

THE METROPOLITAN

The Metropolitan State University Student Newspaper

Administration Moving Forward with Anti-Racism Class Proposal

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Metropolitan State University is moving forward on a proposed new graduation requirement. If passed, students will be required to take at least one course with a significant focus on issues of race and racism in order to graduate. The proposal for this requirement was submitted by Metro's Anti-Racism Leadership Team (ARLT). If passed, the requirement will be enforced only for students who are new to the University starting Fall 2016.

Work on the proposal began at ARLT's 2014 Anti-Racism Summit and was developed in response to

ARLT's 2011 campus climate survey, in which 60 percent of students of color and 30 percent of white students said they thought racism was still an issue.

"With the events this past year and the uproar around the country around issues of race, we thought the timing was right to push ahead and we believe we have an administration that will continue to be supportive," said Dr. Paul Spies, a professor in Metro's School of Urban Education and current co-chair of the ARLT.

The proposal went through a faculty process, where it passed with strong support from six out of the seven academic faculty units. The College of Management was



Faculty and staff converse at the 2014 Anti-Racism Summit.

JILL WILKIE

the only unit to reject it. Going forward into the fall of 2015, a faculty committee will look at course proposals to fulfill the new graduation requirement. By February of 2016, those courses will have been identified for reg-

istration beginning in March 2016 for Fall 2016 courses.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Spies said that "in 2011 students agreed that such a requirement should exist at

[SEE ANTI-RACISM PAGE 2](#)

Data Breach Accessed 160,000 Students' Information

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Approximately 160,000 current and former students at Metropolitan State University had some of their personal information accessed in a December 2014 data breach. About 25,000 of those students currently attend Metro. No financial information was compromised; however, demographic information, personal information, academic information (including Star and Tech IDs) and the last four digits of Social Security numbers were accessed. Students whose data was accessed were contacted either by email or U.S. mail, as required by law. Those students can receive support through an identity theft protection firm called Kroll. About 900 faculty members also had their data accessed in the December breach.

HAVE ANY IDENTITIES BEEN STOLEN?

The University does not know of anyone whose identity has been stolen.

"At this point, we haven't heard from any faculty, or staff or students who have had a data breach who have had any identity theft," said Anne Sonnee, interim vice president of advancement and communications at Metro.

INVESTIGATION FINISHED

Three different agencies worked together to conduct an investigation into the data breach, according to Sonnee. One of those was MN.IT, Minnesota's governmental information technology service, which collaborated with Minnesota State Colleges and Universities' (MnSCU) information technology department and Metro's information technology department.

Their study was concluded this April, after announcing that student data had been accessed.

"It's kind of been concluded in phases," said Sonnee.

[SEE DATA BREACH PAGE 3](#)

Metro's Veterans Services Gives Support to Soldiers

ANNA MASRUD
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Another semester is quickly approaching Metropolitan State University, and with every new semester comes a fresh wave of students from all different backgrounds, situations and lifestyles, including veterans and military students who work hard to serve our community and our country. Registration and picking out new classes for the fall semester can be very exciting, but it can also be difficult to discover all the resources Metro has. One powerful resource for students to be aware of is Metro's Veterans and Military Student Services (VMSS), which is located in the Veterans and Military Student Center on the second floor of Founders Hall.

Veterans, military students and their families can find free on-campus support through VMSS. "Our primary purpose," said Mike Anderson, senior student worker for VMSS, "is to assist veteran students with applying for, understanding and utilizing their educational benefits which they earned while in the military."

The Veterans Center also provides student veterans and military students with a safe environment to access computers and talk to



MICHELLE FRANTZEN

Bruce Holzschuh (center in blue), Veterans and Military Student Services coordinator, guiding students through the Veterans Center's many resources.

knowledgeable staff. "Any student veteran can come into our office to simply decompress, relax, study, do homework, fill out veterans paperwork or simply 'shoot the breeze' with a fellow veteran," said Anderson.

Metro is no stranger to supporting veterans and military students. The university has long been hailed a military-friendly school and was listed on the Military Advanced Education's "2014 Top Military-Friendly Colleges and Universities" database. In 2013, Metro was named a Yellow Ribbon Company in recognition of its work to support veterans, service members and family

members. The Veterans Center and VMSS work continuously to uphold these recognitions and support current and future service members, both active and retired.

Metro's Veterans and Military Student Services strive to make the transition into higher education easy and painless. "The transformation from service member to student can present many challenges," said Anderson. "Whether you need serious, life-affecting questions answered or simply want to pull up a chair and have a cup of coffee, we are always here for you." Staff can guide students through available resources, including educa-

tional benefits for spouses and children, applicable scholarships, financial assistance, counseling services, disability services and access to academic advisors.

Recently, the Veterans Center also put effort into broadcasting awareness about the Minnesota GI Bill to veterans and military students. "This is a modest but helpful financial benefit that many student veterans do not know about," said Anderson.

For veterans and military students who are new to Metro, there's more to discover than simply resources.

[SEE VETERANS PAGE 3](#)

THE METROPOLITAN

The Metropolitan State University
campus newspaper

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The submission deadline for the
August issue is July 10.

ANTI-RACISM PAGE 1

Metro State, including 64
percent of students of color
and 51 percent of white
students.”

Furthermore, he said
students should understand
that the new graduation
requirement will not increase
the number of courses
students must complete.
Rather, the classes will fit
into either general education,
liberal studies, major
requirements or electives.
In other words, it will not
increase the number of
credits needed to graduate
but will overlap with
existing requirements,
one of which must have a
racial issues designation.

The new graduation requirement
was half of a two-part education
focus.

OTHER PROPOSALS

ARLT’s 2014 Anti-Racism
Summit led to a focus on
five categories for improving
race relations at Metro.
The new graduation
requirement was half of a
two-part education focus.
The other half focused on
the development of faculty,
staff and administrators
around issues of anti-racist
theory and how to incorporate
anti-racist practice into their
respective areas of responsibility.
The remaining focuses include
diversity, which consists of
developing plans for recruiting
and retaining students and
employees of color; climate and
accountability; community,
which includes being intentional
about having

collaborative experiences
with communities of color;
and policy.

Ginny Arthur is provost at
Metro, as well as co-chair of
Metro’s Diversity Council and
liaison of the policy-focused
ARLT group. And while this
particular working group is
still in formation and not as
far along in its proposal as
that of the education focus
(graduation requirement),
Arthur said they have carved
out their mission and started
working to achieve it.

Arthur said the ARLT policy
group is developing a proposal
to revise Metro policy 1000.
This policy provides the
guidelines for the structure of new-

ly proposed policies. The
proposed revision to policy
1000 would include the
formation of a policy review
committee. This committee
will include a group of
diverse stakeholders including
students, faculty and
administration, who would
review and approve policies
after analyzing their impact
on persons

This committee will include a
group of diverse stakeholders
including students, faculty and
administration...

from historically marginalized
communities. The committee
would also review and
recommend changes to
existing Uni-

versity policies. At present,
Arthur said the proposal has
not received much resistance.

WHY IT’S NEEDED

“We live in a country that
has always struggled to
understand what it means
to be an American,” said

White perspectives of “American-ness”
often leave non-white members of
society in the margins.

Nantawan Lewis, professor
and co-founder in the
Department of Ethnic and
Religious Studies. Lewis is
also a member of ARLT.
“Most immigrants are
drawn to this country because
of its ideological principle,
i.e. freedom, liberty, rights
and justice for all. Sadly,
once they arrived in this
land, many have experienced
otherwise.”

Lewis said white perspectives
of “American-ness” often
leave non-white members
of society in the margins.
“Non-whites found
themselves at the periphery
of the society, excluded
and treated as ‘others’ in
all spheres of life.”

“It is worse when you also
belong to [a] class, gender,
religion and ability ‘other,’”

said Lewis. “As a higher
education institution,
Metropolitan State has a
responsibility to educate
students to live out the
principles

of freedom, liberty, rights
and justice for all.”

HOW DID ARLT START?

In 2002, former Metro
president Wilson Bradshaw
created the ARLT. Comprised
of students, faculty and
administrators, its mission
is to help Metro

fulfill its vision of addressing
institutional racism and
building an anti-racist
learning community. Vested
with this duty, one of the
team’s first initiatives was
to check Metro’s pulse and
find out how students and
faculty members perceived
race relations from within.
They did so by conducting
Metro’s first campus climate
survey in the fall of 2005.
As described within the
campus climate report, “The
purpose of this initial survey
[was] to stimulate awareness,
discussion, further study
and action about racism at
Metro State.”

The 2005 survey found that
“racism does exist in various
forms at the University.” Its
accompanying report, prepared
by Spies and assistant professor
Dr. Robert O’Connor, made
21 recommendations for
Metro to reduce racism. One
of these recommendations
is to hold an annual (or
semi-annual) summit for
strategic planning around
anti-racism.

Got something to say? Want
to voice your opinion? Submit
a letter to the editor, Kevin
Miller at lg0074tj@metrostate.edu
or TheMetropolitan@metrostate.edu.
Letters will be printed at the
editor’s discretion.

Haute Dish, Metro’s literary
magazine, is now accepting
submissions for its fall 2015
issue! Anyone can submit!
Poetry, screenplays, short
stories and photography are
accepted. For the fall issue,
Haute Dish is encouraging
students to write poetry or
prose in their native
languages. The fall
submission deadline is July
15. Visit hautedish.metrostate.edu
or email hautedish@metrostate.edu
with questions.

DATA BREACH PAGE 1

“That first phase was concluded in February, which is when they determined that there were the 900 faculty members who had their Social Security numbers breached. They kept digging to decide ‘well, was there anything else?’ That’s when they started looking more into the student data and learned there had been some additional data [accessed]. That was concluded in April.”

The U.S. Secret Service is working on its own investigation into the hacking. Sonnee said the administration is waiting to hear the results.

WHO WAS THE HACKER?

Sonnee said the actual identity of the hacker may not be who the individual claimed to be online. That said, he or she is allegedly a 16-year-old Australian.

This individual bragged in an online forum about hacking Metro and several other schools. It was seen by an outside vendor who alerted MnSCU. Allegedly, the hacker may have been inspired to hack Metro after watching the movie “22 Jump Street,” as the main characters attend a fictional university called “Metro City State” or “MC State.” The suspect is alleged to be in custody of the Australian government.

A vendor named Kroll will provide identity theft protection services for affected students and faculty. Sonnee said since faculty had their full Social Security numbers exposed, they are eligible for a year of Kroll’s identity theft protection service package and their credit monitoring service.

Metro purchased a different package for students. Those with the last four dig-

its of their social security number exposed have Kroll’s identity theft protection service package. Kroll will refer students to a free credit monitoring service that is not affiliated with their own work.

Sonnee said affected students should call Kroll to

“They have expert consultants who will walk you through what you should be watching out for, or concerned for.”

begin the protection process. “They have expert consultants who will walk you through what you should be watching out for, or concerned for.”

HOAX PHONE CALLS

Some Metro students have received phone calls from people claiming to be with the Minnesota Department of Education, asking the students to confirm their personal information. Sonnee said around a dozen others have reported hoax phone calls, though they were not from agents claiming to be

Sonnee said the administration does not know if these calls are in connection with the data accessed in December.

with the Department of Education. Sonnee said the administration does not know if these calls are in connection with the data accessed in December.

“I’ve probably had a dozen phone calls since we sent that email out asking people to notify me if they had anything that seems suspicious,” said Sonnee. “Only

two or three specifically said it was the Department of Education that called them. Otherwise, they were random ‘I have an uncle in Nigeria that wants to send you money’ kind of calls, and I don’t [think] we can connect that.”

“If you receive such a call,

you can assume it is a scam and should not provide any information,” said an April 27 email to students.

If you do receive such a phone call, you should contact Sonnee at [anne.sonnee@metrostate.edu](mailto:sonnee@metrostate.edu) or 651-793-1805.

MNSCU SECURITY CHANGES?

MnSCU’s head office stores student information in its Integrated Statewide Record System (ISRS). Charting the Future, the program driving MnSCU’s upcoming economic and educational decisions, wants to replace ISRS. It said ISRS uses “aging and outdated software tools.” Moreover, Charting the Future’s documentation said ISRS “hampers MnSCU’s ability to keep up with current education and software trends.” This system is separate from Metro’s server.

Sonnee said MnSCU was concerned about the possibility of the breach reaching ISRS, so MnSCU took preventative measures to in-

Identity Theft: Signs and Protection

If you were affected by the breach, you should contact Kroll and begin the process of protecting yourself. The Federal Trade Commission offers advice for recognizing identity theft before it causes too much financial damage. Things to look for:

- Unfamiliar charges or withdrawals on your bank account
- If the IRS notifies you about multiple filings under your name, thieves may file your taxes for you to try to steal your return
- Debt collectors call about debt that isn’t yours
- Merchants refuse your checks or debit cards

What Can You Do?

- Contact a credit reporting company and place a fraud alert on your credit file
- Check your bank statements and accounts for unfamiliar activity
- Order a free copy of your credit report—you have a right to one free credit report a year from a national credit reporting agency. The Social Security Administration recommends using annualcreditreport.com.

crease security.

Ramone Padilla, Jr. is acting chief information security officer at MnSCU. “We take our responsibility to protect student and employee data very seriously and are working hard to ensure the right safeguards are in place,” he said. “We made immediate adjustments to our security posture and will make further adjustments in the future based on this and other threat data we get from our security partners.”If you suspect someone is using your So-

cial Security number, report it to the Federal Trade Commission at idtheft.gov or call 1-877-IDTHEFT. They can give you specific advice on repairing the damage done by identity theft.

VETERANS PAGE 1

The Veterans Center holds several events a year for students. Paintball games, summer picnics, professional development programs for active military personnel, award ceremonies and art exhibitions are only a few of the events students are invited to attend and enjoy. Interested students are encouraged to contact the Veterans Center for details about upcoming events.

To learn more about the services Metro offers for veterans and military students, stop by the Veterans Center—fresh coffee and welcoming faces are always available. Office hours are Monday–Thursday, 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Need love advice?
Ask Dr. Kev!
Shoot an email to lg0074tj@metrostate.edu or TheMetropolitan@metrostate.edu. We are here to help! Submissions should be no more than 250 words.
(The Metropolitan cannot be held responsible for failed relationships, does not offer medical advice and does not have a doctor on staff.)

On Campus

Inver Hills-Metro State Community Garden Recognized in Book

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A new book about therapeutic garden design features the Inver Hills Community College–Metropolitan State University interdisciplinary community garden and orchard as an example of how gardens can benefit the community. *Therapeutic Gardens: Design for Healing Spaces*, by landscape architect Daniel Winterbottom and occupational therapist Amy Wagenfeld, uses examples from around the world to demonstrate how gardens can support learning, movement, reconciliation and memorialization, as well as improve physical and psychological health.

“Community gardening is rapidly becoming one of the most important resources within the Twin Cities to help provide low-income families with access to healthier foods”

“Therapeutic gardens welcome people of all ages and abilities, no matter where they are located, to participate and engage in an equitable way that is meaningful to them,” said co-author Amy Wagenfeld, “The participatory nature of the community garden—especially for those with special needs—made it a good choice for the book.”

The garden is located on the Inver Hills Community College campus. It was founded in 2012 by August Hoffman, Metro psychology professor,

and Barb Curchack, Inver Hills psychology professor. Since then, it has served as a place for students and other volunteers to connect with the community.

“Community gardening is rapidly becoming one of the most important resources within the Twin Cities to help provide low-income families with access to healthier foods,” said Hoffman. “Urban forestry projects, community gardens and green sustainable projects in general provide numerous psychological

and social benefits and have been shown to provide important resources to community members.”

According to Hoffman, the garden has provided several thousand pounds of fresh vegetables and apples to the Dayton’s Bluff and South St. Paul community. It also has a positive impact on students who become involved.

“I think the Metrostate-Inverhills garden project is unique in that it is focused on connecting students across campuses,” said Shawn Veldey, a Metro stu-

dent who became involved with the garden when he took a class taught by Hoffman. “The garden is a way of bridging the higher ed experience and bringing a sense of connectedness to students.”

Hoffman and his fellow volunteer garden enthusiasts haven’t limited their growing skills to campus; the professor has organized trips to several gardens and orchards throughout the country, including Newtown, Conn., and Detroit, Mich. A trip this past winter even took a group to Guatemala. He is currently planning a similar project for June at the Red Lake Reservation in Red Lake, Minn.

Therapeutic Gardens: Design for Healing Spaces, published by Timber Press, is available online and in bookstores. If you’d like to get involved at the Inver Hills Community College–Metropolitan State University interdisciplinary community garden and orchard, contact August Hoffman at 651-999-5814.



AUGUST HOFFMAN

The Inver Hills Community College–Metropolitan State University interdisciplinary community garden and orchard.

According to Hoffman, the garden has provided several thousand pounds of fresh vegetables and apples to the Dayton’s Bluff and South St. Paul community.

Metro State to Offer new Master’s Degree in Urban Education

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Metropolitan State University has approved a new master’s program in urban education, and its first class offerings rolled out for the summer semester. According to a recent press release, the program will focus on providing educators with the knowledge and skills they need to make a difference in the lives of urban youth, families and communities. Applications for the fall semester are currently being accepted.

Rose Chu is the interim dean of the School of Ur-

ban Education. “We have had a graduate certificate for secondary education teacher preparation for a few years,” she said. “The goal has always been to augment the graduate certificate into a master’s degree.” In fact, besides secondary education, the new master’s degree has four other program concentrations available including special education and English as a Second Language.

With this new program, Metro has positioned itself uniquely among local universities. “As far as we can tell, we are the only institution that is offering a master of science

in Urban Education in Minnesota at this point,” said Chu. “We are also the only academic unit in Minnesota that calls out urban education among all other educator and teacher preparation programs.”

Chu said this new program is a perfect fit for our university because of the urban location and diverse student body. “We are the most diverse in terms of faculty and staff demographics for an education unit in Minnesota; two-thirds of all faculty and staff in the School of Urban Education are persons of color. We are also the most diverse in terms of our student body; we

currently enroll over 40 percent students of color.”

“Collectively as faculty, staff and students, we have incredible rich knowledge, along with personal and professional experiences in urban education that inform our work,” said Chu. “Besides the affordability of Metro, our new master’s program is a tremendous opportunity for many professionals to explore ‘moving the needle’ on the academic achievement of our underserved urban E-12 learners.”

For more information, please go to choose.metrostate.edu

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Combat Racism With NCBI

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On April 24, Metropolitan State University’s National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI), a non-profit whose mission is to eliminate racism and oppression, held a four-hour workshop as a follow-up to a shorter event held earlier in February. This April workshop focused on promoting NCBI’s goals of “prejudice reduction, violence prevention, conflict resolution and coalition building.” In the fall, NCBI is planning on hosting a training session that will create new facilitators.

Trained NCBI facilitators Jose Santos and Kathleen Cole began the April workshop with an introduction to NCBI principles. Workshop attendees were asked to respect these principles, which included honoring confidentiality, respecting others, leaving work and technology outside of the room, and speaking for yourself and listening respectfully with your full attention on what is being conveyed. Those in attendance raised their hands in confirmation.

UPS AND DOWNS

Participants were then invited to partake in two activities that were featured in February’s shorter workshop. The first activity involved group members standing up and sitting down, and thus is appropriately named “Ups and Downs.” Presenters identified various groups, which included birth place, age, educational status, connection to the university, religious affiliation, sexual orientation and ethnic heritage, to name a few. When a participant identified with a specific group, they would stand and those sitting clapped and cheered in support and recognition.

This activity allowed the workshop group to recognize the voices that

were present, as well as those that were not, and promote pride when establishing individual representation. Afterward, participants shared why the activity was difficult or not and discussed how some categories are assigned by others, as well as how labels cannot fully describe each individual.

PERSONAL IDENTITIES

The second activity included participants identifying their personal identities, which is important because, according to Santos, “One thing that we do find is that these different groups ... whether you have them thrust upon you or whether you don’t even notice if you are a member of them, they affect your leadership. They affect your ability to navigate within groups, and they affect your ability to direct those groups, and they affect how people might react to you.” Attendees worked in pairs with a given prompt to identify a personal identity and discuss the positive and negative aspects associated with their chosen social group.

STEREOTYPES

The next activity focused on attendees’ knowledge of numerous social groups and how a lot of knowledge can be the result of stereotyping. NCBI thinks of stereotypes as “records that play in our heads even if we don’t want them to,” according to Cole. She explained that it’s like a song you hate but know all the words to. “First thoughts” was an activity that included teaming up with a

partner and picking an identity from a list provided (that neither member was a part of) to share the records each person had heard about the social group.

After choosing a group, one person spoke the name of the group while the other replied with the first word that came to mind. This activity allowed participants to examine their “records,” which is important because, according to Cole, “We internalize knowledge about various social identity groups and normally those things are stereotypes ... and you just pick them up by being in the culture ... even if you don’t necessarily endorse it.” This took place four times before the pair switched roles. Once the activity was over, the group discussed how the results of the exercise shocked or surprised them.

CAUCUSES

After a short lunch break, Raj Sethuraju replaced Cole as presenter. Sethuraju introduced himself and then the group began the next activity, called “Caucuses.” The goal of this exercise was to have groups of three or more represent a certain social group that they belong to. Attendees provided social groups to the presenters and the group was then divided into smaller groups to represent an identity that they belong to. Groups then discussed the question: “What do you never again want people to say, think or do in regards to your identity group?” Each group then shared a few answers to the question with all attendees, which allowed those listening the opportunity to practice being better allies to

various social groups.

The last activity included hearing stories from two group members regarding their experiences with oppression based on a social identity group. Everyone then expressed the thoughts and emotions each story brought up, and participants provided their support.

In closing, the presenters and attendees expressed statements of appreciation to the presenters.

NCBI provides training that is beneficial to everyone. “There are groups that we are told that we are members of ... and then there are groups that we don’t even notice we’re a member of ... it’s about being able to see these things even if you don’t want to lend them power,” Santos explained.

For those interested in learning more about Metro’s NCBI, future workshops or leadership training, contact the organization at ncbi@metrostate.edu.

NCBI thinks of stereotypes as “records that play in our heads even if we don’t want them to,” according to Cole.

Arts and Community

Summer Fun for Free in St. Paul

St. Paul has lined up arts and cultural experiences free of charge all summer long.

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Beyond the leisure landscape of biking, riverwalks and picnics in the park that is summer in the Twin Cities lies a menagerie of movie multiplexes and highfalutin music festivals begging for the attention of your disposable income. These events are advertised to deliver high value, but they are also designed to do so at high cost.

Students whose disposable income is nonexistent—who don’t have a rainy day fund to raid or don’t want

to cash their student loan check for anything short of food and shelter—fear not! St. Paul has lined up arts and cultural experiences free of charge all summer long.

MUSIC IN MEARS

Every Thursday night this summer in the Lowertown neighborhood of St. Paul, you will find local bands, local food trucks, local beer and—for the last six weeks of summer—local films in Mears Park.

For the past 12 years, Music in Mears has featured local musicians and artisans, bringing the community together to share in what makes it special. Expanding to over 13 events, this summer’s lineup spans multiple genres and delivers a healthy representation of the local music scene.

Featuring jazz by Pippi Armenia on June 25 and hip-hop by Mixed Blood Majority on Aug. 6 helps round out

a more traditional, guitar-based lineup featuring the indie rock of Zoo Animal on July 23, the Melismatics on Aug. 20 and the Flamin’ Oh’s on Aug. 27. Singer-songwriters Field Trip and Van Stee open the series on June 4.

Food trucks, while not offering their wares free of charge, are included in each setlist and rightfully billed as the artists they are. Local favorites such as Gastrotruck, Potter’s Pasties, Hot Indian and Tiki Tim’s all appear regularly but rotate, so check the schedule for your favorite lineups.

Music in Mears begins June 4 at 6 p.m. The full schedule can be found at musicinmears.com.

MOVIES IN THE PARK

The St. Paul Parks and Recreation Department screens films for free with their Movies in the Park series beginning June 19 at locations scat-

tered throughout its recreation centers and parks.

Classic films such as “The Wizard of Oz,” “Annie,” “Little Shop of Horrors,” and “The Goonies” add variety to the more recent blockbusters like “Frozen,” “Despicable Me 2” and “The Lego Movie.” The series finale, “Jailhouse Rock,” takes place at Harriet Island on Friday, Sept. 4.

Showtimes are at nightfall. The full schedule is available at stpaul.gov/moviesintheparks.

As it says on St. Paul’s website: Bring a pillow, blanket and lawn chair to enjoy a starlit night of fun with friends and family!

deM atlaS: Local Rapper on the Rise

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The first time I had an opportunity to meet local label Rhymesayers Entertainment’s newly signed emcee deM atlaS was back in early 2014. I was at Rhymesayers’ record store, Fifth Element, talking with a friend who works there when I noticed a skinny dude with dreads and thick-rimmed glasses that would do Woody Allen justice.

“Is that deM atlaS?” I asked my friend behind the counter. He said yes and that he was in preparing for an in-store show the following day. It was one of the first official shows he would play as the label’s newly-assigned musician. After about 20 minutes, he left for the bus stop, so I left to meet him there and introduce myself.

The reason for my excitement was very simple: not a whole lot was known about him before he signed with the label. He’s from St. Paul, had an EP and had a song called “Charlie Brown” on Youtube. So, when famous local rap label Rhymesayers Entertainment, the biggest record label in Minnesota, signed him, he suddenly became the local hip-hop scene’s newest fixation.

I introduced myself as a music journalist who wanted an interview and offered him a ride home, as he was short for bus fare. He accepted, and then we began chatting, mostly just small talk about music we liked. But when I dropped him off, I departed by saying, “I’m going to get that interview soon; just keep an ear out!” He smiled and replied, “I look forward to it.”

About a year later, I gave him

a call to cash in the favor. After a few extra spins of his “Charlie Brown EP,” characterizing his sound as if Nas, “Lucy” era Atmosphere and Miles Davis decided to kick it at a party. At this point, he had just released his second EP, “DWNR,” as well as a constant string of shows beginning with the Soundset festival the year prior.

“[Performing at Soundset] was crazy,” he said. “I was on this legendary stage and I smashed a guitar. I know no one has done that at Soundset. But I knew I wanted to because I had never performed in front of that many people before.” Soundset is a local hip-hop festival, and it has grown exponentially since its 2008 inception. It had record attendance last year.

An eccentric performance at the festival tends to mirror his musical attitudes as well, with the aforementioned “Charlie Brown EP” utilizing jazzier instrumentals and song structure, transitioning into “DWNR,” which has an emphasis on a more melancholy pop, into his rhyme structures similar to the Gorillaz or fellow label mate Atmosphere. “I think for the next release I want to do something fusing the two concepts of my last two EPs,” he said, answering my questions and quips with a level of clarity and grace.

That’s when I realized why atlaS had been such a lightning rod of attention in the underground since his label-unveiling. Sure, he may be technically proficient in his rhyming, but he puts a lot of thought into what he says on record, despite only rapping for about four years. The curiosity ultimately stems from two things: his innate focus on incorporating the genres of music



deM atlaS is a local rapper newly signed to Rhymesayers Entertainment.

JULES AMEEL

he loves into his own style and a precise focus on detail.

This sudden interest in his music, two relatively successful EPs and a string of incredibly successful shows have built anticipation for his first proper album release. “When the LP is ready, it’s going to let people

know what’s up,” he said. “It’s going to dive into what the two words ‘deM’ and ‘atlaS’ really means. Expect at least a new EP this year, but the album is in the works. I want to really take my time with it, I gotta take my time with it.”

Our Thoughts

Take It or Leave It

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Most Metropolitan State University students are mature enough to understand what it means to be responsible, but for those of you who think you're ready to become parents, you might want to think again. Some folks out there might have told you that you need to map out your entire life plan, comb through it to remove any potential kinks, and then figure out the best time to raise a family. That works, but honest parents will tell you that there's never a perfect time to have children. And they're right. You could plan for years by saving every penny, reading all the highest-rated parenting books on the market, and even finding the perfect name for your firstborn, but reality will prove that you can never be prepared enough for the responsibility—the commitment—it takes to safely and adequately care for a child.

Parenting also comes with innumerable teachable moments that you can't just brush aside. You probably already know that it would be your responsibility to guide your youngsters throughout life, holding your arms out just far enough to keep them safe while also making sure that you help shape them into the adults they will become. Notice the word "help" in there. You're not shaping them with your own hands

and beliefs; you're helping them shape themselves. After all, it's not your life, is it? So anything beyond "helping" your child would be considered controlling—and

You're not shaping them with your own hands and beliefs; you're helping them shape themselves. After all, it's not your life, is it?

that's just not cool. Some of you might think that controlling your children isn't such a bad thing. But it is. Take religion, for example.

Just last night, my six-year-old son, a kindergartener, told me that his classmate told him god made the sky. "God who?" I asked, disdainfully. "You know, the one who made the earth and everybody in it," he claimed. "There is no evidence of a god, so zip it," I told him, before immediately realizing that I had just found myself almost guilty of the very thing I despised about the situation: indoctrination. As someone who doesn't believe that we have a creator, based on years of my own research (call me atheist if you wish, but I don't really care for labels), I was angry that someone—although indirectly, no doubt, since it was probably just another kindergartener—had tried to indoctrinate my child. Sadly, I would no longer be able to protect my son from the burden of the myth of eternal damnation.

No big deal, you say? My Christian family thought it was appropriate to take me to church every Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday night, from

birth until my early teen years, because they thought they were doing the right thing. They wanted me to be branded with their religion so they could reunite with me in their golden afterlife. Pretty sweet, right? Absolutely not. I love my parents, but those actions were selfish. Their controlling behavior created another follower of Christianity by ingraining their biblical principles into my youthful mind without even bothering to ask me if that was something I wanted. Of course they weren't going to ask me. I was just a child. Most of you might say that children don't know what they want. Well, that's right because they're too young to make important decisions. So how could they possibly be old enough to understand what religion might bring about in their lives? This is why it's absolutely outrageous to assume that it's acceptable to scoop them up and deliver them to your church without allowing them to decide for themselves whether attending services—or even believing

in a higher power, for that matter—is something they want to take part in. What if they want to study Buddhism and just try to live a peaceful life without joining some sort of congregation, or what if they want to read about the lack of evidence for the existence of a higher power and simply live a happy life without following the rules of some book allegedly sent down from an alleged creator? Would you really want to deprive them of these options? Simply put: the choice is theirs, not yours.

The fact is children are easily influenced, so causing them to be victims of religious indoctrination could be quite harmful in the long run. As humans, shouldn't they be allowed to come to their own conclusions objectively? And don't they have the right to decide whether they even want to be religious? Before carting them off to church this weekend, I challenge you to ask yourself if it's really ethical to force your children to be religious before they're old enough to do their own laundry. Kids, just like adults, are entitled to their own opinions. Fortunately, my son has two parents who will allow him to make these choices himself.

After forcing away my desire to chew out the monster that planted such a harmful seed in my son's innocent and carefree brain, I cloaked my anger with a neutral attitude and turned the conversation into yet another fine

learning opportunity. "Look," I said, "maybe there is a god, and maybe there isn't. What's important is that you don't go around saying things just because you hear them from someone else." I then explained to him that, when it comes to theology, it would be wise to educate himself about the many different religions of the world before deciding which, if any, he might want to explore further. I told him that I would be willing to take him to the library, where he would have access to any religious reading material he might want to research and process. "That's okay," he told me.

Simply put: the choice is theirs, not yours.

"We can do that when I'm a teenager. I'm gonna go trade some Pokemon cards now."

So, my fellow Metro students, if you're going to have children, please consider allowing them to think for themselves before hauling them to your place of worship and indoctrinating them before they have an opportunity to truly understand what's going on. You don't want to strip them of their rights to use their own brains to make such life-altering decisions. They just might thank you some day.

Office for Everyone: 365 Everywhere

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Did you see a pop-up while checking your email last month? Every student's inbox got a message from Microsoft, but if your finals were as busy as mine, you probably had no time to check it out. What was it about? Now that things have calmed down for the summer, I've put together the details.

The Office 365 offer attached to your student account has always included free access to Office in the browser and on your phone (both were covered in this

column a few months back). If you need a refresher: you can open and edit documents in your browser and install the Office mobile apps on up to five smartphones and five tablets—more than enough to cover all your devices.

What you might have missed is the most recent upgrade: the Office desktop suite is now free for your personal computers, including Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote! That's Office 2013 on a Windows PC, or Office 2011 on a Mac, both of which will be upgraded to Office 2016 when it comes out later this year. Plus, it's

the same five-device deal as tablets and phones, so if you really have five different computers you could put it on every single one.

"But I've already got Office," I hear you say. "Why should I upgrade?" Well, the real killer app in Office 2013 is syncing school files to your personal computer. Any time you save a file in an Office program on a campus PC, you can save it in the OneDrive account attached to your student email. It's got one terabyte of free space (that's 10,000 times larger than the H: Drive), but until now you had to use your

browser to download those files at home. Not anymore! Set up the new OneDrive for Business app included in the Office suite, and files saved through OneDrive on campus computers will appear seamlessly on your personal computer. (Unfortunately, this only works on Windows right now, but Microsoft has promised a Mac solution coming with Office 2016 this year.)

Installers can be a hassle, so I gave it a test run on my own laptop. Things were much simpler than in the past: it left my existing install of Office 2010 untouched, import-

ed all my preferences and opened all my documents with no trouble. If you need a bit more direction, the ITS department has put together a couple of guides to help. Check the website at metrostate.edu/ITS and click "Microsoft Office 365" under the "I am new here" section. You can also ask for a copy in person at the ITS department in St. Paul or at Metro's library computer help desk. "Free" is a good deal, and it doesn't expire until you leave Metro, so get your computer set up now for future classes!

Student Voices

Asian Student Organization Attends Hmong National Development Conference

ASIAN STUDENT ORGANIZATION MEMBERS
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From April 17–19, 2015, students in the Asian Student Organization had the opportunity to go to the Hmong National Development Conference (HNDC) in St. Paul, Minn. The conference’s mission and goal was to bring together community members, professionals, politicians, scholars, youth, business owners and more to network, dialogue and celebrate the community’s accomplishments. The theme was “Honoring our Legacy, Onward to Prosperity” because 2015 marks the 40th year that Hmong have been in the United States since the first refugees came in 1975.

The conference had many workshops to choose from in the following categories: economic development and entrepreneurship, education, healthy and wellness, advocacy and civic participation, arts and culture, leadership and professional development. There was a concert held on Friday night and an awards banquet on Saturday night. There were opportunities for attendees to visit and tour Hmong charter schools here in the Twin Cities and also go to the We Are Hmong exhibit at the Minnesota History Center.

The conference gave students of Metropolitan State University’s Asian Student Organization the opportunity to network with leaders and learn about the community. Here’s what students who attended had to say about their experience at the conference:

PLOUA YANG

One of the workshops I attended was Kabzaug Vang’s session on international marriage abuse. Through her passion and work, I wanted to learn more about the organization, Building Our Future. Her work is based in Wisconsin. However, every state with Hmong populations has its own community of Building Our Future. She has spent many years working in the field and is clearly very knowledgeable.

She spoke a lot about accountability. In Hmong culture, we are a patriarchal system. Women are viewed as property. They belong to their father, then their husband, then their son. Some husbands break away from

their marriage to marry another international person, who is perhaps 20 or younger.

Where do we hold our husbands or men accountable? We go to our fathers who are doing the same thing, we go to the clan leaders who are doing the same thing or we go to the 18 clans that are doing the same thing. Are the women just stuck then? “If the men cannot be held accountable, then it is the time where the women will lead,” said Vang.

Are the women just stuck then? “If the men cannot be held accountable, then it is the time where the women will lead,” said Vang.

At one point during the session, Vang opened the discussion to others in the audience. I was disappointed that few of the younger men spoke. There was an elder man who spoke, and I was disappointed with his questions. He told us that the information provided is wrong in that it only gave a woman’s view. He asked, “What about the women who do go and marry younger men?” Also, “I do not know anyone who is younger than 18 who has come here. Every one woman who came here through marriage is 18.” Everyone is the room held their lips because we knew Vang would respond appropriately. Vang told the elderly man that, per the U.S. embassy, only three percent of women marry younger international men, which tells us that 97 percent of Hmong American men marry internationally. Vang chose to focus on the 97 percent. As for their age, they lie in their documents. While they claim to be 18 years old, in reality, they are only 13 or 16 years old. In my head, I kept thinking “denial, denial, denial.” Hopefully, the elderly man will see these words across my forehead. It is disappointing that we do not have the majority of Hmong men’s support who can speak up in this endeavor. So, Hmong

women will lead now.

SHENG YANG

My overall impression and experience attending the Hmong National Development Conference this past weekend is that it was beneficial. HNDC provided a safe and constructive space for professionals, students and community members to come together to speak about Hmong identity from when we first came here (40 years ago) to where we are headed in the future. I especially liked how there were numerous workshops we were able to attend, with different topics and categories to choose from. I was highly interested in the leadership and education workshops they provided, and that was where I was for most of the conference. Furthermore, I was able to connect and network with the professionals pre-

I was able to connect and network with the professionals presenting the workshops.

sending the workshops. They were intellectual individuals who gave me advice and tips on how to work toward the issues and problems I am passionate about. Overall, I would recommend this conference to others in the future.

HNDC provided a safe and constructive space for professionals, students and community members to come together to speak about Hmong identity from when we first came here.

YENG HOUA XIONG THAO

I somewhat enjoyed this conference. Many of the workshops I attended were amazing, and I learned a lot. The workshops that I attended were mainly related to my major so I enjoyed them. These are a few workshops that caught my attention: shamanism and folktale storytelling, youth leadership and middle school

teaching about Linux. These workshops were entertaining and engaging. The speakers had the audience participate instead of just talking to us.

GHAO YANG

This was my first time attending HNDC. I had always heard great reviews from classmates. I always want to know a little bit more on my culture and history. The plenaries are always so intriguing. Topics on education, community and history really opened my eyes. These topics gave us opportunities to discuss and review the community and our stories.

SANDY YANG

I attended the leadership workshop and got to meet our local Hmong Bush Leadership Fellows and learned about the work they are currently doing in the community. It was very interesting and inspiring to hear their stories and professional achievements. I liked that Dr. Kalc Vang from 3M talked about the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programs. I am a biology major here at Metro, and I do believe this is where innovation starts.

WELL WORTH IT

Overall, everyone agreed that HNDC was a good conference to go to, especially for people who wanted to know more about the Hmong community. It gave us insight into education, community, history and leaders who want to work with the Hmong. We were able to network with other colleges, as well as talk to professionals and leaders who want to work on the issues to make a better future.