A Great Start to a Daunting Task

Nearly four years ago, MSU researcher Rebecca Campbell immersed herself into a project to help address the problem of more than 10,000 untested sexual assault kits found in Detroit. Now, she is on the verge of completing the report that will lead to new standards for cities nationwide.

Campbell, a psychology professor and veteran sexual assault researcher, has served as the independent evaluator for a project funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), an agency within the U.S. Department of Justice.

Working with Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy and others including Steven Pierce, associate director of MSU’s Center for Statistical Training and Consulting, Campbell has found that chronic resource depletion and lack of effort by the Detroit Police Department are the two basic underlying causes of so many sexual assault kits going untested.

“Detroit was way understaffed compared to national norms. They had two DNA scientists while similar cities had six to 14 scientists,” she said. The Detroit Sex Crimes Unit had staff cut in half twice, and the prosecutor’s office also had staggering budget cuts over this same period of time.

“They just did not have the resources to be able to keep up with what they were supposed to be doing,” Campbell said.

The more troubling cause was that Detroit Police “did not put organizational time, effort, care, and attention” into investigating complaints of rape, often avoiding investigation by blaming the victim.

A thorough rape investigation police report would normally be two to three inches thick, Campbell explained. In many cases, there was as little as a single page written at the time the complaint was made and no evidence of follow up.

“A lot of our work was trying to get to the bottom of how did this happen,” she said. “Certainly resources were an issue, but what resources the Detroit Police Department did have, they just absolutely did not put into this crime. It’s a training issue, but it’s also an organizational priority issue.”

Campbell’s final report will include the steps municipalities must take when untested kits are found as well as the results of testing 1,600 of the kits in Detroit. It will also include recommendations on how to handle a large number of hits on the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) and how best to inform victims to minimize the trauma that can accompany reopening a previous traumatic experience.

Campbell is encouraged that the remaining kits in Detroit are being analyzed thanks to $4 million dollars provided by the State of Michigan, but her hard work is far from over. While ultimately her final report will help jurisdictions nationwide who are struggling with the same issue of untested kits, her analysis of the first 1,600 kits tested has led to her next challenge to investigate the issue of serial rapists.

“My hope is to be able to take an in depth look at the serial sexual assaults that were identified through these kits,” she said. “It’s a new way of thinking about measuring serial rape because usually you look at court records to see if a perpetrator has been prosecuted more than once. The problem is that most sexual assaults are not prosecuted. That’s a huge underestimate about the problem of serial rape.”

Despite the heavy demands on Campbell and others involved in the crisis of untested sexual assault kits, Campbell has also found the work rewarding.

“I’ve really enjoyed getting to know the Detroit community. I have a lot of respect for the prosecutor’s office, the victim advocacy organizations, and the forensic nurse examiners,” she said. “I’m also very encouraged by the changes I’m seeing in the Detroit Police Department.”
To all College of Social Science Alumni and Friends, I am pleased to share with you that we have closed on another outstanding academic year with nearly 1,400 undergraduate and graduate students proudly earning their degrees. The year was filled with many success stories including students winning prestigious scholarships, the recruitment of excellent new faculty, and advances in research involving faculty and students from all disciplines. Now we turn our attention in full to next fall and all the excitement to come. One new program that I have spoken and written about frequently will officially make its debut: The Social Science Scholars Program.

With the help of generous alumni such as Barbara and Mark Gerson, Art Block, Berton Gerber, Mike and Midge Morrow, and the College of Social Science Alumni Association, the Social Science Scholars Program has been able to recruit phenomenal students to make up the very first cohort. The program director, Dr. John Waller, and academic specialist Jenn Arbogast have navigated the all-important selection and interview process, reviewing numerous applications and finding a palpable sense of excitement among the students and their parents. Dr. Waller has said that the students are exactly what we were looking for: ambitious, able, personable, and articulate. They are drawn to the collegiality of the program and the fact that it offers an impressive list of opportunities including special seminars, faculty-led research, study abroad excursions, close mentoring and internships.

The students accepted into the first cohort of the Scholars Program are amazingly high performers including a National Merit Finalist, a winner of an Alumni Distinguished Scholarship, and a young man whose mock bill for Michigan Youth in Government will be debated in the Michigan Senate! The backgrounds of these students are diverse. They come from Michigan and beyond, a third from low income families, and three are first generation college students.

As for the program structure itself, discussions with faculty throughout the College are yielding many enthusiastic offers to mentor our students and to conduct seminars. The College faculty is heavily invested in the program, and my belief in its importance is so strong that I have invested my own personal financial contribution to it as well by creating an endowment to provide support for a scholarship. Now, as the university-wide fundraising campaign nears its kickoff in October, we are counting on our alumni and friends to continue their generous support of the Social Science Scholars Program and our many other wonderful departments, schools, centers and thematic areas.

The Scholars program has been a focal point in part because it is a key element in transforming how we approach undergraduate education in the College. In fact, other departments such as Economics, Political Science and History have already begun their own scholars programs designed for upper division undergraduate majors. Support from alumni and friends is always important, not only financially but also in volunteering time and connecting our students with internship opportunities and other career preparation experiences. With your help, your College of Social Science will not only continue its excellence but continually improve as well.

Thank you for your many varied and generous contributions.

Sincerely,

Marietta L. Baba, Dean and Professor

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Changes in the Dean’s Office

The College of Social Science welcomes two people into positions in the Office of the Dean.

Associate Professor Steven Kautz of the Department of Political Science is now Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs. Dr. Kautz joined the MSU faculty in 2000 and received his BA from MSU in 1981. His primary research interests are in the fields of modern political philosophy and American political thought.

Laurel Schulte joined the Dean’s Office as the Executive Staff Assistant. Laurel taught high school English in North Carolina from 2008 to 2013, served as an adjunct professor of English as a Foreign Language at Wake Technical Community College, and most recently served as the Patient Care Coordinator in the School of Dentistry at the University of North Carolina.
After four years of successful efforts, Michigan State University’s program on anti-counterfeiting and product protection officially has been recognized as a center — a move that will spur further growth.

MSU approved the change in status for the newly named Center for Anti-Counterfeiting and Product Protection to provide the necessary framework for establishing an interdisciplinary, self-sustaining program of research and education with international recognition.

“A-CAPP’s new center status will help solidify it as a global leader in anti-product counterfeit and brand protection strategy,” said Jeremy Wilson, A-CAPP’s founding director and associate professor in the School of Criminal Justice.

The center was created after industry leaders challenged MSU to create an interdisciplinary platform of research, education and outreach to combat product counterfeiting and intellectual property rights violations around the world.

The global market for counterfeiting has risen from about $30 billion in the 1980s to as much as $600 billion today, according to estimates. In addition to harming companies’ bottom lines and taking jobs from people, counterfeiting can be a safety concern when the products involve tainted food and medication and deficient auto parts.

Among many successes in its first four years, A-CAPP has launched an industry advisory board with members that include DuPont, Johnson & Johnson, Qualcomm Inc., General Electric, Deckers Outdoor Corporation, Hewlett-Packard and Underwriters Laboratories; secured external support for dynamic research, education and outreach activities; and published many journal articles and industry reports.

“As a center, A-CAPP is poised to grow its team and expand its research and education programs, thereby further advancing science as it assists even more brand owners, law enforcement agencies, policymakers, consumers and other stakeholders,” Wilson said.

In fact the growth has already begun. Recently, A-CAPP signed a Memo of Understanding with the Quality Brands Protection Committee (QBPC) of the China Association of Enterprises with Foreign Investment. This partnership will help foster international cooperation in education and research in product counterfeiting and product protection, and it is the first academic partnership for QBPC.

A-CAPP is supported by the MSU colleges of Social Science, Business, and Engineering.
Summer internships are hard to come by and even more difficult to pay for, but they play a critical role in the career development of students. Fortunately for four students in the Economics Scholars program, unrestricted funds from an alumnus allowed them to accept summer internships abroad in Washington D.C., Beijing, China, and Montevideo, Uruguay.

Nick Ferguson, a senior and one of the recipients of the funds which came to the department through an estate gift from the late Herbert Hoover (Economics, 1946) of California, was able to accept an internship in Beijing working for Jimu Box, a technology oriented finance firm. “The Hoover funds were the only reason I was able to pursue this internship. Without it I wouldn’t have been able to afford airfare or be able to support myself while I am abroad,” he said. “This is a rare opportunity, and I was lucky to be able to accept the offer.” After his internship abroad, Ferguson is will likely work toward a PhD in Economics.

Another student benefitting from the Hoover family funds is senior Kathryn Beck. As a result of the award, Beck was able to accept an internship in Washington, D.C. with Virginia Advanced Energy Industries Coalition, a company seeking to make Virginia a leader in energy policy. “Finding a job that offers a lot of hours, consistent pay and professional development outside of MSU’s campus is near impossible,” Beck said. “I am exactly where I need to be to make the connections to build my future.”

Beck was also grateful to the Hoover family for the donated funds. “I no longer need to worry about running out of money and not being able to afford food or transportation,” she said. She hopes to eventually find a career that melds her majors of Economics and Global and Area Studies by possibly working toward the sustainability of poorer countries.

“The Department of Economics was concerned that some students might not be able to take unpaid internships that would provide valuable experience due to financial considerations,” said Economics Chair Carl Davidson, “or that some students might need financial support to take advantage of paid opportunities in unusual locations. The gift from the Hoover family has made a tremendous difference to the Economics Scholars Program and our students, and we are very grateful for their support.”

If you would like to learn more about contributing to the Economic Scholars program and supporting student internships, contact Senior Director of Development Nick McLaren at (855) 551-4904 or mclarenn@msu.edu.
Membership in the MSU Alumni Association is one of the most affordable ways for alumni and friends to demonstrate their pride in Michigan State University and support for numerous programs. When you join, you can select your College of Social Science as your constituent group and join the college association as well. Membership keeps you connected in a variety of ways, not the least of which is a quarterly subscription to the award-winning MSU Alumni Magazine or monthly @MSU e-newsletter.

Join online today by visiting alumni.msu.edu or call the Social Science Alumni Relations office at 866-496-6656.

Monte the Association!
Shell Gives the College a Furniture Makeover

When revitalizing their offices in downtown Houston, Shell Oil Company’s Shell Real Estate needed to determine what to do with existing furniture. Employees were given the opportunity to nominate organizations that had a need for the furniture, and the Michigan State University College of Social Science was fortunate to be on Bill Fitzpatrick’s mind.

“I have been the MSU Shell/Motiva campus executive for about 10 years, and I’m always looking for ways we can help support the university’s needs,” said Fitzpatrick, VP Human Resources, Motiva Enterprises. “We realized that some of the furniture at the university was outdated – possibly by several decades. We agreed to donate newer furniture and ship it to the campus. I’m so glad that we were able to make this happen for the university.”

Fitzpatrick serves on the School of Human Resources and Labor Relations (HRLR) Advisory Board, and he nominated the college and school to receive one full floor of slightly used office furniture. In total, Shell gave MSU nearly 1,000 pieces of furniture valued around $40,000.

Units within in the college that benefited include Economics, Social Work, Anthropology, Sociology, Criminal Justice, Asian Pacific American Studies, Chicano/Latino Studies, several areas of the Dean’s offices, the new Social Science Scholars Program space, and of course HRLR.

The furniture was especially vital to creating a new space for Social Science Scholars to gather as the first cohort comes to campus in fall 2014.

“As the director of a new program at MSU designed to provide a close-knit learning experience to many of our best social science students, the chairs and tables donated by Shell have transformed the program’s seminar room into the perfect environment for these students,” said Dr. John Waller. “We are very grateful for this generosity.”
CSSAA Annual Award Winners

By Jess Foxen

The College of Social Science Alumni Association (CSSAA) announced its 2014 winners with Mr. Stewart Zimmerman receiving the Outstanding Alumni Award and Dr. Jennifer Cobbina earning the Outstanding Teaching Award.

Since earning his degree from the College of Social Science in 1965, Mr. Zimmerman’s career has embodied a true entrepreneurial spirit. He is founder and retired chairman and CEO of MFA Financial, a New York Stock exchange company. During his time at MFA, he served as a director, as president from 1997-2008, and was appointed Chairman of the Board in 2003. Mr. Zimmerman has also served as an excellent role model for current Social Science students by giving back to MSU in numerous ways. Among other activities, he returned to campus in the fall of 2013 to network with students in the Economic Scholars Program and the Undergraduate Economics Association.

Dr. Cobbina, an assistant professor in the School of Criminal Justice, is known for developing and delivering a highly innovative learning experience for students. She is developing a national reputation as an outstanding teacher as well as a strong researcher. Her primary responsibilities have been at the 300- and 400-level, and her student evaluations reveal a challenging, committed, and engaged instructor. She is also a core faculty member of the MSU Research Consortium on Gender-based Violence with a focus on female offenders, re-entry issues and victimization.

“The CSSAA is proud to honor these two outstanding Spartans as the 2014 award winners,” said CSSAA Board President Mike Morrow. “They are both excellent representatives of the College of Social Science, and are leaders in the mutual interests of the College and its Alumni through personal, professional and educational development.”