



# SCII Agenda Newsletter

*December 2022 Issue*

*The mission of the Schoolcraft College International Institute (SCII) is to coordinate cross-cultural learning opportunities for students, faculty, staff and the community.*

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## Arab Women United

by Zahraa Alrafish

My name is Zahraa Alrafish. I have been a student at Schoolcraft College for two years and am studying to become a nurse practitioner. My experience at Schoolcraft has truly been life changing. I have grown and expanded my knowledge in so many ways, I've met many great people, and have made lifelong friends. Schoolcraft has a very open space for people to express themselves and I wanted to create an environment for women in Arab communities and all women to do so, as well.

Arab Women United was originally founded by me in 2021. For many years now, I had this idea to unite women within my community, but until recently I

had never felt the confidence to do so. I decided in 2021 that this would be the year to follow my dream and so I made a “safe space” at Schoolcraft College for women affected negatively by judgement within their communities.

I, personally, have experienced negative judgement and so too have many other women I grew up with. They grew up isolated and alone due to the judgement of the elders within our community. They had nowhere safe to go to express their feelings. Arab Women United is that safe space for all women; not just those from Arab communities. It is a judgement-free zone where we can share ideas, experiences, and spread awareness on the current issues women here and all over the world face. We also give back to our communities by running clothing drives, food drives, and volunteering at shelters.

Our group expanded tremendously this year. We have women who are from different parts of the world; one of which just moved here from Lebanon. She had no friends when she first arrived, but after she came to some of our meetings, she expressed great appreciation for our welcome and friendship. That is my goal: *To make women feel less alone.*

If you are struggling and need a place to come to, we are here for you at Arab Women United. Please contact us at [arabwomenunited@gmail.com](mailto:arabwomenunited@gmail.com) and we welcome you to join us.

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# International Conference Hosted at Schoolcraft

by Helen Ditouras



"Love in the Time of War"

Artist: Emad Alkafri



"Becoming Displaced"

Artist: Emad Alkafri

Schoolcraft College hosted the [Midwest Institute for International/Intercultural Education](#) Conference on October 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> for the first time in several years. With a warm introduction from our Vice President, Stacy Whiddon, member participants from the Midwest and Schoolcraft faculty and staff attended two days of engaging presentations spanning the following topics: International Education, Curriculum Modules on Africa and East Asia, Human Migrations, and Virtual Exchange in Global Education. Additionally, one of the highlights of the conference was the ["Stamps of Hope 2" Syrian Refugee Art Exhibit](#) presented by Professor Rihab Sawah, [Lincoln Land Community College](#). Conference participants had an opportunity to view the artwork that accompanied the presentation and several faculty/institutions including Schoolcraft College purchased art to support the refugee artists. The art will be used as learning artifacts within the Schoolcraft classrooms as well as being displayed on campus. As an aside, 100 percent of all profits are directly allocated to the artists in the refugee camps.

Schoolcraft College was well represented by faculty including Dr. Steve Berg, Dr. Colleen Pilgrim, Dr. Anna Maheshwari and Professor Helen Ditouras who all presented curricular and co-curricular content on global education and its role at Schoolcraft College. They were joined by other Schoolcraft SCII members Annika Sholander (Admissions Representative) and Sharon Christian (Associate Dean for Student Success and Retention) as well as SCII

Community Liaison Janice Ford. In 2023, Illinois Valley Community College will host the next Midwest Institute (MIIE) Conference. For more information, contact Helen Ditouras, MIIE Board Secretary.

*Helen Ditouras is a Professor of English, Co-Chair for SCII, and a Consulting Editor of the SCII Agenda; she can be reached at [hditoura@schoolcraft.edu](mailto:hditoura@schoolcraft.edu).*

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# Guests from Kazakhstan

by Colleen Pilgrim



This fall, my social psychology students participated in a cultural exchange with college students from [Kazakhstan](#) during their visit to the Detroit area and our Schoolcraft campus. The event was coordinated with Program Consultant Dr. Laura Kline from [Global Ties Detroit](#) as part of the American Leadership Experience (ALEX).

Global Ties Detroit is a nonprofit organization that hosts international exchange programs on behalf of the U.S. Department of State, and other governmental organizations, think tanks, and universities that promote global exchange and citizen diplomacy. They bring delegates from around the world to learn about our life and culture, educate us about theirs, and foster mutual understanding and cross-cultural connections.

Our Kazakhstan visitors took turns presenting on various topics such as their history, culture, food, and diversity within their country. After the presentations,

the students met in small groups to exchange ideas and have conversations about the similarities and difference between countries and cultures. Schoolcraft students were treated to Kazakhstan snacks and both groups of students exchanged small token gifts of appreciation. Social Psychology (Psych 207) is a Globally Endorsed course and the cultural conversation added to the course focus on individualism and collectivism. Student feedback was positive and we hope to continue to link with Global Ties Detroit and Dr. Kline in future endeavors.

The SCII wishes to extend a huge thank you to [Nicole Margosian-Galindo](#), the [SC Coordinator for Experiential Learning](#), for arranging a breakfast for the students and coordinating the room logistics in VisTaTech for this cultural conversation.

*Colleen Pilgrim is a Professor of Psychology and the Editor of the SCII Agenda; she can be reached at [cpilgrim@schoolcraft.edu](mailto:cpilgrim@schoolcraft.edu).*

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## Highlights on Campus

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[GlobalEYezers](#) continued this fall with its informal discussion on topics unique to various cultures, yet bind us together as global citizens.

We welcomed Neha Mantri, M.D., a Structural Imaging Cardiologist at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Palo Alto, California, and a Clinical Assistant Professor at Stanford University School of Medicine to campus for a discussion on the *Increasing Risk of Heart Disease among Young People*. Dr. Neha Mantri, a former student from Schoolcraft College, noted the trend of



young people suffering from this disease. According to Dr. Mantri, due to the rising rates of obesity, diabetes and related health problems, there has been an increase in heart attacks of 2% per year among the younger patient population.

In addition, we hosted Dr. Mel Gurtov, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Portland University, for a discussion based on his book [\*Engaging China: Rebuilding Sino-American Relations\*](#). His book directly confronts the bipartisan “China threat” consensus in the US and hardline Chinese perceptions of the US by underscoring areas of common interest and suggesting that domestic insecurity significantly influences their leaders’ foreign policies. The author proposes a US policy toward China of competitive coexistence, which would benefit both countries’ economy and society.

Our discussion topics come from suggestion by our campus community; please reach out to GlobalEYEzers Coordinator and Professor of English [Dr. Anna Maheshwari](#) with ideas for future discussion.



A small group of social and introductory psychology students applied their classroom knowledge during a recent visit to [The Zekelman Holocaust Center](#) in Farmington Hills. Students completed worksheets designed to guide their visit and apply psychology concepts to the rise of the Nazi Party and their “horrors of deportation by rail to the ghettos, death and concentration camps of Europe”. The student trip was funded by the [Schoolcraft College Center for Experiential Learning](#) and the hope is to continue expanding with future groups of students. Faculty interested in the Holocaust Center student worksheet may contact Schoolcraft Psychology Professor [Colleen Pilgrim](#).

## Teaching Resources

## With the Russian invasion of Ukraine unlikely to stop soon, Kazakhs rally around their language

How the Kazakh language found itself at the center of debates



Written by  
**Zhar Zardykhan**

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Contact: Dr. Colleen Pilgrim, Editor  
cpilgrim@schoolcraft.edu  
Schoolcraft College International Institute Agenda  
18600 Haggerty Road - Livonia, MI 48152 - P: 734-462-4400

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