The Office of Equity & Engagement Presents a Tribute to Extraordinary Women in Leadership.

Schoolcraft College and The Office of Equity & Engagement is proud to celebrate Women’s History Month! We’re thrilled to recognize Women who represent our diverse campus community and honored to showcase their extraordinary contributions to our campus and the world at large, as we highlight this year’s Theme: Women Who Tell Their Stories! Throughout History, Women have made countless contributions that have helped to shape the world around us. Today and everyday we’re committed to creating a learning environment where Women are encouraged to reach their full potential. We’re driven by our passion for making a difference and filled with the HOPE that all Women will one day experience EQUALITY EQUALLY regardless of race, gender identity, religion and or any other factor that might impede success. We believe that Women are a driving force behind the success leading to the continued advancement of every aspect of our society. For these reasons and more, we celebrate the importance, contributions, achievements and accomplishments of Women Who Dare To Inspire Change!

THE ORIGIN OF WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH

The National Women’s History Alliance, which spearheaded the movement for March being declared National Women’s History Month, has announced the women’s history theme for 2023, “Celebrating Women Who Tell Our Stories.”

“Women’s History Month originated as a national celebration when Congress passed Pub. L. 97–28 which authorized and requested the President to proclaim the week beginning March 7, 1982 as “Women’s History Week.” Throughout the next five years, Congress continued to pass joint resolutions designating a week in March as “Women’s History Week.” The Library of Congress (1981).

To this end, it was decided “In 1987 after being petitioned by the National Women’s History Project, that Congress passed Pub. L. 100-9 which designated the month of March 1987 as “Women’s History Month.”” The Library of Congress (1981). Between 1988 and 1994, Congress passed additional resolutions requesting and authorizing the President to proclaim March of each year as Women’s History Month. Since 1995, presidents have issued a series of annual proclamations designating the month of March as “Women’s History Month.” In keeping with this year’s Theme, we’re proud to recognize Schoolcraft College extraordinary Women Who Tell Stories.
EDUCATION

MI-ACE WOMEN’S NETWORK INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATIVES PASS THE TORCH

The MI-ACE Women’s Network is an extension of the American Council on Education (ACE), which was established in 1918 and currently serves more than 1700 member colleges and universities. The Women’s Network (originally called the Office of Women in Higher Education) was established in 1973, and Michigan was one of the first 12 pioneering states to join the network in 1978.

The mission of the MI-ACE Women’s Network facilitates the networking of women interested in pursuing higher education leadership opportunities. Accordingly, MI-ACE Women’s Network seeks to identify, develop, encourage, advance, and support opportunities for women leaders in Michigan.

As Schoolcraft’s institutional representatives (IR) since 2018, Dr. Michele Kelly (Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences) and Dr. Jodie Beckley (Director of Personal and Professional Learning) have championed MI-ACE Women’s Network initiatives and advocacy of public policy initiatives.

In 2021, they sponsored two virtual events: ‘Women of Excellence – a Celebration!’ and ‘Defining Microaggressions.’ In addition, the Schoolcraft College MI-ACE Women’s Network Steering Committee submitted a successfully funded MI-ACE Micro-Grant application, paving the way for the first Schoolcraft College Women’s Network Book Club. In 2022, Equal Pay Day events included distributing “Ask Me About Equal Pay Day” shirts to raise awareness.

In 2023, Michele and Jodie enthusiastically pass the IR torch to Lori Timmis (Dean of Distance Learning) and Melissa Gury (Director of Laboratory Sciences). Lori and Melissa extend an earnest thank you to Michele and Jodie for their leadership and service as Schoolcraft’s MI-ACE IRs.

As your new institutional representatives, Lori and Melissa warmly invite you to save the date for Schoolcraft’s next MI-ACE Women’s Network event, a Coffee and Conversation hour on Friday, April 14 from 10 to 11 a.m.!

We hope to cultivate a space of inspiration and meaningful conversations at Schoolcraft College. Learn how you can participate in the network and empower others!

WOMEN WHO DARE TO INSPIRE CHANGE

MEET JENNIE ROKAKIS

The theme of ‘women who tell their stories’ is so important not just during Women’s History Month, but every day. Women have long been silenced. Their labor is devalued and not taken seriously by society, particularly when it comes to household tasks, caretaking, and taking on the mental load of the household. Their research and discoveries have been stolen with men taking credit. Women are silenced by the violence enacted against them as we have seen with the missing and murdered Indigenous women epidemic. Women telling their stories is an act of resistance, rebellion, and self-preservation.

This is why I implore all readers to share your story or the stories of the women in your life. Document these stories. Write in a diary, make a ‘day in the life’ video, create a time capsule, collect news stories and photographs, interview the women in your life and record it, document family recipes, and take the time to read about historic women and their unique experiences. Think about the women whose stories aren’t told and ask yourself why. Seek out those stories too.

Women’s History Month celebrates all women, including women of color, transgender women, queer women, poor women, disabled women, and the list goes on. So shout your story from the rooftops, or write it quietly for yourself, but never think your story is not worth telling. You have value. You’re allowed to take up space. Your story matters.

- Jennie Rokakis, Learning Support Services Assistant
Delphine currently serves as an APEX Accelerator Procurement Counselor, training business owners on how to sell their products or services to the local, state, and federal government. Delphine, a graduate of Spring Arbor University, holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management. Furthermore, Delphine is currently one among a select group of team members as a facilitator of the Government Contracting 101 class.

Delphine is warm, witty, and equally as charismatic. But, that’s not all! Delphine is a master at her craft and understands the importance of creating an environment that fosters growth and development within her government contracting class and among members of the campus community. Delphine is a natural born leader, inspired by her experiences, and motivated by generations before her, who made a conscious decision to believe in a world where all people were equal and free to live a life absent of prejudice, discrimination, and strife.

When we took this trip down memory lane, through Delphine’s past, we found that earlier on in her academic journey Delphine had sparked a conversation with her supervisor during the period of her studies In 1997 over expressions and slangs. This heated topic over African American cultural expressions and slang would soon become the catalyst to what drove Delphine’s curiosity enough to fervently explore the origin of the n-word and its definition.

Filled with enough gumption to take down the barriers standing in the way of her finding the truth, the tenacious and inquisitive Delphine went about the business of scouring the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary to find what she believed to be the true definition of the n-word. Delphine was utterly shocked to learn that the definition noted the n-word as “a black person, a member of any dark-skinned race, a member of a socially disadvantaged class of persons.”

Appalled, Delphine called the dictionary company and spoke with the company’s President and Publisher, who was polite, yet failed to comprehend the depth and complexity of her concerns! This reaction ignited a fire inside of Delphine, that drove her to make a stand that would help to prevent her nieces, nephews, and younger generations from growing up believing the dictionary’s ethnocentric and discriminatory definition of African Americans. Little did Delphine know that her spark would turn into a flame that burned inside of her over the course of a three year campaign in which she spearheaded herself.

With the stakes set high and nothing to lose, Delphine initiated a petition drive that would yield over 2,000 signatures within the first month. Her campaign quickly became successful, as the momentum grew and larger groups of followers began to emerge. She was interviewed by the Associated Press, radio talk shows, and CNN. News groups on the internet joined the campaign, syndicated newspaper columnists weighed in, and by the end of the first year Delphine had gathered more than 10,000 signatures.

Delphine strived to bring awareness to the fact that the n-word was defined in one of the most widely used and most influential educational tools, but with an improper definition. Delphine soon found herself being contacted by ‘Good Morning America’ and was interviewed by Robin Roberts. Delphine’s advocacy campaign has not gone in vain.

After three years, Merriam-Webster decided to edit the n-word definition and other dictionary publishers soon followed suit. This is a prime example that one person, inspired by generations of strong prior influences, can make a difference for the future to come. Delphine continues to serve as an activist, inspiring others to stand for what they believe in, and act on it when needed.

“I have always been a fan of the strong woman that was Frieda Kahlo and perseverance has been a huge theme in my life the past few years, so the quote that resonates with me the most from her is:

“At the end of the day, we can endure much more than we think we can.”

–Frieda Kahlo

Danielle M. Harkins | Communications Arts Instructor
A SEAT AT THE TABLE WITH BRIANA PURCELL

AUTHOR OF GALAXY GIRL’S INQUISITIVE PIONEER ADVENTURES

The Evolution & Journey to Becoming Galaxy Girl

Briana Andromeda Purcell:

My name is a Woven Tapestry of the Woman I am, have become and keep evolving into – the Galaxy Girl is a name forged over 40 and reflects my passionate interests in areas such as Science, Math, Mythology, Story Telling, Writing, and even being an Artist.

Briana is an Irish name meaning ‘Strong,’ but I asked in what way when naming myself. I realized I am strong willed, strong in my interests, strong in my persistence, strong in my values. And, from my middle name I am a Galaxy, a Galaxy Girl, a self-proclaimed and lived up to nickname – a dynamic dynamo embracing both science and science fiction. I wrote of Andromeda some 40 years ago in high school whilst battling myself in my coming out.

I decided to write my own story and cast myself as one of the key characters – be and become the woman I am, craft my own myth, my own tale of adventure and hope, believing we all need to be the authors, the artists, the scientists that craft our own lives and share our unique individual story. Presently, there are 1000+ pages and over 100 stories for her and all the Galaxy Girls.

The Andromeda Galaxy is the farthest visible object one can see without a telescope and shows that the Big Bang is a fact and the universe is expanding. Imagine that – I changed the course of all of Science, Physics, and Astronomy by being use of Edwin Powell Hubble, to increase the volume of the Universe by many orders of 10 in power – a galaxy not small and not orbiting Earth, its own ‘island of stars’ and some 2.2 million light years far away.

Thus far, this seems a far stretch from Science, Math, STEM, or even STEAM at best. One might ask ‘where is that bridge, Bri?’

Between the ages of 7 and 12, I decided to be a Student of Life and be the girl who learns all there is about the Known Universe and then translate it as a sort of matrix into my fictional Galaxy Girls universe. In the 7th grade, I came across a Physics book from the High School and was told only the seniors can take its class after a series of classes to be able to be there – I wanted that quest, and that book. Then, in my 9th grade class I had an Algebra Teacher, Cip as he calls himself, and there were older books on the nearby shelf. Late in the school year, I asked if I could have one of those Physics textbooks – he checked on it and sure enough, I received a sacred copy. I still have it to this day.

This is the S for Science.

Through time I took classes to challenge myself both in High School and in college. In fact, since I love being a student so much in college, I decided to achieve Bachelor of Arts Degrees in English, Physics, Accounting and then a Master’s Degree in Teaching Physics along with state certification in Unified Mathematics, All Sciences, and Physics as my main major. For my Master’s Project, I invented a Board Game to act as a reviewing tool in the classroom and now have two versions of it and they too, like the book series, are labeled as Galaxy Girls. They are a business – board games, card games based on the environment, bracelets with unique personalities for each girl, and even a cookbook with gluten-free recipes (since I am that way so I learn and do what I can) with more books to come.

About 15 years ago, I was a writer for the Oughtred Society, a journal publication concerning mathematical historical pieces – Particularly, in Slide Rules, which were a generation before my time. But I decided to teach myself this math tool used for 400 years even in the NASA era of the 1960s and carry 2 or 3 of them daily and use them more often than a scientific calculator. In my first main article, I write of the paths that Math puts all of us on. A given person’s path in life is directed and dictated by their proficiency and level of mathematics – a different set of doors open with greater math skills – such as science, engineering, and such with more math skills. I also note that a Slide Rule is a tool that promotes estimation, a critical math skill to open the door to all other forms of math and allow one to explore opportunity.

Here is the M for Mathematics.

Coupled to this is E for Engineering and T for technology from when exploring these ideas and their roles and importance. In history, NASA and the quest for the Moon helped unify Americans. There is a book called ‘500,000 people put Men on the Moon’, and not many know that the term Calculator existed long before computers and calculators. This was a term referring to women who did the calculations needed in many of the sciences and engineering projects across the land and even traveling to space. We need to remember the Rocket Girls and their contribution.

Finally in STEAM there is A for Art or Artistry.

When I came out I set my name to be the blend of fabrics or weave of my personal journey or tapestry as I see it to be both Science and Science Fiction – hence not only write about Science but also Science Fiction. Whilst a teacher for some 19 years I have crafted a set of scores of knesthetics, i.e. hands-on activities that use everyday items in the home to explore all the key ideas in Science like Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, Biology, and also Mathematics. A student of life uses Water, Rulers, Marbles, String, Plastic Sandwich Bags, Clocks, Styrofoam Peanuts, Thermometers, Measuring Tapes, Hangers, Rubber Bands, and the like to uncover: Density, Acceleration due to Gravity, Acceleration on an Incline, Archmedes’ Principle and Buoyancy, Newton’s 2nd Law of Force and its relation to Acceleration and Mass, Kinetic Energy and Gravitational Potential Energy, Hooke’s Law, determine PI two different ways, determine the Electric Charge on an object, and determine the Size of the Moon.

Note there is more you can do with this list I have provided. My book ‘Galaxy Girl’s Inquisitive Pioneer Activities’ has all of these in it. I chose Inquisitiveness to be in the title since we start life with Curiosity and we need to be inquisitive to be able to form a measurable question and pursue it – to be on the Frontier of Science and Math and Curiosity, to hence be a Pioneer – a term from my longtime friend Linda who always saw herself as a Pioneer, and of course to be one of the Galaxy Girls – a very diverse team I crafted, who are dedicated to creating a world of truth, safety, love, equality, whilst embracing and celebrating being unique while embracing each other and the world with love.

Always remember we are composed of starstuff – the remnants of long ago and now dead stars that forged in their nuclear furnaces, the elements of which we are made. Be the star, why not a set of stars, or a galaxy of stars. There are more of these than there are not only people on Earth but perhaps the number of grains of sand on all the beaches in the world. Each unique, Each radiant, Each Brilliant.
STUDENTS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

MEET DEBORAHNICA POLK

Deborahnica is currently a Freshman here at Schoolcraft College from Wasilla, Alaska who recently completed a successful six year term of duty in the Air Force as a ground transportation journeyman. While in the Air Force, Deborahnica attained the highest scholastic achievement out of sixty-three people from surrounding bases - notably one of the most prestigious and difficult awards to win.

Furthermore, Deborahnica has received numerous awards for volunteerism and went on to become her squadron’s booster club President. Deborahnica is currently a Doula and is pursuing a degree in Nursing with a concentration in midwifery. Deborahnica is extremely passionate about helping women and children connect to the resources that matter the most. Deborahnica’s childhood experiences have played an integral role in helping her transform herself into the young Woman she is today. As a result, she offers the following reflection for Women’s History Month:

“As I reflect on my past, I would have to say that the Woman I look up to is mom. My story isn’t simply about who inspired me, it’s about how and why they inspire me. I was given to grandparents at two months old, that disconnect from my parents was life altering. The oldest of five siblings, yet and only growing up with one of them, really caused me to think about how I wanted to live when I grew up and what I wanted life to look like for myself. — My mom didn’t give me up because she didn’t love me. She gave me up because she didn’t know how to be a parent and wasn’t afforded access to resources and other opportunities that would have helped her to escape the inequities she faced in every aspect of her life. My mom experienced a tumultuous life that would lead her to substance abuse, which subsequently led to a series of unfortunate events. Yet, through all these things she was able to turn her life around before she passed away and went on to become a CNA.

I am inspired by her willpower and grateful for the guidance of my grandparents and the memories I will forever cherish with my mom. Watching her overcome so much adversity, showed me that no matter what life throws at me, I can overcome it, and become the person I’ve stayed awake dreaming I could be. I believe that anyone is capable of making a better life for themselves, and their families no matter what stage of life you’re at. These things have made me appreciate what it means to walk in my own power. — One of my favorite quotes is by Maya Angelou who said ‘I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.’ There is one such woman here among others who wholeheartedly believes in me, supports my goals and challenges me each and everyday that I step foot on this campus. I’m reminded of my mom’s strong will through her, and that woman is my Mentor Catreese Qualls. She’s a driving force that reminds me that I will be able to achieve my goal of becoming an exceptional Dula who will embolden women by providing them with the opportunity to have a safe and sacred birthing experience that will help to change the trajectory of generations to come.”

-Deborahnica Polk

MEET ZAHRAA ALRAFISH

Zahraa Alrafish, a Junior studying Nursing and Psychology here at Schoolcraft College, is the founder of Arab Women United Club, a student leader, and women’s advocate. Zahraa is passionate about helping to raise awareness for women rights, gender equality, and the issues women, who suffer abuse in silence, face.

Zahraa shared the following perspective for Women’s History month and what feminine figure inspires her everyday life:

“What inspires me most about Women’s History Month is reflecting on the significance of the roles that so many strong women from around the globe play. There are many who inspire me and others who move me in a way which motivates me to pursue my dreams.

One of those individuals is Angelina Jolie, who dedicated over 20 years of her life to the UNHCR, a UN Refugee Agency. She’s an inspiration to millions of women, including myself. Her words encourage me to create greatness and fill me with the courage to help embolden others to pursue a better life. A favorite quote from Angelina Jolie is ‘Nothing Would Mean Anything If I Didn’t Live a Life of Use to Others.’

In this same way, I believe that when we help others, a life of greatness therein shall follow you. I furthermore believe in women, but most importantly I believe in the power that comes from within us.”

Her desire to drive change and promote awareness of Muslim culture, causes, and practices has led her to partner with the Office of Equity & Engagement to develop and create the first ever Arab American History Series of Events set to kickoff on March 22 - the beginning of Ramadan.
JANUARY | FEBRUARY HIGHLIGHTS

The Office of Equity & Engagement celebrated a Week long series of events showcasing and highlighting the lifelong legacy of iconic Civil Rights Leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., during the month of January, as a prelude to a month long series of Black History Month Event Series centered around the 2023 Theme: Black Resistance in the form of RESILIENCE!

We kicked the series off with a Town Hall that highlighted Civil Rights Leaders past and present carrying the torch forward. Followed by a Documentary Exploration Viewing & Discussion Event Series which highlighted Detroit’s history spanning from the 1967 Riots to present day.

We grappled with the challenges and difficulties faced by the African American LGBTQ community and shared the innumerable contributions of members of the community that have helped to shape our country and society as a whole.

Finally, we concluded our series of events with a tribute to Black Excellence with a Black Excellence in The Arts Awards Ceremony and Celebration to recognize three outstanding student leaders who arose to the challenge of sharing who was their Greatest of All Time G.O.A.T African American Leader who inspires them to live their best life ever. Those winners included Destiny Shedd, Madison Loving and Madison Ling. Help us congratulate them all again on their extraordinary submissions.

We’d like to share a few highlights from those events, as well as thank you all for continuing to support the mission, message and purpose of the IDEA Strategic Theme!

Our work towards creating more awareness and the necessity of promoting and sustaining a more equitable, inclusive and accessible environment here on our campus continues and is evidenced through the further development of initiatives, educational based training, workshops, events and presentations, all created to promote and enhance our overall community culture here at Schoolcraft College. Please take a moment to enjoy a few of our memories from our previous event series and don’t forget to check out our event recordings at: schoolcraft.edu/idea/

MLK EVENT SERIES PHOTO GALLERY

Please find MLK Event Recording Link here: youtu.be/HRtAOHFpNAo
BLACK HISTORY MONTH PHOTO GALLERY
UPCOMING EVENTS

Women’s Mental Health Awareness Symposium
March 27
6 to 8 p.m.
DiPonio Room

This event will be presented by IDEA Fellow, Matthew Morrow and will include the following esteemed panelists:
Dr. Tendai Thomas
Dr. Melissa Heinen
Kimberly Dunleavy, Nurse Practitioner
Victoria Guste-Brown, Behavioral Health Therapist
Adelaide Campbell, Medical Assistant
Emajae Woodley, Clinical Support Assistant
Shafaq Anwar, Receptionist

WHAT’S NEXT
The Office of Equity & Engagement & The Center for Experiential Learning Presents:

A Glance At April:
Arab American History Month
Schoolcraft College & The Office of Equity & Engagement is honored to host the first ever series of events dedicated exclusively to showcase the rich and diverse culture, achievements and, contributions of the diverse population of Arab Americans. We are proud to celebrate and recognize our emerging Muslim student population and their contributions to our campus and community at large.

Michigan has the second highest Arab American population in the United States and according to the US Census Bureau, Dearborn is home to the largest Muslim population in the United States per capita. It’s also home to the largest mosque in the United States which according to Angie Chirri-Bazzi, was founded by her Grandfather, Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri.

Please see documentary:

An Intimate Conversation with
Zahraa Alrafesh | President of Arab Women United Club (AWUC):
Customs, Practices and Beliefs
April 4
10 a.m. to Noon
Sutherland Room

We’re excited to announce that Angie Chirri-Bazzi will be joining us for this historic occasion, as well as the Leadership Team from the Arab American Museum located in the City of Dearborn alongside other esteemed guests of honor.

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