

OIDEI NEWSLETTER

Office for Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

**“Unity has never meant
uniformity.”**

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



IN THIS ISSUE...

In this issue, we talk about:

- Threads Fashion Show and Interviews with Event Organizers
- CMU Alternative Breaks
- Upcoming Holidays
- Our Staff & Programs
- Leader Spotlight

OIDEI UPCOMING EVENTS

April 2025:

Annual CMU Diversity Gala

Date/Day: Fri, 4/4/2025

Time: 7:00pm

Venue: Pohlcat Golf Course

Sisters of the Academy 2025 Writing Retreat

Date/Day: Tues, 4/29/2025 - Fri, 5/2/2025

Time: 7:00pm

Venue: Denver, CO

Conversations that Matter

Date/Day: Wed, 4/23/2025

Time: 6:00pm - 7:00pm

May 2025 :

CMU MI-ACE Annual Women's Retreat

Date/Day: Thu, 5/15/2025 - Fri, 5/16/2025

Time: All day

Venue: Grawn Hall 278

June 2025:

MI-ACE Annual Conference "Empowered: Break Barriers and Influence Change"

Date/Day: Mon, 6/16/2025 - Tues, 6/17/2025

Time: All Day

Venue: Kellogg Center, 219 South Harrison Road, East Lansing, MI, 48824

Juneteenth Celebration

Date/Day: Tues, 6/17/2025 - Thu, 6/19/2025

More information coming soon

Black Alumni Weekend

Date/Day: 6/27/2025 - 6/29/2025 in Detroit, MI

More information coming soon



WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

The Office for Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (OIDEI) is the driving force behind CMU's commitment to creating a culture of belonging. The work of our division emerges in the expansion of institutional policy, procedure, and practice as it relates to diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice. We aim to advance Central Michigan University as a pluralistic educational community that fosters growth and transformation in action and thought.



Shawna Patterson-Stephens

Vice President for Inclusive Excellence Belonging



Nikita Murry

Director of Diversity Education



Danny McQuarters Jr.

Assistant Director of Diversity Education



Shymaine Desmond

Executive Office Specialist

At the Office for Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, we are committed to fostering an inclusive campus environment. We host a variety of impactful events aimed at promoting dialogue and advancing equity. Signature programs include:

Conversations that Matter:

Community members, faculty, staff, and students join around a provided dinner and loosely facilitated conversation often of controversial topics. Previous topics include "Policing and Politics in 2024" and "Who Really Gets Affirmed in Affirmative Action."

Soup & Substance:

Community members, faculty, and staff join around a provided meal of soup and rolls, and loosely facilitated conversation. Previous topics include "At the Intersection of History, Diaspora, and Civil Rights."

The Klymyshyn Symposium on Inclusive Excellence, Equity, and Social Justice:

Our flagship event, formerly known as the Diversity Symposium, is a chance to celebrate and make better known the research efforts conducted nationally that are centered around equity, inclusion, belonging, and social justice. It is a chance for members of the campus and the broader community to learn about how CMU faculty, staff, and students are dedicated and involved in research and activism for diverse populations.

Diversity Gala:

The Annual Diversity Gala marks a celebratory close to the academic year at CMU. It brings together individuals from across the university and region to recognize achievements in promoting inclusion, equity, and belonging. A highlight of the evening is the presentation of the Dr. Diane E. Newby Award for Inclusive Excellence in Education, which recognizes a nominated faculty member whose work reflects CMU's diversity principles. This prestigious award is named after the late Dr. Diane E. Newby, professor emeritus in Teacher Education.

ALTERNATIVE BREAKS

Make a Difference with CMU Alternative Breaks

Transform Your Breaks into Meaningful Service Experiences

Are you looking for a way to spend your winter, spring, or summer break making a real difference? Central Michigan University's Alternative Breaks program offers students the opportunity to engage in life-changing service experiences while addressing important social justice issues.

Through local, national, and international community service projects, students develop leadership skills, gain hands-on experience, and work directly with nonprofit organizations to create positive change.

The program provides students with an opportunity to participate in direct service projects that impact communities in need. Participants learn about pressing social justice issues and how they intersect while gaining valuable leadership and teamwork experience. Students also have the chance to travel and immerse themselves in new communities and cultures while being part of a supportive and motivated group.

Students can choose from a variety of Alternative Breaks, including domestic week-long breaks, international alternative breaks, Serve the Mitten, which focuses on local service, and Friday Breaks. Leadership opportunities are available for those interested in becoming Alternative Break Site Leaders or serving on the Alternative Break Advisory Board to help organize service projects.

Before departure, all participants attend weekly group meetings to learn about their service project, the community they will serve, and the nonprofit organization they will be partnering with. The program follows the Nine Quality Components of an Alternative Break to ensure that every experience is impactful, educational, and sustainable.

CMU Alternative Breaks has also partnered with the Office of Study Abroad and the Department of Counseling, Educational Leadership, and Higher Education to provide international volunteer opportunities. Students can now apply for international alternative breaks through the Study Abroad Website. Travel dates are subject to change based on flight availability.

A past participant shared that Alternative Breaks helped them critically think about the way every social justice issue intersects with others in the world. They described it as one of the most rewarding experiences of their college journey.



Sign-ups are now open, and spots are limited. To learn more or register, visit the Alternative Breaks website or contact the program at abinfo@cmich.edu or (989) 774-7685. The Alternative Breaks office is located in 106 Bovee University Center.

LEADER SPOTLIGHT

As Associate Director at the Leadership Institute here in Mount Pleasant, my mission aligns seamlessly with OIDEI's commitment to fostering inclusive excellence.

With over 16 years of public sector experience, including my role as a Leadership Development Trainer for the State of Michigan, I've had the privilege of empowering leaders across diverse sectors. These experiences have fueled my dedication to cultivating impactful leaders right here at the Leadership Institute. As a proud Central Michigan University alumna, my Master's in Training and Development and Graduate Certificate in Equity-Centered Learning and Training provide a strong foundation for my work.

In my current role, I oversee vital programs like the Leader Advancement Scholarship and Leadership Safari, while pursuing my Ed.D. in Educational Leadership. As a certified Clifton Strengths facilitator, I am deeply committed to empowering individuals to maximize their potential and contribute to a thriving campus community.

Inspired by Maya Angelou's words, "In diversity there is beauty and there is strength," I believe in creating environments where everyone feels valued and empowered. I am particularly thrilled for our Women in Leadership Symposium on March 22, 2025, at 10:00 AM. Our theme "Connect, Cultivate, Climb: Empowering the Next Generation of Women Leaders" reflects our commitment to connecting, developing, and elevating women leaders in Mount Pleasant and beyond.

As a new CMU staff member in Mount Pleasant, I am eager to connect and collaborate with other campus partners to further our shared goals of equity and inclusion. This is an open invitation to explore potential collaborations. Please feel free to reach out. I can be found in Powers Hall 131.

VERNIQUE JACKSON



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Michelle Bussert is a Fixed-Term Faculty member under the department of Business Information Systems, and is a Lecturer in Business Communications.



MICHELLE BUSSERT

What inspired you to pursue a career in your field, and how has your journey shaped who you are today?

Honestly, I kind of fell into teaching. Fresh out of college, I got a job as a high school Spanish teacher on the San Carlos Apache Reservation, in Arizona. Needless to say, I was out of my depth, but I loved interacting with young people. I welcomed the challenge of trying to teach and be a positive influence in student's lives. And those students, in San Carlos, inspired me to pursue a career in education. In good part thanks to them, I went on to get a master's degree in education, and another one in the teaching of English to speakers of other languages.

What do you love most about teaching, and what do you hope students take away from your classes?

What I love most about teaching is the opportunity to engage with students. My goal is to provide a solid foundation that will serve them well in future classes and their careers, and more broadly in their lives. I also enjoy working with students one-on-one, getting to know them and their goals and aspirations. For instance, recently I had a student contact me via LinkedIn who I taught 20 years ago. Engendering that sense of connection and inspiration is what I love most about teaching.

Can you share a research project or achievement you're especially proud of?

Something that I am especially proud of is my connection to the National Center for Interpretation at the University of Arizona. While teaching at Tucson High Magnet School, I was recruited by the NCI to be trained to teach translation and interpretation to bilingual high school students. In that capacity, I co-wrote the course curriculum and collaborated in the development of a community program. The program has been tremendously successful, leading to the establishment of a new major in Spanish-English translation and interpretation at the University of Arizona.

How do you hope your work impacts your students, the university, or your field of study?

My hope is that I will inspire students to become life-long learners. One of the underlying objectives in all classes I teach is to encourage



and nurture curiosity. Although it might seem vague, being curious is a skill that can be developed, and that will serve all people across different aspects of life. Curiosity is at the core of all fields of study and consequently is one of the cornerstones of university life.

What's a piece of advice you often share with your students?

One piece of advice I often share with my students is to always be curious. Curiosity drives learning and discovery. It encourages you to ask questions, explore new ideas, and seek out knowledge beyond what is presented in the classroom.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time? Any hobbies or passions outside of work?

I love reading and traveling, but one of my favorite activities is completing the NYT crossword puzzle every morning with a cup of coffee. Fridays and Saturdays I work the puzzle with my husband. Those are the more difficult days, although over time I've gotten better at solving the puzzles. I also enjoy running, walking our dogs, and watching mystery series.

What's a fun fact about you that most people might not know?

A fun fact about me that most people might not know is that during my undergraduate studies, I spent a summer in Alaska working on a fish processing barge. It was a unique experience not only because of the work, but there was hardly any darkness at night, and I wasn't able to see land for 7 weeks! For part of my job, I worked in the "egg house," where we processed salmon roe for sale in Japan. All in all, it was quite an adventure, I worked 16-hour days, and I had to wear rain gear the whole time. It was an extremely messy job to say the least!

Who has been the most influential person in your life or career, and why?

I have to say that the most influential people in my life are my parents. They always believed in me, even when I didn't believe in myself. I feel fortunate to have them in my life.

Do you have a favorite book, quote, or movie that resonates with you?

My favorite book is *Aura*, by Carlos Fuentes. It's a bit eerie and suspenseful; it kept me hooked the first time I read it, and I have reread it a few times since then. The story revolves around a young historian who takes a job to organize and publish the memoirs of a deceased general. While working on the archive of the general's writings, he has long conversations with the general's widow, as he slowly discovers that not everything is as it appears. An interesting aspect of this novel is that it is narrated in the second person, and in the future tense, which is not only unusual, but adds to the foreboding sensation of the narrative.

If you could travel back in time, what advice would you give to your younger self?

I know this sounds cliché, but I would have to say, believe in yourself. When you're young, you can be unsure of what you are doing and can also be easily influenced by what others tell you. Having faith in yourself will help you stay the course in the face of adversity or naysayers; but it will also give you confidence to make changes if you deem them necessary.

What are your goals or dreams for the next phase of your career?

As a veteran teacher, my goal is to continue to incorporate innovative pedagogy and technology into my courses. I'd like to continue evolving as an instructor, to meet the needs of younger generations.

If you weren't a professor, what another career would you have pursued?

One of the most interesting jobs I had was working as a linguistic analyst for the federal government (and that's all I can say about it!). So, I would probably have pursued a career as a translator and interpreter in the legal field.



THREADS FASHION SHOW



THREADS
FASHION

Central Michigan University

Experience the Ultimate Fashion Event

Introducing Threads Fashion Show 2025 – A Night in the Spotlight

The wait is over! Central Michigan University's highly anticipated Threads Fashion Show returns on April 12, 2025, at Plachta Auditorium. This annual event is a showcase of talent, creativity, and innovation, bringing together student designers, industry professionals, and fashion enthusiasts for an unforgettable evening.

Threads Fashion Show is more than just a runway event. It is a platform for aspiring apparel designers, creative directors, and production teams to collaborate and execute a professional-level fashion show. Whether you are passionate about fashion design, public relations, photography, video production, graphic design, choreography, or stage lighting, there is a role for everyone in making this event a success.

Students in the CMU Fashion Show Production course take charge of nearly every aspect of the event, offering hands-on experience in event coordination and production. Designers for the show are exclusively CMU students, and the show has a history of attracting representatives from leading fashion brands such as Meijer, Wolverine Worldwide, Kohl's, Carhartt, Glik's, and Torrid. Fashion alumni also return to serve as judges, further strengthening the connection between CMU and the fashion industry.

A VIP reception will take place before the event, providing an opportunity for networking and celebrating the creativity and hard work of the participants. The Threads Fashion Show not only highlights student talent but also opens doors to potential career opportunities within the fashion industry.

Tickets for Threads 2025 are now on sale. Don't miss your chance to witness a spectacular night of fashion and artistry. For more information or to get involved, visit the Threads Fashion Show website, follow us on social media, or contact the Department of Fashion, Interior Design, and Merchandising at fashion@cmich.edu or (989) 774-1830.



Your Role & Experience: Can you share a bit about your role as a producer for Threads? What are your key responsibilities, and how has the experience been for you?

I, and my two fellow producers and advisor Piper Davis, Kristen Pitschel, and Ian Mull, have been working on our show since last May. We spent the entire year focusing on planning key locations, details, and sponsors to set our students up for success come January. Things like securing our location for the show, creating connections with University Events and the President's Office, and planning events to promote Threads Fashion Show have all been key responsibilities for us three over the fall semester. We have worked with dozens of different teams which has personally helped me understand the art of event planning, especially on a University level.

What makes this year's show unique compared to past years? Are there any new themes, designers, or special elements that attendees should look forward to?

Yes! This year's show is very different compared to past years. There are performative elements we have never done before, hence the location being in Plachta Auditorium. All of our designers and models are students of CMU, but we have added special performances and collaborated with other student organizations that will really enhance the guest experience. Expect to be entertained!

Behind the Scenes: What goes into organizing an event like this? Have there been any challenges you and the team have faced, and how have you overcome them?

A lot goes into it. Like I mentioned earlier, the 3 of us have been working on this show since last May, so we are so excited to finally watch it come to life over this next month. Threads Fashion Show provides an opportunity to students like nothing I have ever experienced, and it really does set you up for success. Therefore, there have been many challenges, because why wouldn't there be! We are told 'no' a lot of the time, so the most important thing I have learned is to get creative!

Impact & Takeaways: What do you hope attendees and participants take away from this year's Threads Fashion Show?

I hope the participating students take away the confidence that they can do anything they want to when it comes to fashion. We have some incredible designers that are working so hard on their collections, so I hope they feel rewarded watching it all come together. I hope the



attendees really enjoy the show! We have truly cultivated such a unique experience. Everyone should feel celebrated and represented when watching Threads Fashion Show!

Getting Involved: How can students, faculty, or community members get involved or support the event?

The best way to support right now is to purchase tickets to our show! Tickets can be found at Threadsfashionshowcmu.com. Any ticket purchase supports our models, designers, production crew, and faculty at CMU! We would truly appreciate seeing you there, you won't regret it! Our show will take place on April 12th @6pm in Plachta Auditorium.

Personal Insight: What has been the most rewarding part of working on Threads for you personally?

The most rewarding part of working on Threads Fashion Show is seeing my work come to life. As part of one of my design courses, I have also gotten to design a collection for Threads. It will be extremely surreal getting to watch it walk down the runway as part of a show I worked so hard on. I didn't think I could both produce the show and design for Threads, but CMU gave me that opportunity that I am so grateful for!

Your Background & Role – Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your involvement in the Threads Fashion Show?

My name is Sofia Serratos, and I'm from Detroit, Michigan. My major is fashion merchandising, and my minor is marketing. I am a member of the social media committee for the Threads Fashion Show, where I help promote the event and engage with our audience through various platforms.

Your Experience – What has it been like working on the event? What have you learned from this experience?

Working on this event has been an amazing experience and a great opportunity for my future. I've learned how much work goes into organizing an event like this—every detail matters. I've also gained valuable skills in event promotion and marketing, which will be incredibly useful in my career.

Challenges & Achievements – Have there been any challenges you've faced while preparing for the show, and how did you overcome them?

Overall, everything has been running smoothly, but one challenge has been finding the perfect way to promote the event while staying true to the theme. We've tackled this by brainstorming creative marketing strategies and ensuring our messaging aligns with the vision of the show.

Personal Takeaway – What does being part of Threads mean to you, and how does it align with your passion for fashion?

Being part of Threads means so much to me. I love being involved in the fashion community on campus and contributing to an event that showcases all the hard



work and creativity within our program. This experience aligns perfectly with my passion for fashion because I love event promotion, building excitement around creative projects, and highlighting the incredible work of our designers.

Future Aspirations – How do you see this experience contributing to your future career in fashion?

This experience has been incredibly valuable for my future career. I want to pursue a career in fashion marketing or social media marketing, and being part of Threads has given me hands-on experience in promoting an event, engaging an audience, and understanding the level of detail that goes into marketing a fashion show. It has shown me both the challenges and the excitement of the industry, making me even more passionate about this career path.



The Central Michigan University Fashion Merchandising and Design program is ranked top in Michigan. Threads Fashion was founded in 1998 at Central Michigan University under the Fashion Merchandising and Design program (FMD).

UPCOMING HOLIDAYS

March 2025:

Women's History Month

Mar. 31 – Eid al-Fitr (Islam)

April 2025:

Arab American Heritage Month

Apr. 10 – Mahavir Jayanti (Jain)

Apr. 12 – The Memorial of Jesus' Death (Christian)

Apr. 13-20 – Passover (Jewish)

Apr. 14 – Vaisakhi (Sikh, Hindu)

Apr. 18 – Good Friday (Christian)

Apr. 20 – Ridv'an (Baha'i) April 20 - May 2

Apr. 20 – Easter (Christian)

Apr. 21 – Grounation Day (Rastafarian)

May 2025 :

Asian American and Pacific Islander Month

Jewish American Heritage Month

May 1 – Beltane (Pagan, Wiccan)

May 5 – Buddha's Birthday (Buddhist)

May 12 – Vesak (Buddhist)

May 16 – Lag BaOmer (Jewish)

May 23 – Declaration of the Ba'b (Baha'i)

May 28 - 29 – Ascension of Baha'u'lla'h (Baha'i)

June 2025 :

LGBTQ+ Pride Month

June 2-3 – Shavuot (Jewish)

June 5-9 – The Hajj (Islam)

June 7-10 – Eid-al-Adha (Islam)

June 8 – Pentecost (Christian)

June 19 – Feast of Corpus Christi (Christian)

June 19 – Juneteenth



Women in Higher Education Leadership Series



An Afternoon with

Beverly Davenport & Sarah Opperman



**CMU MI-ACE
WOMEN'S
NETWORK**
CENTRAL MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY



**APRIL 4, 2025 @ 3:00 PM
OPPERMAN AUDITORIUM**

**REFRESHMENTS
IN STROSACKER**

THE 2025 CMU

Diversity GALA

**HARMONIES OF CHANGE:
A SYMPHONY OF VOICES**

FRIDAY, APRIL 4TH
★ 7:00 PM ★

POHLCAT GOLF COURSE
6595 EAST AIRPORT RD, MOUNT PLEASANT, MI, 48858

REGISTER HERE:



DIVERSITY@CMICH.EDU



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OIDEI | ITD FACULTY AND STAFF SERIES



DIALOGIC COMMUNICATION FOR GREAT LEADERSHIP & EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

Join Cohort One | Jan 24th, Feb 21st, Mar 21st, and April 11th
9:00 am-12:00 pm

Join Cohort Two | Jan 24th, Feb 21st, Mar 21st, and April 11th
1:00 pm-4:00 pm

[Click Here to Register as a Pilot Participant!](#)

- Learn techniques and strategies to increase collaboration in groups.
- Learn about your conflict style and ways to navigate conflict more adeptly.
- Earn a digital certificate in dialogue-based leadership or teaching practices.

Contact jared halter for more information: halte1j@cmich.edu.

Sisters of the Academy



SAVE THE DATE

2025 Writing Retreat



APRIL through MAY
29TH 2ND

DENVER, CO





annual women's retreat

accelerating action into practice

may 15-16, 2025 | grawn 279

For the second year in a row, join the CMU MI-ACE Women's Network for a complimentary, two-day workshop dedicated to engaging women around their holistic developmental needs.

topics include:

- Financial wellness during crises
- Wellbeing sessions
- Mentorship and career advancement
- Women as caretakers, and more...

register here



<https://forms.office.com/r/m7zGLBcSr5>

SAVE *the* DATE

MI-ACE Annual Conference EmpowerED: Break Barriers and Influence Change

Hosted by Lansing Community College

ACE WOMEN'S
Network[™]
Michigan

June 16 – June 17, 2025

Kellogg Center, 219 South Harrison Road
East Lansing, Michigan 48824

Registration opens January 2025



OFFICE FOR
**INSTITUTIONAL
DIVERSITY, EQUITY,
& INCLUSION**

CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY