

Fostering Hope and Strength Now and for the Future

An Archive of Community-Engaged Work

2022-2023 Faculty
and Staff Spotlight



Office of Community Partnerships

Introduction

The Office of Community Partnerships (OCP) at the University of Massachusetts Boston is dedicated to highlighting and recognizing university-community projects that showcase significance and impact, while adhering to the principles of equity and reciprocity. In this regard, we present an archive of community-engaged faculty and staff partnership spotlights that our office gathered during the 2022-2023 academic year. These spotlights on the university's faculty and staff showcase a diverse range of projects in which they are involved; projects that focus on the betterment of Boston for the present-day and for the future of our community. These projects also align with the university's new strategic plan focus on "Grand Scholarly Challenges," which seek to build deep connections in integrated scholarship.

A theme that we gleaned from the spotlights this year was the overwhelming attitude of hope and resiliency that radiated through the dedicated work of faculty and staff with community partners. That is why the cover of this publication is the iris: a symbol of strength and optimism. These spotlights and their featured projects focus not only on the care and advancement of the community for present times, but they also look to the future of the Boston community and the lives of those who call it home. Living in a (mostly) post-pandemic world still emotes feelings of fear and uncertainty for many, but the featured faculty and staff have shown that they are undaunted by these obstacles. Together with their partners, they are striving to find the light and are blossoming in the face of adversity.

We intend to continue this practice of spotlighting the exceptional work taking place at our urban public university and urge you to contact us if you wish to share your own work and inspire others. We hope these stories resonate with you, just as they have with us, and foster a greater appreciation for the power of community partnerships in creating meaningful change.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cynthia K. Orellana".

Cynthia K. Orellana

Director, Office of Community Partnerships

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Stephen Silliman, PhD

Stephen Silliman is a professor of anthropology at the College of Liberal Arts and a historical archaeologist who works primarily on topics pertaining to Indigenous people and colonialism. This year marks the 20-year anniversary of the Eastern Pequot Archaeological Field School, a community-engaged effort initiated in 2003 by Silliman. The project was launched in collaboration with the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation of Connecticut, who sought assistance with cultural and historic preservation and community education on their reservation. The Eastern Pequot reservation, established in 1683, is still occupied today. Silliman wanted a project that would focus on Native American history, solidify the power of collaborative and Indigenous-led initiatives, and teach undergraduate and graduate students the fundamentals of research and justice-oriented work.



Because of that interest in the connections between past and present, the legacy of the repatriation movement, and a growing concern with issues of social justice, the Eastern Pequot Archaeological Field School is a long-term venture in putting that vision into practice in southern New England.

The Eastern Pequot Archaeological Field School: 20 Years of Heritage and Justice

Silliman and the people of the Eastern Pequot nation wanted research that demonstrated the persistence of this Indigenous community through centuries of colonialism. This remains profoundly important because they had their 2002 federal acknowledgement determination unjustly reversed in 2005.

Just this year, the project was named one of the “20 Game Changers” in Connecticut history by *Connecticut Explored Magazine*; in 2020, it received the Mark E. Mack Community Engagement Award by the Society for Historical Archaeology.

Silliman continues to be amazed, humbled, and inspired by the project. The partnership between Silliman and the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation of Connecticut has included 12 summers of fieldwork, trained 150 undergraduate and graduate students, resulted in 18 master’s theses, and involved 30 Eastern Pequot members as field technicians, advisers, co-authors, and students themselves. Working alongside tribal members, hearing their stories, engaging their insights and leads, and feeling their cultural presence has been professionally and personally transformative for students and Silliman alike. The feeling seems mutual, given the statements captured in a 2021 documentary and expressed recently by Mitchel Ray, Tribal Chair: “The Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation has been blessed to have a program which has enabled the tribe to connect with the land and our ancestors through archaeology, a way to journey through time to capture the experience of living on the reservation over hundreds of years.”

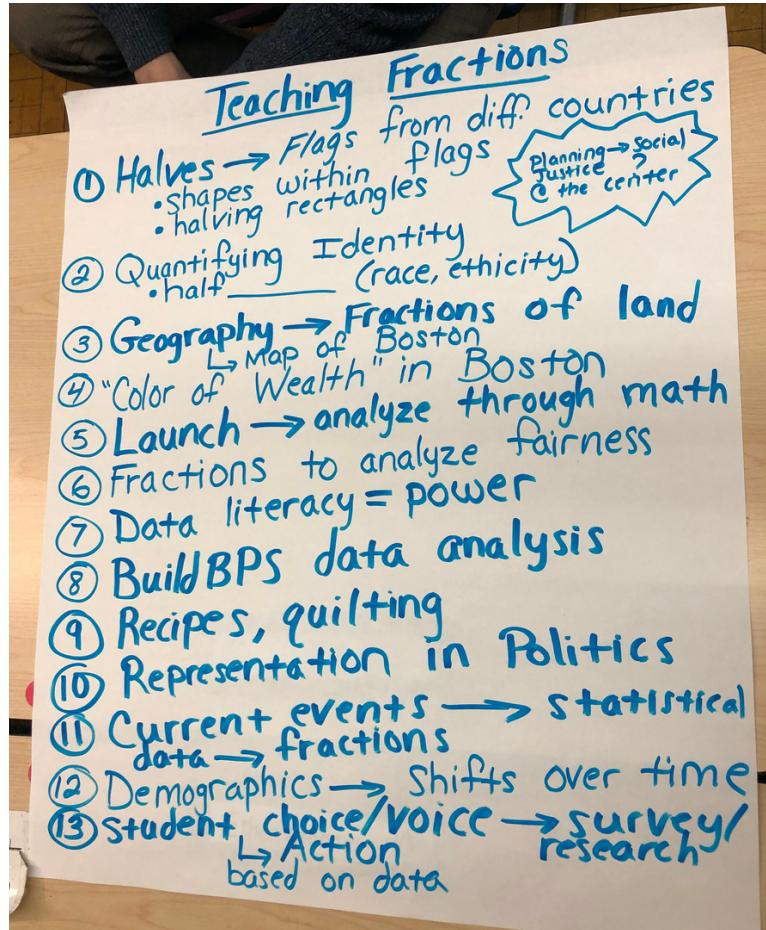


Silliman offers these tips for those undertaking community-based work: “to be flexible and innovative to adjust to changing dynamics and needs; listen to and amplify community voices in research and teaching; to offer financial compensation for partners’ knowledge and participation; expect to commit years for meaningful change and output.”



Abiola Farinde-Wu, PhD

Abiola Farinde-Wu is an assistant professor and the graduate program director of the Urban Education, Leadership, and Policy Studies Program in the Department of Leadership in Education. Her scholarship explores the experiences of teachers and students of color. “Race Matters: A Family-Educator Antiracist Curriculum Collaboration” is a public service, community-based research project, which brings together scholars and school community members. In this study, Farinde-Wu, Michael Baulier, and their coauthors Melissa Winchell of Bridgewater State University, and UMass Boston colleague Amy Cook focus on experiences at one Boston-area school engaged in antiracist work.



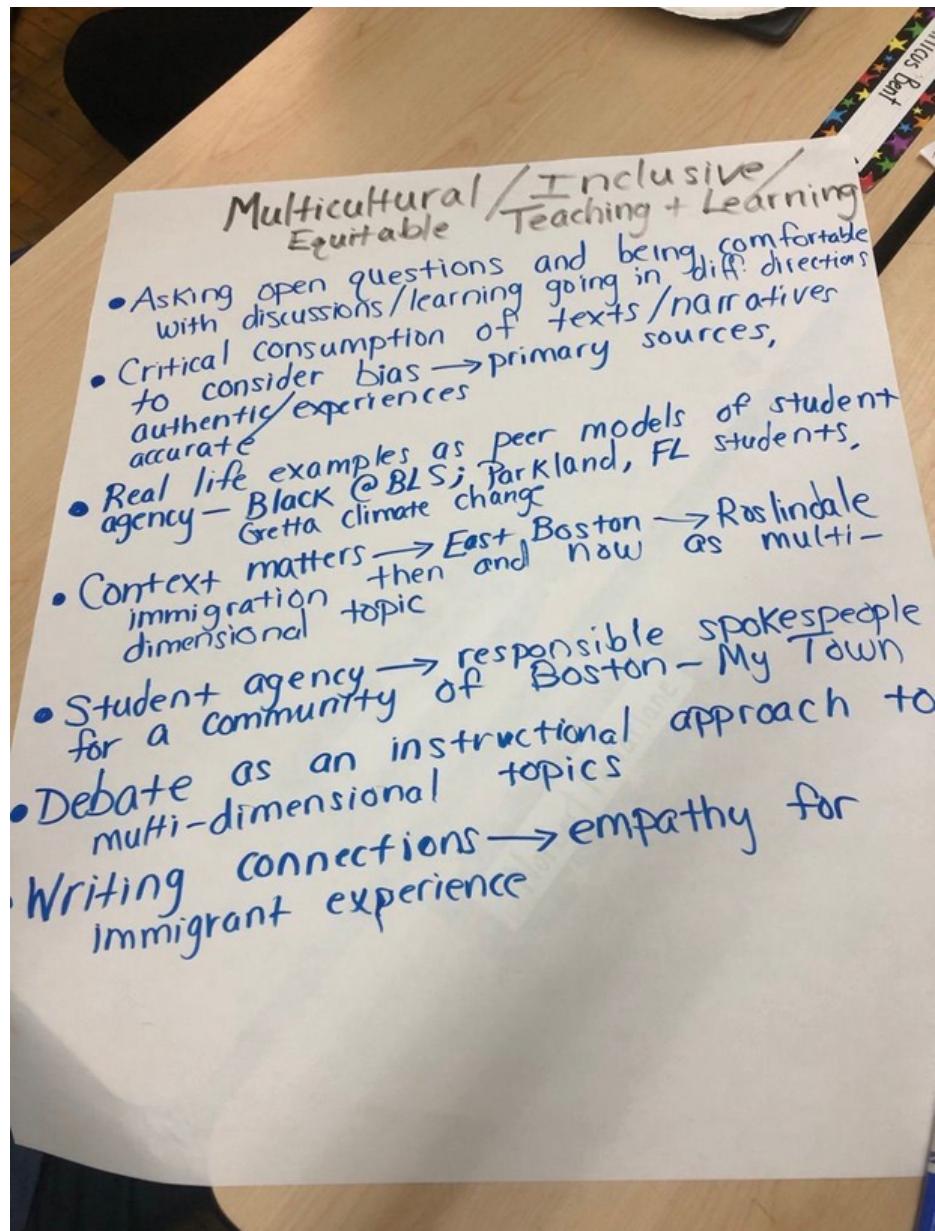
The research project was funded through the University of Massachusetts Boston’s Public Service Grant Program for community-based research, which is both for public service as well as the production of recognized scholarship. For the project, the school community, already engaged in intentional antiracist work, partnered with the research team to facilitate a series of professional learning seminars among educators and family members focused on antiracism and the K-5 curriculum.

In conducting this project, Farinde-Wu asserts the team came together in service to the community because antiracist work is work for the collective good. With this understanding, Farinde-Wu and her collaborators persist despite challenging and/or uncomfortable race conversations. Highlighting how racial, social, and cultural issues impact equitable educational opportunities and treatment of marginalized groups, they draw from critical theories, such as Black feminism and intersectionality to interrogate education policies, pedagogies, structures, and practices in urban schools, communities, and contexts.

Race Matters: A Family-Educator Antiracist Curriculum Collaboration

When considering her path as a motherscholar, a sistascholar, and a Scholar of Color, community-engaged work is at the foundation of Farinde-Wu's scholarship and teaching.

While centering on the educational experiences and outcomes of students of color, she also teaches about policies, practices, and systems that impact our most vulnerable populations. She considers that such research, teaching, and theorizing, as an act of resistance, must be done with the community. Principal of Willett Early Childhood Center and Little Mustangs Preschool Michael Baulier praised Farinde-Wu's work saying: "The thing I appreciate so much about collaborating with Dr. Farinde-Wu is that she has really been intentional about getting to know the school community."



For others interested in doing anti-racist work, Farinde-Wu poses this, "There is no one and done; there is no one size fits all, and community work can't be done by one person. It has to be done by a collective, and it has to be done with intentionality. It has to be grounded in humility, and it has to also be grounded in the life, the history, and the spirit of the community that you're working with. This work isn't going to look the same in every community. It has looked different in this community over the years because it evolves, and the people who are part of the work evolve."

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Rosemary Samia, MS

Rosemary Samia is the director of the Center for Clinical Education and Research in the Manning College of Nursing and Health Sciences and has been at UMass Boston since 2014. As a Certified Healthcare Simulation Educator, she has completed the National League for Nursing Simulation Leadership Institute and was recently awarded the Innovative Teaching Award from the Massachusetts Association of Colleges of Nursing for the work being done with Hope House. Currently, Samia's doctoral work is focused on researching and counseling the community members with mental health and substance use disorders (SUD) in nursing education.



Hope House Boston is a residential addiction treatment program that addresses social determinants of health when creating individualized treatment plans. According to Samia, the stigma of SUD exists among healthcare professionals and deters people living with the disorder from seeking treatment. Thus, she considers students may be exposed to pejorative language used by healthcare professionals, influenced by attitudes of preceptors, and form judgment that fuels the stigma held by the public. Furthermore, she suggests students encounter this patient population in a variety of clinical settings but do not have an opportunity to speak freely with patients about this disease in prelicensure education.

Addressing the Stigma of SUD with Hope House Boston

The goal of this collaboration is to build relationships among prelicensure nursing students and a population within the local community who are reluctant to seek medical care. Through weekly interactions in the nursing skills lab, Samia seeks to decrease the stigma of substance use while empowering clients to navigate the healthcare system. Students working with Samia perform physical assessments and obtain health histories from clients, including substance use and approaches to treatment. Clients provide feedback to the students focused on communication skills and how to develop rapport with vulnerable patients.



Samia describes the weekly encounters between students and clients as successful in developing communication skills and increasing confidence levels of all participants. For example, clients are introduced to the fundamental principles and benefits of simulation, including strategies to provide feedback to students following each encounter. Students report a better understanding of addiction and acceptable language to use. The patient-provider dynamic is lessened when students and clients interact in a neutral environment with permission to learn from each other. The result is clients begin to develop trust in healthcare providers, stating “I didn’t know if I was worthy of being in the company of professionals because that’s what drugs make you think. The biggest reason I’m still in Hope House is because of my experience at UMass.”

Samia considers that setting the expectations for open dialogue between students and clients allowed them to see each other as people with stories that extend past the ‘patient’ and ‘nurse’ titles. When asked about what they learned from working with clients, one student shared, “I have watched documentaries about drug abuse...that made people with SUD seem like monsters who do not care about anyone but themselves. However, after meeting the people from the Hope House, it made me realize people with SUD are so much more than their disorder.”

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Mona Abo-Zena, PhD

Mona Abo-Zena is an assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction in the College of Education and Human Development, and she is partnering with Boston Children's Museum to support the work of their Religious Literacy Team. Developing Religious Literacy aligns with the Museum's commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and its mission to engage children and families in joyful discovery experiences that instill an appreciation of our world, develop foundational skills, and spark a lifelong love of learning. Abo-Zena's scholarship addresses how people may have been taught to avoid discussing religious and spiritual beliefs and experiences, even though they pervade our lives. Thus, she seeks to partner with community organizations and cultural institutions, like the Museum to increase people's individual and broader capacities to engage in open dialogue about these salient topics.

According to the Museum's Senior Director of Arts and Culture Vaughan Bradley-Willemann, "The Religious Literacy Initiative supports families by providing opportunities to develop a curiosity about the ways in which religion is embedded in identity and culture. Through various platforms, including exhibits, programs, object-based learning, and community collaborations the goal of this initiative is to help children, families, and caregivers feel more comfortable talking about their religious identities and develop skills to practice empathy towards other people. The overarching goal of the Religious Literacy Initiative is for children, families, and caregivers, regardless of belief systems and practices, including those with no religious beliefs or affiliation, to feel supported in engaging with topics that affect children's identity development and wellbeing."



The Boston Children's Museum: Supporting Religious Literacy

Planning for the initiative began in 2020 when Leslie Swartz, then the Museum's Senior Vice President for Research and Programming, in collaboration with Dr. Diane Moore of the Harvard Divinity School reached out to Abo-Zena. Having read her¹ 2019 co-authored paper , they wanted to explore how an anti-bias approach that centered around young children and families could inform the Religious Literacy Initiative.



Pictures provided by Boston Children's Museum

What started with Abo-Zena giving a talk that featured culturally informed developmental perspectives of young children has led to an ongoing partnership. The overarching goal of the Religious Literacy Initiative is for children, families, and caregivers, regardless of belief systems or practices, including those with no religious beliefs or affiliation, to feel supported in engaging with topics that affect children's identity development and well-being.

This initiative aims to help children, families, and caregivers feel more comfortable talking about their religious identities and develop skills to practice empathy toward other people. Abo-Zena's collaborations with the Museum include consulting with the arts and planning team on the content of the exhibit, providing a series of all-staff workshops to facilitate their engagement with families on religious literacy, and helping

rearticulate what being religiously literate means for the Museum. Developing capacity for religious literacy at the Museum has helped the Religious Literacy Team support similar processes for other museum educators, including the Mississippi Department of Archives.



1. Nimmo, John & Abo-Zena, Mona & Leekeenan, Debbie. (2019). "Finding a Place for the Religious and Spiritual Lives of Young Children and Their Families: An Anti-Bias Approach." NAEYC.

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Allison Cohen Hall, PhD

Allison Cohen Hall is a senior research associate and project director at the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI). In 2015, she worked with ICI to develop a project that focused on employment for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD) with several partners, including Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE). SABE is the national self-advocacy organization for people with IDD. In that project, members of SABE participated in field research, developed plain language products, and were actively engaged on the project's leadership team. This experience of working alongside colleagues with IDD as full collaborators set the expectation that going forward, Cohen Hall and ICI's disability-related work would always seek partnerships with people with lived experiences.



Cohen Hall is also director of the Center on Youth Voice/Youth Choice, a national resource center on alternatives to guardianship for youth with IDD. This project includes an Advisory Committee with over 75% youth with IDD who guide the Center's major activities, as well as a Youth Ambassador Program lead by SABE. The Youth Ambassador program provides support, mentorship, and leadership development to up to 50 youth with IDD who serve as conveners and resource contacts in their states. As part of their work, youth ambassadors have shared their stories about being under guardianship and using supported decision-making. They have done this in a variety of ways including through their art, public testimonies, and podcasts.

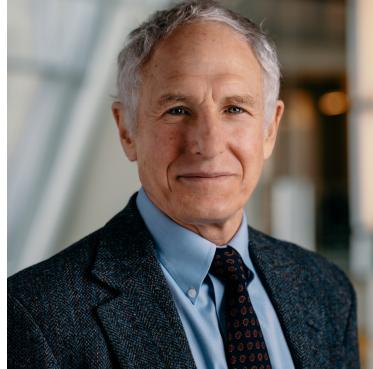
Guardianship Alternatives and Transfer-of-Rights (GATOR)



The term “nothing about us without us” has been adopted by the disability community to communicate that people with disabilities should be front and center in any research, policy development, and advocacy around disability issues. Cohen Hall stated: “While I have been working in this area for over twenty years, the past five to seven years have been the most rewarding and impactful. When I first started at ICI, we studied community inclusion and integration. Now, we are engaging in it. While there is still much work to do in this area, the more we support the voice of people with disabilities to be the guiders, the conveners, and the facilitators, the closer we are to more equitable and accessible communities.”

According to Cohen Hall, self-advocates bring their expertise, perspectives, and lived experiences and their participation has helped make the research, advocacy and systems change work more effective. Melody Cooper from SABE said of her participation in the CYVYC project and her role in training the youth ambassadors: “[youth] looked scared to death. But as the weeks and months went by, they grew. We presented with them, and they blossomed. When I watched their showcases sitting at my computer, I was almost in tears. They did this. We did this.”

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Paul Kirshen, PhD

Paul Kirshen is a professor of climate adaptation in the School for the Environment (SFE) and research director of the Stone Living Lab. He has more than 40 years of experience serving as Principal Investigator of complex, interdisciplinary, participatory research related to water resources, coastal zone, and infrastructure management, and climate variability and change. His community work focuses on research, engagement, and distribution of the impact of climate change with marginalized and oppressed groups in Boston.



Kirshen knew that the East Boston community faced present and future climate threats because it is a highly densely populated area with community members who have been marginalized and oppressed in the past. He partnered with Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (NOAH) to improve the lives of these residents and to distribute the impacts of climate change on these communities. One of his community- engaged projects aimed to collaborate with NOAH to obtain just adaptation in East Boston through a multifaceted, long-term approach. There were two parts to this project.

First, Kirshen worked with NOAH to expand the work started in 2008 to remediate the unjust impacts of flooding in East Boston and the development of adaptation strategies. They led workshops with local residents and infrastructure agencies to discuss adaptation options for East Boston. More recently, they have focused on social network analysis and worked on the launch of the East Boston Resilience Network that has responded to climate change as well as to wide-spread food insecurity in the community and the COVID pandemic (SCALE-UP).

Equitable Community Resilience to Coastal Flooding in East Boston

The second part of Kirshen's project is supporting the NOAH Youth group. This includes being involved in all the planning activities, for example leading field trips and supporting charrettes, attending a Leadership Academy on local coastal resilience. During these and other training events, NOAH youth share their ideas with youth of the Herring Pond/Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, who are carrying out similar activities with the goal of preserving the East Boston community. Kirshen, SFE, and NOAH hope to establish a cadre of East Boston residents and youth becoming strong and knowledgeable advocates for climate change management in East Boston.

Kirshen understands how fortunate he was to partner with NOAH, a trusted and knowledgeable community resource. Even with their support and fellowship, it has taken time to build the kind of relationship that is needed to enact proper change in a community. Philip Giffey, the executive director of NOAH, said this of the partnership with Kirshen and the university: "For more than a decade, East Boston has greatly benefitted from UMB's knowledge of the intersection of various climate issues as well as their personal connections, advocacy, and passion for equitable participation in climate planning... We could not do this work without them!"





Susanna Miller-Raines, MSW

Susanna Miller-Raines is the alliances manager for the Think College Inclusive Higher Education Network (Think College Network), a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion within the College of Education and Human Development. Miller-Raines has been working in inclusive higher education for the last 11 years and joined the Think College team in a full-time capacity in February 2022.



Miller-Raines' philosophy on alliance building is rooted in the Collective Impact Model. She sees the value of bringing together state and regional partners to support mutually transforming relationships and facilitate systems change.

Miller-Raines began in inclusive higher education in 2012 at Georgia State University as the Coordinator of the state alliance: Georgia Inclusive Postsecondary Education Consortium. She brought together inclusive higher education programs, state agency leaders, families, students, and other organizations to increase awareness and promote systems change to expand college opportunities for students with intellectual disability (ID). She expanded her collaborative work beyond the state and joined forces with colleagues across the Southeast to create the Southeast Postsecondary Education Alliance (SEPSEA). SEPSEA was the first regional alliance on inclusive higher education in the U.S. focused on promoting professional development, research, and public policy across the ten states. She began consulting with Think College as a technical assistance provider supporting the development of state and regional alliances.



Think College: Supporting Enrollment of Students with Intellectual Disability in Higher Education

In her current role, Miller-Raines takes lessons learned from state and regional alliance partners' development experiences to grow partnerships and foster collaboration within states and regions to expand and improve inclusive higher education opportunities for students with ID.



Tom Smith, Executive Director of SEPSEA, summarizes the critical role that regional alliances play in supporting state initiatives and local programs: "regional alliances provide direct technical assistance and professional development... They are more acutely aware of the characteristics and needs of programs and communities within the region."

Miller-Raines considers that by coming together as an alliance there is a collective power, whereby alliance partners can speak as one voice to affect change in states and regions. This is evident as Misty Parsley, a member of the Tennessee Inclusive Higher Education Alliance, describes the importance of state alliances: "State alliances provide support within the state for new programs to get started, but also provide a network for a collective voice for advocacy on key issues such as funding and scholarships." Miller-Raines is energized by this collective work, stating: "Great things happen when we work together towards a common goal!"

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Caitlin Coyle, PhD

Caitlin Coyle is the director of the Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging at the Gerontology Institute. For nearly a decade, the Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging has been a research partner to the AgeStrong Commission in the City of Boston. Although the research questions vary from project to project, the core purpose of the partnership is to use data to inform the Commission's planning and decision-making to create positive, and equitable change for older residents of Boston.

Since 2014, the partnership has completed about 10 projects that engage older residents and those who work on their behalf on issues like employment, transportation, housing, civic engagement, information equity, social connection, and community planning related to outdoor spaces. The engagement of residents and stakeholders in the research process has become embedded in how the Commission informs their actions and decisions.



AgeStrong Boston: Information Equity Among Older Bostonians

In addition to the benefits to the community, Coyle considers that the partnership has been pivotal in developing the Center's community-engaged research and dissemination skills. She also maintains that the Center has grown in community engagement and continually returns to this work, because the process empowers older residents to effect change and be heard—something that is often unavailable to them. When discussing the empowerment of older residents, she posits: "The notion of reflecting and being consulted about what is happening in your environment and in your life can make residents feel more connected to their community and to themselves."



While building the staff's expertise in community-engaged research practices, Coyle suggests the partnership work with the City of Boston and older residents has been transformative for graduate and undergraduate research assistants. She considers the opportunity to be involved in primary data collection and analysis; and the follow-through with using data to develop recommendations for how these findings come to reality in the communities of Boston, is an experience that can only be fostered outside the classroom. Furthermore, the Center is developing community-based research questions that translate back into the practice of knowledge-building—and these are questions that evolve from lived experiences, and are bolstered or guided by the literature, rather than stemming from a collection of peer-reviewed publications hiding behind a paywall.

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Additional Resources

Campus Leadership Advisory Group (CLAG)

The Campus Leadership Advisory Group (CLAG) champions and brokers community-engagement efforts on campus and beyond, provides high-level guidance to OCP on strengthening campus community engagement infrastructure, and identifies opportunities for networked partnership strategies.

<https://www.umb.edu/ocp/affiliatedgroups/clag>

Subcommittee on Community-Engaged Research (CES)

The Office of Community Partnerships works in partnership with and serves as an ex-officio member of the Subcommittee on Community-Engaged Research (CES) which is charged with giving voice to the issues and concerns of faculty who are collaborating with community partners in their research, teaching, and service, thereby enhancing the mission of the University. The CES is a subcommittee of the Research Committee of the Faculty Council which ensures the representation of members of the faculty in the governance of the Boston campus and the University of Massachusetts as a whole.

www.umb.edu/ocp/affiliatedgroups/ces

Office for Faculty Development

The Office for Faculty Development at the University of Massachusetts Boston advances the university mission by supporting faculty excellence in research and scholarship, teaching and learning, and engaged service by providing opportunities for professional development at all stages of faculty careers (tenure and non-tenure-track, from new faculty to emeritus faculty).

www.umb.edu/ofd

The Office of Student Leadership and Community Engagement

The Office of Student Leadership and Community Engagement enhances the student experience through the development of local community engagement programs, leadership development opportunities, service trips, and more.

https://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/oslce

A Word From Us to You

The OCP spotlight series began during the 2018-2019 school year establishing this tradition of highlighting the community engaged work of UMass Boston faculty with community partners. It has since then expanded to featuring the university's staff recognizing the significant contributions that they are also making in meaningful community engagement.

The spotlight series is curated and designed by OCP student staff members. This year's publication was spearheaded by Sophie Serage, undergraduate PACE apprentice serving as the communications and events assistant for the OCP in collaboration with Shauna Murray, PhD student in the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development. They are happy to present this publication as a part of the culminating work together.

Sophie is a graduating senior of the class of 2023 and will go on to serve on the editorial team of *Enspire Magazine* in New York City post graduation. She feels lucky to have worked alongside such dynamic and determined women this semester and is excited to continue this work of shining light on those who are making a positive impact on the world. She and Murray congratulate all who are being spotlighted and hope those reading feel as inspired by these projects as they have.



Office of Community Partnerships

University of Massachusetts Boston

The Office of Community Partnerships (OCP) was created in 2011 to serve as a gateway for and resource hub for partnerships, connector, and strategic coordinator of the university's engagement. The goal is to better align our campus' engagement efforts, understand and recognize the impact, and support the needs of our external communities. OCP seeks to identify, strengthen, and support the creation of collaborative community partnerships that advance our mission as Boston's public research university.

Office of Community Partnerships

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