intercultural and intersectional educational frameworks to address barriers for success. Professor Johnson is heartened by the community's fervor to "devise new and better ways to teach, to learn, to do research and to do service."

Not only were the workshops well-attended by faculty and staff, but the student turnout was significant: "there must have been at least 25 students in two different sessions .... They had a lot on their minds and I heard from them that they're hurting." Doctoral students, international and domestic, expressed their frustrations about work wages, health insurance, and mental health support resources. The students "felt taken advantage of by their professors. [They] didn't feel heard, were frustrated by people like me. .... And they said, 'We don't need another needs assessment. We've been needs-assessed to death. We want the University to treat us fairly.'" Student participants, in conversation with Steven Thomas, identified areas where they wanted the university to show up for them, such as providing mental and physical health services. "It really motivated me," reflected Johnson, "to .... keep at this work and bring that notion to the Special Advisor role." This September, Professor Michael Johnson succeeds Joseph Cooper (College of Education) as Special Advisor to the Chancellor for Black Life, a role created in 2020 by Chancellor Marcello Suárez Orozco to address the growing needs and concerns of Black faculty and students. In this role, Johnson also heads Black History Month activities on campus and co-chairs the [Restorative Justice Commission](#).

Steven Thomas is set to return remotely this Fall semester to continue collaborating with M-RET's inclusive excellence workgroups from the April event. Outcomes of this work, including how faculty implemented tools and initiatives during the semester, will be showcased at an event in early Winter



2025. M-RET's other Fall semester plans include completing a DEI living document guide as a resource for the UMass community, outlining a bridge course focused on better preparing marginalized students for the realities of graduate school, and hosting heritage and awareness month events. Johnson advocates for McCormack's significant research and public impact, despite the school's size: "McCormack is a small unit by numbers, but we add value in other ways. And I would say that we put our stake in the ground. ... And we take that pretty seriously."

## MCCORMACK SCHOLARS CLUB HOSTS INAUGURAL SPEAKERS EVENT WITH ATTORNEY AND JOURNALIST ALEX MOREY

For their inaugural event, the McCormack Scholars club invited Alex Morey, former Director and current Vice President of [FIRE](#), the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, and member of First Amendment Lawyers Association, to speak to student members and faculty about free speech and "what student governments can do when free speech is threatened."

Founded in the Spring of 2023, the McCormack Scholars Club is the first officially registered club for the McCormack Graduate School at UMass Boston. Students established the club as a "space for McCormack students to connect and communicate with one another, to encourage and facilitate student success through community engagement." Club President Jiedine Phanbuh introduced the event as meant "to highlight the purpose and the mission of the club and bring us all together to engage on very important issues." One of the ways the club achieves its purpose is to bring in speakers who discuss topics McCormack students care about, who understand and promote the "value and importance of student voices on college campuses." And what better topic to start with than free speech on college campuses.



*Alex Morey of FIRE, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, during her with talk with MGS student members and faculty about free speech at the inaugural McCormack Scholars event*

Alex Morey was first choice for this inaugural event because her “approach to defending student and faculty rights blends the trusted legal strategy and the power of public interest reporting,” as Phanbuh praised. Morey spends her days “intaking alleged [free speech] violations” and discussing with complainants and possible violators the scope and limits of the first amendment. Her purpose every day is to start the “conversation for how we can show up to difficult conversations.” In her keynote speech, “Free Speech on Campus: Today's Controversies & Culture and What Student Governments Can Do!”, Morey emphasized the productive value of these conversations, particularly on college campuses, “where the limits of free expression should be wider than ever.”

During the lecture, Morey walked students and faculty through the basics of the First Amendment, uses of and responses to free speech, including examples, and institutional neutrality. Her advice to students: avoid reductivism. Ignoring the multifaceted reality of individuals you fundamentally disagree with on an issue can narrow one’s perspective, limiting the opportunity to “find points of commonality” in conversation with people. “Free expression is ... a condition in which all other problems ... can be solved,” explained Morey. What is required to create an optimal environment for this condition is a mindset shift towards trusting students to come together and work out some of these very common ideological problems on their own, [which] 90% of the time, is something that would give students the kind of agency...that they really want and deserve, make them feel empowered to used their own expressive rights, to talk through some of these incredibly challenging topics. .... You have to be able to learn to show up and see people who disagree with you and work through those challenges in a way that is productive so that’s ... an important part of education today.

For student organizations specifically, Morey told members to know the rights of the student body, “know policies and apply them constitutionally [and] neutrally”, and encourage other “students to show up ... with a pro-speech mindset.” Morey wrapped up her lecture with the message to prioritize the method of “calling in” instead of calling out from Professor Loretta J. Ross of Smith College: “calling in involves conversation, compassion, and context.”



*From Left: Adanna C. Kalejaye, Jiedine I. Phanbuh, Professor Rita Kiki Edozzie, Fernanda Oliveira Costa, and Alex Morey*

In her remarks, Phanbuh thanked “champion of the students,” Dr. Rita Kiki Edozie, the Deval Patrick Endowed Chair of Political, Economic, and Social Innovation, for her irreplaceable “support and inspiration” which made the McCormack Scholars Club and this event possible.



## MGS STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF GATHER TO CELEBRATE AY23-24 GRADUATES AND AWARDEES

In honor of the Class of 2024 May and August graduates of the McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies, the Director's Office hosted an awards ceremony to showcase their achievements.



*Public Policy and Conflict Resolution PhD Graduates and Faculty at the May 2024 Graduation Ceremony*

On May 10, 2024, students, faculty and staff of the McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies gathered at the University of Massachusetts Alumni Club in Boston to celebrate graduating students and award honors for excellence in academics, community engagement, and service to the School. The ceremony opened with remarks from Interim Director Aduana Lemi and Interim Dean of the College of Liberal Arts Pratima Prasad. Awards were presented from the Department of Conflict Resolution, Human Security, and Global Governance (CRHSGG) and the Department of Public Policy, as well as from representatives of the Summer Internships and Fellowship programs and the Director's Office of Student Success.

The following CRHSGG graduate awards were presented by Professors Mehr Latif, Eben Weitzman, and Joseph Brown.

*Academic Excellence in Conflict Resolution (MA):* Kenneth Murphy and Abdel Rasak Kawaf

*Academic Excellence in Conflict Resolution (Certificate):* Clara O'Driscoll

*Conflict Resolution Convocation Award:* Kristina Angelevska

*Donald Paulson Service Award IN Conflict Resolution:* Lynn Vincent

*Convocation Award for Academic Excellence in International Relations:* Joshua Windsor-Knox

*Outstanding Achievement in International Relations:* Miles Lockwood and Marvin Read IV

*Master's in International Relations Capstone./Thesis Award:* Tayler Stevenson

*Global Governance and Human Security Excellence in Dissertation Award:* Rebecca Yemo

*Global Governance and Human Security Excellence in Community Engagement and Leadership Award:* Abiodun Baiyewu

*Roni Lipton Service Award:* Satwika Paramasatya

*Ambassador John W. McDonald Award for Leadership and Innovation in Global Governance and Conflict Resolution:* Denise Muro

PhD student Satwika Paramasatya, who graduated with his Master's Degree en passant in Global Governance and Human Security, was awarded the Roni Lipton Service Award in recognition of his



“extraordinary peer mentorship and community building.” Paramasatya expressed in story-like detail how emotional and profound the ceremony felt to him:

My most memorable moment of the MGS Graduation was the warm and proud feeling of walking up to the stage to receive the diploma. As I approached the podium, the magnitude of the achievement truly sank in, making the experience both exhilarating and humbling. The applause and cheers from friends, family, and peers [amplified] the sense of accomplishment and gratitude for the journey that led to the moment.

The following Public Policy and Public Affairs graduate awards were presented by Department Chair and Professor Christian Weller, Public Policy PhD Program Director Prof. Amit Patel, Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program Director Prof. Michael Johnson, and Gender, Leadership, and Public Policy Program Director Prof. Laurie Nsiah-Jefferson.

*PhD in Public Policy Book Award:* Denisse Delgado-Vazquez

*Best Master’s in Public Administration Capstone Award:* Anna Grady and Tyler Cotta

*Master’s in Public Administration Public Service Award:* Edgar Ruiz

*Master’s in Public Administration Matthew P. Sullivan Cohort Award:* Denisse Delgado-Vazquez

*The Carol Torto Memorial Scholarship:* Melquisedez Gomez Rodriguez

*Richard A. Hogarty Book Award for Academic Excellence:* Cody Diehl

*Gender Leadership and Public Policy Certificate Program Academic Excellence Award:* Isabella Drago

*Gender Leadership and Public Policy Certificate Program Emerging Leader Award:* Ceara Tavares

*Gender Leadership and Public Policy Certificate Program Community Leadership Award:* Kenise Phanord and Angela Akpah

The following MGS Director’s Office of Student Success (DOSS) awards were presented to graduate and undergraduate students by MGS Interim Director Adugna Lemi and CLA Interim Dean Pratima Prasad.

*Robert C. Wood Student Internship in Public Affairs Award:* Olivia Dannenberg

*Civic Action Project (CAP) Fellowship:* Abra Berkowitz, Dayana Blanco Quiroga, Augustina Aboh, Elham Hesari, and Dominic Offei

*The Ambassador Jawara-Njai African-Democracy ECOWAS Award:* Rebecca Yemo and Dennis Jjuuko

*David Nyhan Award for Journalistic Career Excellence:* Stephanie White

*Elaine Werby Public Service Internship Award:* Tayla Duarte, Weichun Yan, Hina Khurshid, and Mahesh Admankar

*The Bluestone Scholars Award Scholarship:* Jessica Thomas

*Vincent G and Robin Loporchio Summer Legislative Internship on Beacon Hill:* Sahar Badiezadeh

*John W. McCormack Public Service Award:* Denise Muro, PhD.

*Outstanding Undergraduate Student Award (BA):* Fiona Erin Conway

*Outstanding Master’s Student Award (MA):* Michael Webb Sandquist

*Outstanding Doctoral Student Award (PhD):* Rebecca Yemo

Mahesh Admankar, an MS graduate and PhD Candidate in Public Policy, earned the Elaine Werby Public Service Internship Award for his investment in “research and evaluation related to social and economic justice.” For Admankar, the awards ceremony

was an unforgettable experience. The warm congratulations from faculty and fellow graduates made me feel deeply connected to the community. It was a moment of pride and joy, not just for me but for everyone who had been on this journey alongside me. Receiving an award of Elaine Werby Internship added an extra layer of inspiration to the day. The event gave me the chance to meet new student friends, and we celebrated together, soaking in the vibrant atmosphere of downtown Boston. The entire experience was a perfect blend of achievement, camaraderie, and the joy of being part of a supportive community. I thank the school for organizing such an amazing celebration.

Charlotte Nnambi, the MGS event coordinator, agreed that “the event was a success ... because we worked together as a unit for all MGS director's office staff to ensure that all the necessary materials, awards and vendors were all on board with our graduation vision.” During the event, the crowd enjoyed a delicious lunch and cheerful company. Attendees had the chance to mingle, congratulate each other, and reflect on years of hard work, enriching experiences, and rewarding relationships. “It was nice to see a harmony of interactions, happiness and emotions in the room throughout the ceremony,” Nnambi shared. Though the ceremony was well-attended, Prof. Michael Johnson wished even more students would show up: “I'd love to recognize just as many students as we possibly could, because we care about it a lot, and we want the students to know that we're proud of what they've done.”

It wasn't just the students who received awards honoring their efforts and commitment. Several staff and faculty were presented awards including Jason Fasano (CRHSGG) for the Outstanding Department Staff Award and Madhawa “Mads” Palihapitiya (MPC) for the Outstanding Center Staff Award. The Faculty Program Director Award for Outstanding Student Mentorship Award went to Professor Amit Patel, the Graduate Program Director for the Public Policy PhD Program.

Many expressed their thanks to Interim MGS Director Adugna Lemi, Academic and Events Programming Support Coordinator Charlotte Nnambi, Senior Program Assistant Gifty Debordes-Jackson, Graduate Research Assistant Amrith Fernandes Prabhu – also a Master's in Public Policy graduate – , Office Assistant Krupali Jitendragiri Goswami, and Executive Assistant Elizabeth “Liz” Diaz. Diaz received special thanks for her fourteen years of dedicated service to MGS, as this was her last year with the School. Her 33 years with UMass Boston will continue in the Art Department.



*Attendees in celebration at the 2024 MGS Graduation Awards Ceremony and Reception*

*Congratulations to the MGS graduating class of 2024 and AY2324 awardees. Your efforts and contributions to not only the McCormack School but also your fields are unmatched and far too meaningful to go unnoticed. Well done and thank you!*

# DONORS MAKING IMPACT

## CIVIC ACTION PROJECT CO-FOUNDER AND POLICY EXPERT GEORGE BACHRACH SITS DOWN WITH STUDENT APPLICANTS TO DISCUSS “TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CIVIC LEADERS IN BETTER POLICYMAKING”

On December 11, 2023, in a casual keynote conversation with McCormack Graduate School faculty, staff, and students hosted by the MGS Director’s Office of Student Success (DOSS), CAP Co-founder George Bachrach guided students through the inception of the Fellowship Program, its application process, and the ways students benefit from policy engagement.

In an animated retelling of the Civic Action Project’s establishment, former State Senator and President of the Environmental League of MA George Bachrach told how he “sat down with a couple of old friends ... who ... had long careers in government and profit, [Steve Crosby and Ira Jackson,] and [they] decided to do something that nobody in their right mind should do, which was start a new nonprofit.” That nonprofit, the Civic Action Project (CAP), is now a significant provider of professional development for not only McCormack graduate students, but also students from Northeastern, Suffolk University, and the remaining universities of the UMass System, resulting in over 200 alumni of CAP’s programs.

Attendees included students interested in applying to the program as well as alumni of UMass Boston and CAP. Dominic Offei (CRHSGG), who is wrapping up his internship at the City of Boston’s Office of Immigrant Advancement this summer (2024), recalled the session with Bachrach and observed that CAP’s focus on strategy in public policy is essential because “by strategy [Bachrach] means how to get things done. How to move ideas on pertinent issues into reality.” Offei commended CAP for setting up ways for “young people to immerse themselves” in the U.S. political system to better understand and engage with policy makers. He was equally appreciative of the roundtable talks with policy leaders and fellow cohort participants. Bachrach agrees that the close-knit cohort collaboration element is a key part to CAP’s success, that collegiality is a characteristic that can be found in the best of policy leaders. Open and honest conversation about this work breaks down the “silos”, as Bachrach phrased, in order to “build new relationships, new networks for innovative policy.”

The fellowship program is not without its challenges. Graduate students enter unfamiliar territory, having to develop a rapport with an already established team. That’s where collegiality comes in, as well as an area where interns can find camaraderie in their cohort through dialogue with people working in different contexts and capacities. For Satwika Paramasatya, another CRHSGG student and CAP alum in attendance, it meant “a lot to [him] to be able to pass on the real-life experience that [he] obtained from the internship” to new applicants. “CAP’s mentorship system and weekly meetings to discuss policy strategy helped [Paramasatya] get through” the challenges of his internship at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. Overall, Bachrach’s influence on Paramasatya “made [him] realize that there is a lot of work ahead that needs to be done.” What will also build confidence in the interns’ sense of self, contribution, and team-building is perspective. CAP alum Nadeem Hussain (Public Policy) imparted this wisdom on the new applicants: it’s not all about the money raised or paid but primarily about how meaningful it feels to do something that matters for the community.



*George Bachrach, CAP Program Director and former State Senator and President of the Environmental League of MA*



At its inception, according to Bachrach, CAP was created in response to the investment and care graduate students demonstrated about ongoing issues, whether environmental, political, or in the pursuit of basic human rights. What CAP wanted to avoid was the disillusionment students can feel in the long run, so the program places them in contexts where they not only learn how to strategize impact but so they can actualize it.

Bachrach expressed the concern of keeping up with the intellectual and professional demands of each graduating class's students, suggesting that his team will need to vet CAP's program partners more thoroughly to ensure that the interns are getting the most out of their experience, that the program is "challenging and enriching enough for graduate students" to feel they can effect real change. Bachrach concluded the talk by encouraging students to apply themselves with conviction and receptivity:

My hope is, again, that you come to UMass in your studies with a sense of purpose and a sense of commitment to try and change things. And our only role, I think, is to help you learn from our 50 years of success and failure, and that we can accelerate your process of achieving, as John Lewis would say, good trouble.

Bachrach proudly acknowledged the value of CAP's partnership with UMass Boston, praising its students and the MGS Director's Office as a true source of inspiration for the work being done.

# MGS FUNDED OPPORTUNITIES AND PROGRAMS

1. Civic Action Project Internship for 5 students
2. Summer Enrichment Award for 14 students
3. DOSS Travel grant for 10 students
4. DOFFAR research and travel funded 12 faculty members
5. Research Support helped fund MGS centers (Internship Opportunity for Students
6. Policy Across Discipline funded two projects in collaboration with CLA Dean's Office
7. McCormack Racial and Equity Taskforce funded events and workshops in collaboration with the CLA Dean's Office
8. Moakley Chair Events and Chair support and two events
9. The Wood Fund for the Wood lecture event and the Wood Scholar Internship
10. The Barry Bluestone Fund for 1 student scholarship
11. Loporchio fund for 2 student internships
12. Nyhan fund for 1 student internship
13. The Elaine Werby Program fund for 4 students internships

**We would like to thank all the sponsors who support our students through their generous financial support**

# McCormack Graduate School Newsletter Editorial Board

Dani Kodess, Newsletter Writer & Editor

Gifty Debordes-Jackson, Senior Program Assistant, MGS

Adugna Lemi, Director (interim), MGS



**Dani Kodess** is the writer of all the newsletter articles.

Dani Kodess is a writer and composition instructor in the English department. She completed her master's in English literature at UMass Boston in 2019, specializing in queer theory and Romanticism. Since then, she has worked in writing studies and instruction at UMB and Lesley University. Dani's current research interests include care pedagogy and queer performative labor. Dani values the power of community, amplifying and centering marginalized voices to disrupt and transform normative societal structures. In her teaching, she loves guiding students to become more confident writers and always welcomes a fond "hello" from former students. Dani can be reached via email at [danielle.kodess@umb.edu](mailto:danielle.kodess@umb.edu).

**Gifty Debordes-Jackson** is the Senior Program Assistant at the John W McCormack Graduate School. She provides event and communication support for MGS, focusing on supporting the Director's Office of Student Success Initiative (DOSS). Gifty is also a PhD Candidate in the Department of Sociology and is working on her dissertation on African immigrant students' experience in public high schools and their knowledge, access, and utilization of academic resources.



*The Director's Office would like to acknowledge the effort and the time that Dani Kodess and Gifty Debordes-Jackson put in to convert the newsletter idea into a reality in less than three months. They worked very hard to ensure that the articles were reflective of the McCormack Graduate School's mission and values. I would like to recognize their commitment to delivering a high-quality newsletter.*

*From the McCormack Graduate School Director's Office.*