

Lifting Our Urban Mission as Change Agents:

Faculty Engaging Students
and Communities



**OFFICE OF COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIPS**



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An Archive of Community-Engaged Faculty Spotlights
2018-2019

Office of Community Partnerships
UMass Boston

INTRODUCTION

The Office of Community Partnerships (OCP) at UMass Boston is committed to elevating and celebrating university-community projects that demonstrate relevance and impact, are defined by the core principles of reciprocity and equity, and are making significant contributions at the local level and beyond. We present to you here an archive of community engagement and partnership spotlights of faculty who are leading activities of impact beyond the campus. Our office collected these profiles for our monthly newsletter in the 2018–2019 academic year, and decided to share these with you through this special publication.

Faculty at our university have a history of engagement with communities that run deep in our founding and institutional mission. Highlighted within are projects spanning local, national, and international partnerships led by some of our esteemed community-engaged faculty at UMass Boston. The spotlights tell stories of hope and resilience, and the fruits of community-empowered work. They span capacity-building, participatory action research and planning, teaching and learning, social change and activism, among others in areas such as education, health, community planning, civic engagement, and immigrant and ethnic community issues.

Through this archive, we hope the work of our featured faculty members will touch a cord with you as it did with us. And through meaningful university-community partnerships, bring us all a step closer to building the “beloved community” charged by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. We hope to continue to shine light on the extraordinary community-engaged work of Boston’s only public research university and the change agents that are driving this work within and beyond our walls. We encourage you to get in touch with us if you would like to share your work and be an inspiration to others.

Cynthia K. Orellana
Director, Office of Community
Partnerships



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1



Using Digital Storytelling for Empowering Students to be Producers of Knowledge

Shirley Suet-ling Tang, associate professor of Asian American Studies in the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, has been at UMass Boston since 2002, focusing on war, gender and migration, race and development, Southeast Asian cultural and community studies, and Chinese diasporic pop culture and leadership. Tang worked with local immigrant and refugee communities such as the Cambodian American communities and Asian American student veterans in Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs). Tang's distinctive approach is identifying knowledge gaps relevant to underresourced populations, co-producing fresh data sources, and sharing important voices.



As the first woman of color to receive the Chancellor's Award for Distinguished Teaching at UMass Boston in 2016, Tang is widely known for digital storytelling in Asian American Studies through the Asian American Media Literacy course, which she adapted in 2005. She wanted students to be producers, not just consumers, of knowledge by developing an elaborate pedagogy and curriculum to support students' personal/family/community storytelling using digital media. Over the years, she put together a robust platform and strong co-production team to support this work, which is now an archive of over 200 original digital stories and documentary video projects, research reports, and award-winning entries in the Boston Asian American Film Festival Short Waves competition.

Tang explains, "I have many Asian American students who live with the realities faced by their families and communities in Boston: poverty, health disparities, racist violence and discrimination, limited political representation, etc. The support and op-

portunities we provide them demonstrates how UMass Boston can directly address inequities as an AANAPISI. Our students' digital stories are especially valuable sources that show the realities of Boston's communities."

Notable among Tang's collaborations are a documentary oral history with Asian Women for Health and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, and a photo documentary project with the Golden Age Center in Boston Chinatown. Tang and her team identified Jensun Yonjan, Media Program Coordinator, Community Art Center, Cambridge, as a praxis partner, to collaborate with Parmita Gurung, a sociology and Asian American studies major, who took Tang's AANAPISI-supported course called Social Documentation and Community Storytelling and Asian American Media Literacy. Gurung and Yonjan are young generation leaders in the Boston Nepali community. Gurung shares: "my passion for filmmaking grew stronger while crafting my own digital story and I continued to use filmmaking as a communicative and empowering tool to reach stakeholders in effective ways in my community." Yonjan added, "After my experience with the digital storytelling in Asian American studies efforts, I am able to support the Nepali community by engaging in intergenerational dialogues addressing issues of transnational family separation and its repercussions, as well as helping youth and adults overcome their insecurities and build confidence in their complex identities."

Despite success and support through her work, Tang wishes "that our campus leaders would more proudly claim our AANAPISI institutional identity and take greater responsibility for championing our AANAPISI mission together with our community partners who can play a more active role in the process."

2



Professor Pilgrim Combines Teaching with Activism and Civic Engagement

Aminah Fernandes Pilgrim proudly identifies as “a Kriola (a woman of Cabo Verdean descent) with Bajan roots.” She is a mom, community organizer, historian, artist, author, and mentor. Beginning at UMass Boston in 2001 in the Africana Studies Department, she worked to uphold “the river of black protest” (words of the late African-American historian Vincent Harding) that flowed throughout the chapters of history of the African Diaspora that Pilgrim studied, documented and shared through her teaching and public scholarship. She is grounded in the collective values of community, interdependence, mutual survival, and the Bantu ideal of “Ubuntu” (translated “humanity” or “I am because we are”). Pilgrim strives to model this ideal in her work as a community organizer and activist around advocacy for children, around youth/gang violence, the school-to-prison pipeline, immigrant transitions, and women’s empowerment.



She has co-taught in the classroom with visual and spoken-word local artists, authors, activists and community. Before the hashtags calling attention to police murders, celebrating Black lives and Black excellence, and denouncing Islamophobia, Pilgrim empowered students to engage in action on these real-time, inside and outside the classroom. On two separate occasions, Pilgrim hosted the family of slain student DJ Henry of Easton, MA and the former City Councilor At-Large, now Congresswoman, Ayanna Pressley. The rationale, in Pilgrim’s words, was “for students to gain hands-on experience empowering themselves and others in the process of making change in the community.”

In 2004, Pilgrim created the HIPHOP (Hope Intelligence Pride Heart Originality and Purpose) Initiative in collaboration with then student Sumaiya Zama. The HIPHOP initiative is a collective for student engagement with critical literacy and elements of hip-hop culture, through which students explored Muslim identity and resistance with Sister Amina Matthews of Chicago, organized by Zama, attended a lecture by author Joan Morgan, creator of Hip Hop Feminism, and participated in the world premier by writer and filmmaker MK Asante (author of *Buck*). As a result of this work, alum Jasmine Griffin implemented hip-hop classes in local middle schools.

In 2013, along with Rajini Srikanth, Pilgrim led community-engaged faculty development efforts as part of the Civic Engagement Scholars Initiative (CESI) funded by the MA Department of Higher Education and in collaboration with the Office of Community Partnerships. Pilgrim also co-founded the SABURA Youth Program (Student Ambassadors Bonded Under Recreation & Achievement) in 2013, engaging and empowering youth and families in Brockton. Pilgrim co-founded PODEROZA: International Conference on Cabo Verdean Women in 2016; it has since grown to be an international movement changing the lives of Cabo Verdean women across the diaspora. She was also part of a Boston Public Schools initiative to create a dual-language program in the city for the Cabo Verdean Kriolu language. Her work in the Cabo Verdean community, and as a historian of the Cabo Verdean diaspora, took her to the archipelago in February 2019 as part of a delegation led by Boston ayor Marty Walsh for his historic trade mission.

3



Building Successful Literacy Programs through Student, Faculty and Community Collaboration

Carol Chandler-Rourke, English Department, has been teaching at UMass Boston since 1984. Concurrently, she served as the director of Community Building at the Massachusetts State Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) from 1997 to 2013. Prior to this, Chandler-Rourke was the deputy director of the Haitian Multi-Service Center (HMSC) in Dorchester from 1984 to 1996. This work inspired her current involvement with the Community University Project for Literacy (CUPL), which Chandler-Rourke has coordinated since 1989. Initially funded by the National Student Literacy Corps and Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education grants that she wrote, CUPL was institutionalized at UMass Boston in the mid-1990s. CUPL offers two undergraduate courses: Language, Literacy and Community in the fall and ESOL Tutor Training in the spring. CUPL helps undergraduates combine academic work with service while providing community learning centers with much-needed multilingual and cultural tutors.



CUPL's coursework combines theory, practice, and reflection. A unique aspect of CUPL's design is that the majority of tutors are students who are themselves English-language learners. Their tutoring is informed by reflection on their own cultural and language-learning experiences. Since its inception, CUPL has recruited, trained and placed hundreds of undergraduates from more than 30 countries. Further, CUPL outreached to the growing international student population on campus and developed partnerships with after-school youth programs, including the Walter Denney Center at Harbor Point.

A student tutor in an after-school youth program explains: "I was never the top student in the class, but being accepted by those children gave me a lot of confidence." Furthermore, international students often comment that they now feel "more connected to the community." This semester, a student commented in her journal: "The narrative of being a freshman student doesn't prevent me from being a tutor for middle-aged and senior adults ... By automatically assuming that I didn't have the ability to teach, I was neglecting the complexity of my own narratives." Chandler-Rourke analyzes this sentiment: "Students develop a deeper understanding of their capacity to promote inward and outward change, locally and globally."

However, Carol cautions that building partnerships takes time, flexibility, and sustained funding, and most important, they must provide a real benefit to the community to be truly effective. She also reminisces: "a colleague once remarked that she saw herself as an 'agent of change' in the community. From my experience with CUPL, in this case, the community was the 'agent of change' for the university."



Chandler-Rourke explains, "CUPL was initially inspired by my work in a Dorchester community-based organization serving the Haitian community while teaching writing classes at UMass Boston. In the process, it was clear that we needed to recruit and train talented multilingual/multicultural teachers and tutors if the leadership of the organization were to truly reflect the community it served."

4



Building Long-Term Partnerships for Environmental and Social Justice in Massachusetts and Brazil

C. Eduardo Siqueira, associate professor of environment and public health in the School for the Environment, has been engaged in community-based participatory research projects for over fifteen years with the Brazilian Worker Center (BWC), the Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers (MAPS), Justice at Work and others, that advocate for and/or represent the Brazilian community in Massachusetts. Siqueira is a member of the BWC board of directors and the BWC Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Committee. Throughout BWC's history, he has provided leadership on workplace safety and health, and social justice in the Brazilian and Latino immigrant communities across New England and beyond.

Culminating from this work, a historic memorandum of understanding was signed between UMass Boston and the BWC on November 9, 2012, to formalize the long-term relationship and collaborative projects in research, service, and teaching that the two institutions had shared for some time.



Cancer Institute. “Dr. Siqueira’s partnership with the Brazilian Worker Center has enabled me to work with the Brazilian Community and have a better understanding of their needs, which allows us to find the right resources to help them,” says Santo. Being part of the U54 program allowed Santos to work at the BWC with women who are survivors of cancer, as well as work with Immigrant Defense, in helping immigrants find free legal services. Teixeira shares, “Professor Siqueira has been an instrumental resource for myself and other students to become more familiar with community-engaged opportunities. As an international student, I needed a lot of support with integrating with the communities here in Boston. Professor Siqueira helped me do so with great ease and success.”



Siqueira integrates teaching, research, and service by drawing from his transnational research in class and providing opportunities for students to combine service-learning with theory. His students, Marina Teixeira and Renata Santo, were part of the U54 program at UMass Boston in partnership with Dana-Farber



5



Working Side-by-Side with Communities for Sustainable Urban Planning

Antonio Raciti, assistant professor of urban planning and community development (UPCD) in the School for the Environment, has been part of interdisciplinary local, national, and international community-engaged projects through partnerships, using action research and offering service-learning experiences for students, notably in Chelsea, MA, Memphis, TN, and Sicily, Italy.

Currently, Raciti is working on a local research project through a partnership between the university's Urban Planning and Community Development (UPCD) program and the Hunger Network Coalition in Chelsea. This project generated a community food assessment (CFA) for the City of Chelsea to help craft a Community Food Security (CFS) Plan by residents, community groups, and city agencies. Funded by the UMass Boston Public Service Award, this research project involved students from the UPCD Planning Studio course in co-producing the CFA in the fall 2018



semester and the CFS Plan in the spring 2019 semester. Raciti also initiated a collaborative planning process to assess the conditions and possibilities for expanding the industrial parks in Gloucester, MA. He is working with the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation in Gloucester, also funding this initiative, to envision the future of the Gloucester local economy.

In Memphis, Raciti co-led an action-research team that worked with a historic African-American community to plan the environmental, aesthetic, and economic improvement and preservation of the city's last public housing complex, called Foote Homes (Read more). He also led an action research project in a severely distressed inner-city community known as Klondike Smokey/City (North Memphis), seeking to revitalize the neighborhood using the local African American community's rich history and culture as the catalyzing force.

In eastern Sicily, Raciti worked with distressed communities in the Simeto River Valley, using participatory action research-based planning and design to chart a sustainable future for their region. With his colleagues at the University of Catania, Raciti was responsible for urban design initiatives that led to the development of green infrastructure projects in some of Simeto Valley's most environmentally fragile areas. Stemming from this project, Raciti has been organizing the Community Planning and Ecological Design (CoPED) Summer School, an interdisciplinary study-abroad program. Every year, CoPED collaborates with the Simeto River Valley community to undertake projects that advance the objectives of the Simeto River Agreement, one of Europe's most ambitious regional sustainability planning initiatives.

While Raciti's students learn professional planning and design skills, they serve local communities and, together with faculty and community members, co-create collective research processes aimed at addressing complex community problems. At the end of CoPED Summer School 2018, a student appreciated "the importance and attention given to research" in planning and the openness of academics to being challenged as part of a participatory approach when dealing with real community problems. After a public meeting, a community member shared how "working side-by-side with researchers can really expand" their "capacity-building efforts". The principles of sharing and reciprocity are critical when doing real community-engagement work, something Raciti learned from his mentors during his decade-long experience working for urban-serving public universities.

6



Professor Lee Fights Health Disparities in Communities in Massachusetts and Malawi

Haeok Lee, professor of nursing in the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, imagines that all people, regardless of where they were born and live, can enjoy a healthy and long life. She has been involved in community-based projects for over 30 years, particularly with various Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) communities, and is highly regarded by leaders in these communities. She worked on raising awareness and changing health behaviors in the AAPI population. She learned that the lack of population-based data from AAPIs has often resulted in minimizing their health needs because, ironically, the lack of data led many in western science to conclude that there are no health problems among AAPIs. Therefore, Lee focused on building data for the AAPI communities with the slogan “Data Is Power.”



She collaborated with the Khmer (Cambodian) community in Massachusetts on a community-based participatory research project to develop a population-specific instrument to inform HBV and HPV prevention education and intervention. This study gave the research team hands-on research experience within a Khmer sociocultural context and resulted in developing respectful relationships with Khmer people and community organizations.

Internationally, she has made multiple visits to Malawi in the last seven years to learn about serious health disparities that lead to high risk and high mortality from cervical cancer among Malawian women, especially those living with HIV infection.



Cervical cancer is the number one killer of women in Malawi, often affecting people in their 20s and 30s. In 2017, Lee received a Fulbright Specialty Award for three years to train nursing faculty in Malawi and build capacity to conduct community-based participatory research. She learnt that using their own case studies/stories was an effective way to get Malawian faculty and students interested in research and building data to guide health education efforts to effect health behavior changes. One Malawian nursing faculty member in this project shared, “With Dr. Lee’s guidance, we selected Malawian storytellers, wrote our own health-related stories, and were shooting the videos for teaching our students and patients. It was very exciting to observe the ‘thrill’ of appearing ‘on video’ for our countryside uneducated women and the proactive involvement of our nursing faculty and Malawian women.”

Lee shares, “Just imagine that almost three quarters of non-communicable disease-related deaths worldwide occur in low-income countries. HIV infection increases the risk of cervical cancer by 4 to 9 times. Cervical cancer occurs among relatively young women in Africa and has negative consequences for their children and family.”

Lee is very optimistic and believes that, where there is a will, there is always a way. Wherever and whatever she does, she does not forget where she came from. She was a poor international immigrant student and a stranger in the United States. more than 30 years ago. She has embraced both “us” and “them,” as well as the “old” and “new, guided by the value of mutual respect and reciprocity.

7



Professor Stone-MacDonald Strengthens Early Intervention and Inclusive Education through Local and International Partnerships

Angi Stone-MacDonald, department chair and associate professor of curriculum and instruction in the College of Education and Human Development, believes that “all children have a right to be successful and to be valued as intelligent and worthy, but some children need more support to navigate the academic system than others and need help learning strategies they can use in the classroom to be successful.” For more than five years, Stone-MacDonald has been involved in community-engaged projects around early-intervention and inclusive education, both locally, in Boston, and internationally, in Moshi, Tanzania. Stone-MacDonald shares, “This was all possible because we had developed a mutual trusting relationship and took time to really listen... Your partnership will be richer and more fulfilling if it is mutually beneficial.”



Locally, in partnership with the Department of Public Health, Stone-MacDonald has been involved in the BA program in Early Education and Care in Inclusive Settings (EECIS), which is supported by a federal grant to educate Early Intervention (EI) specialists from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In the last 7 years, 38 students have been trained in this program. Building off this work, a research study was conducted and tools developed that were published as a book titled *Fidelity of Implementation in Assessment of Infants and Toddlers*, co-authored by Noah Feldman, Department of Public Health, and Lianna Pizzo, assistant professor of early childhood education

and care at UMass Boston. Stone-MacDonald and her colleagues continue to expand this work to other areas in Massachusetts through a training institute for EI supervisors.

Internationally, Stone-MacDonald started getting involved as an educational advisor and monitoring and evaluation specialist in the Toa Nafasi Project in Moshi, Tanzania to identify and support students with mild disabilities in an inclusive school. Along with local stakeholders, Stone-MacDonald designed and implemented a culturally-relevant, curriculum-based assessment for screening grade 1 students with potential delays or disabilities and provided pull-out interventions through small group lessons focused on math, literacy, and science. Starting with one school in 2013, this project is now in four schools with plans to further expand. Stone-MacDonald also trains the tutors, advises them on individual student progress, and analyzes the assessment data with the assistance of doctoral students.

Stone-MacDonald's work is motivated by her own experience of being a pre-term baby with very low birthweight and high risk for developmental delays, who received early intervention. She is inspired by the impact of her work and sees the value of this work in research, teaching and service as she explains, “I was sharing the knowledge learned from these research projects and training in my classes with students. This allows me to better understand the current issues in EI. I was able to see the issues from multiple perspectives: from the families, from the EI students, from the EI specialists supervising our students, and from the state-level training staff.”

8



Professor Pearrow Partners with Boston Public Schools and the Boston Children's Hospital to Ensure High Quality Supports

Melissa Pearrow, an associate professor in counseling and school psychology, has been a steward of the Comprehensive Behavioral Health Model (CBHM), a multi-tiered system of supports designed to ensure that all Boston Public Schools K-12 students have access to high-quality coordinated behavioral and mental health supports. CBHM was developed by the Boston Public Schools (BPS) Behavioral Health Services Department in collaboration with Boston Children's Hospital Neighborhood Partnership program (BCHNP) and the School Psychology Program at UMass Boston. Implementation of CBHM began during the 2012-2013 school year and is now in 60 schools. Services range from direct social, emotional, and behavioral skill instruction to the more intensive behavioral health services available through community agencies.



BC: Mark Pijanowski, BPS



PC: Mark Pijanowski, BPS

"The partnership," Pearrow emphasizes, "embodies the core values of UMass Boston's urban mission through the faculty's service on CBHM Committees to oversee data collection and analysis, implementation, outputs, and outcomes, providing research training for School Psychology Program graduate students in real-world contexts, and collaboratively disseminating evaluation and research findings. Notably, our graduate students support Boston Public School teams as they collect, analyze, and manage universal screening data and provide behavioral interventions to students with elevated risks. "In 2018, we had 19 graduate students supporting more than ten BPS schools; and three of the graduate students were completing PhD dissertations in this transformative educational context." One of these doctoral students shared, "After doing this kind of research, I would never want to do research that wasn't community-engaged, because who would the research be for if it wasn't for the community?"

The impact of the partnership is multifold, from BPS students to UMass Boston students, and the school communities within the district. Andria Amador, senior director of Behavioral Health Services at BPS, says, "Our partnership with the UMass Boston School Psychology Department has been integral to the success of our work. By placing [the department's] graduate students in BPS, we have been able to expand the amount and quality of services to schools and students. The UMass Boston School Psychology program faculty are pivotal for the development, implementation, and program evaluation of CBHM."

Pearrow shares her inspiration for this work: "Formerly, I worked for 10 years as a school psychologist, including directing a program for students with behavioral health impairments. I saw the growing needs of students and the lack of consistency in expectations, which left many schools and administrators struggling to support students. Currently, there are no pre-service-training requirements for Boston Public Schools (BPS) teachers on crucial topics such as classroom engagement, behavioral development, and how to support the social and emotional development of all children. From these professional experiences as a practitioner, I saw that more was needed to support children's social and emotional development. Likewise, BPS school psychologists also recognized the need for a large-scale partnership effort to coordinate with the existing assets in the community."

About OCP

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.

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