

The Slay Fund for Social Justice



The Slay Fund for Social Justice at Drake University

Report on Grants Awarded and Completed, Academic Year 2023/2024

Prepared by Jill Allen, August 2024

In academic year 2023/2024 the Slay Fund for Social Justice made grants to projects in three broad categories: pedagogy for social justice, including student research, internships, and travel; campus-wide events and speakers; and long-term programs with community partners. These funding categories coincide with the three strategic priorities of the Slay Fund, which allocate funding for: speakers and events related to social justice; capacity building and institutional support programming; student-proposed and student-focused initiatives.

Pedagogy for Social Justice, Including Student Travel and Internships

Karle Rosales Gearhart (La Fuerza Latina student organization), and faculty mentor, Professor (and Dean) Alejandro Hernandez, received funding for a group of students to attend the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI) in Chicago in February 2024.

Hear what some of our Drake students that attended USHLI said about the conference:

“The workshop that left a significant impact on me was Five Steps Toward Electoral Empowerment. The presenter not only showed us how to implement change in our communities, but also provided a step-by-step strategy. I’m not a political science or law major, but his real-life implementation of this approach in his community and life experiences are what made this workshop truly astonishing. It’s one thing to explain something but it’s another to actually take action and implement this to the benefit of the community.”

-Karle Rosales Gearhart, President of La Fuerza Latina



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International Relations students Jessica Avianeda and Carissa Phan, received travel support to attend the Conference on Diversity in International Affairs with the Council on Foreign Relations with their mentor Professor Mary McCarthy in Washington, D.C.

In reflecting on the experience, Carissa shared *“At the conference, we were able to listen to many breakout sessions that appealed to us as well as hear from distinguished speakers in the foreign relations field. I attended a breakout session called “Diversity in leadership and how to be an inclusive leader,” and I was able to ask a question personally to the speakers. One of the speakers was an immigration attorney who worked in foreign policy politics, which is a career I’m extremely interested in, and I was able to ask her advice for someone who is just starting their career.”*

Professor Dian Nostikasari (Environmental Science & Sustainability) continued her work with Drake students, Oakridge neighborhood students, and community leaders collaborating on a project to improve transportation and walkability in the neighborhood, hosting a community event. The Oakridge youth learned to build StoryMaps in ArcGIS from their Drake peers, documenting their community as they explored sense of belonging, safety, way-finding, history, access to opportunities, and activating people and places.



Their work led to the creation of *Walk My Bricks*; a youth-led walking tour around their neighborhood inspired by Oakridge’s nickname The Bricks, in October 2023.

Professors DeDe Small and Casey Holmes received funding to diversify the social justice offerings in the Curriculum Library within the School of Education. This project enhances teaching materials around historical figures, social movements, and immigration for elementary and secondary education majors. This resource is available to both education students, as well as the broader Drake community.

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Drake Changeloger Scholars



Hands-on Experience

The first-year Changeloger Scholars participated in a semester-long project with Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC) where they raised nearly \$400 for the organization, held a canned food drive, hosted 3 outreach events on campus, and facilitated a panel on topics of food insecurity at the Business for Good Summit held April 19 on Drake's campus.



The second-year students participated in a semester-long internship experience with the Drake Business Accelerator, where they helped up-and-coming minority-owned businesses with their business plans, marketing strategies and more. This culminated in a panel presentation at the Business for Good Summit.

Professional Development and Co-curricular opportunities

Several students participated in on-and off-campus events

- Civic Action Academy at Grinnell College
- The Many Lives of Andrew Young events
- Q & A with the President of Kosovo
- Recognized by the House of Representatives at the Iowa State Capitol



"The Changeloger Scholars program has impacted me personally in more ways than I can put into words. The most important thing for me has been being able to get to know the Des Moines community at a very deep and meaningful level." - 1st year student

Thank you to Brent and Diane Slay, and the Slay Fund for Social Justice, for providing funds to support these student experiences, along with teambuilding and student hospitality throughout the year. We are so very grateful for your support!

Changeloger Scholars, and Amanda Martin (Community Engaged Learning), received funding to support the co-curricular aspects of the program. The Changeloger Scholars program provides such rich opportunity for community engagement, entrepreneurship skills, and leadership opportunities through a cohort model and scholarship program.

Lynne Cornelius, Director of Prevention Education, and Liz Caldwell (Student Affairs) hosted a two-part workshop on Generational Awareness for faculty, staff, fraternity and sorority student leaders, advisors and alumni. This workshop focuses on "themes related to Generation Z's societal concerns, passion for social change, and unique learning preferences while relating this to our everyday practices, which is likely to increase with Generation Alpha," with an eye toward bridging across generational divides.

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Professor Leanne Purdum (Law, Politics, and Society) invited social justice activists and nonprofit leaders to her “Legal Advocacy” course to speak about the ways that they make social change and work for justice (nominal honoraria offered) and updating teaching materials by purchasing new books on activists and advocacy.

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PROFESSOR LEANNE PURDUM TEACHES STUDENTS ABOUT LEGAL ADVOCACY

What's your background? How did you come to focus on the topic of legal advocacy?

I'm a legal geographer by training. My PhD work was as a volunteer legal services provider to detained women and children in South Texas. I also was the Law and Policy lead of the Athens Immigrant Rights Coalition in Georgia before I came here. From my studies and this organizing experiencing I became interested in how people are working to make changes to the legal system, and pushing against big social issues that can be really hard to change.

Tell us about your research. What are you working on right now?

I just published an article about family detention in Geopolitics. I'm currently working on summarizing it into a short blog post. I'm trying to take my 9,000 word idea and write it in 800 words. The article is about how the Obama administration threatened to separate migrant children from their parents, and how they used this argument as a tactic to support family detention in court documents. It's broadly about how violence is passed through seemingly mundane texts. I'm also working on my book!

- <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14650045.2024.2311182>



You were recently part of a panel discussion “How to Make the World a Better Place?”. How do we make the world a better place?

Take something you are worried about and find out who is already working towards making it better. Join them in their work. Get organized, listen to directly impacted people, and build broad coalitions. Don't be afraid to envision a world that is very different from the one we are in, or to question the way things function now. Also... dig up your lawn, leave the leaves, and plant native plants. (I've been learning a lot about biodiversity lately!)

OPPORTUNITIES OF INTEREST FOR LPS STUDENTS

LPS Student Advisory Board is currently recruiting New Members!
All LPS majors are welcome and encouraged to apply! For any questions, feel free to reach out to the new LPS SAB Instagram: @drake_lps

UPCOMING EVENTS

Pre-Law Event: New Course Preview & Drake Law School/Legal Clinic Tour
Wednesday, April 3 at 4:15 p.m.

Students will have the opportunity to hear from Drake Law Professor, Melissa Weresh, about her new and unique course. (INTD 161: "Ethical Regulation- Law and Other Disciplines") and from Professor Suzie Pritchett, Director of Clinics and Experiential Education.



What can students expect to learn in your classes?

I am always trying to add current events to my classes. We were lucky this semester to attend the lecture by Ambassador Andrew Young sponsored by the Slay Fund for Social Justice. It was a once in a lifetime chance for us to see him speak. The visit connected to other themes from the legal advocacy class such as protest, organizing, and the limits of civility in making change. One goal of this class is to help students envision where they can contribute to our society, and to know there are many roles beyond being an attorney. In legal advocacy I argue that scientists, artists, journalists, teachers, and many others have had lasting impact. Each of our students has something important they can offer.

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Events and Speakers

On February 26-27, 2024 we welcomed the iconic Ambassador Andrew Young and AJC reporter, Ernie Suggs to Drake University. This visit coincided with a formal welcoming reception with campus and community leaders, a public lecture, and a simultaneous display of the 'Many Lives of Andrew Young exhibit' at Cowles Library. This series of events, as a celebration of Black History Month, offered the campus and Des Moines communities a unique opportunity to explore the connection of Civil Rights History with the current political and social climate in Iowa and beyond. Below is a testimonial for the traveling exhibit, in reflection on its impact at Drake University, and accompanying photos of the event.



“Words truly cannot describe the gravity of hosting Ambassador Young and Mr. Ernie Suggs to Drake University in Iowa, to coincide with our hosting of the ‘Many Lives of Andrew Young’ traveling exhibit. To bring civil rights history to our campus and broader community, in such an

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intimate and interactive way, was an experience we treasured as an institution. By shedding key insights on economic, racial, and social justice – and through the captivating lens of Mr. Suggs’ words and the rare glimpse into Ambassador Young’s personal photos and history – we will not soon forget the impact of witnessing first-hand stories from the Ambassador, seeing his handwriting displayed on the enlarged panels, and sharing in interactions that bridged across generational divides in pursuit of a true appreciation for justice. Although the exhibit has traveled on, copies of the book and memories adorn our library walls and minds, in remembrance of an American icon who shared space, conversation, and a hopeful vision for democracy with the Drake community.”

-Jill Allen, Director of Slay Fund for Social Justice, Drake University, Des Moines, IA

Slay Funds were awarded to **Kayla Bell, of the Broadlawns Drake Student Counseling Center**, to support the 3rd Mental Health, BIPOC, Neurodiverse, and LGBTQ panel. This popular event titled “I Belong, I am Worthy” elevated mental health concerns for marginalized communities and directly connected members of the Drake community to resources and support. The Slay Fund provided take-home items for this event to promote mental health and wellness (affirmation stickers, workbooks, weighted blankets) for 100 students.

In response to the panelists, here is feedback received from Drake students:

“I love love loved this event and how welcomed it made me feel. It made me smile to see people be vulnerable and share themselves with others so bravely. It made me feel like change is coming and that it is something people are passionate about”.

“I really liked this event I can’t wait for it to be a more frequent event. I know a lot of people who really need to hear these kinds of conversations”.

I Belong, I Am Worthy:
BIPOC, LGBTQ, and Neurodivergent Mental Health Panel
Sponsored by the Slay Fund for Social Justice

FRIDAY, MARCH 22ND, 2:30-4:30PM
PARENTS HALL SOUTH

MAX MOWITZ
(HE/THEY)
Program Director, One Iowa

EZRA KRIVOLAVY
(THEY/THEM)
Graduate Student

ALYSSA GALVEZ
(SHE/HER)
Undergraduate Student

TYLER JACOBS-LEWIS
(HE/HIM)
Therapist, Broadlawns Drake Student Counseling Center

TY COLLISON
(HE/HIM)
Undergraduate Student

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Professor Tim Knepper, of The Comparison Project, received continued support for interfaith programming, events, and leadership. The Slay Fund has been a long-time partner of the Interfaith Youth Leadership Camp, the Lecture & Dialogue Series, and the Meet My Religious Neighbor site-visit series, especially one of its largest events “Roads to Religion”. This year, the “Roads to Religion” event expanded, featuring four dozen local religious communities, collectively representing over ten religious traditions. Representatives from these communities “tabled” in Parents Hall, arranged as if on a map of Des Moines. Visitors were provided with their own “map” to guide them around the room to visit these communities over the two hours of the program, along with enjoying musical performances and hospitality for hundreds of campus and community attendees.



Professor Dian Nostikasari (Environmental Science & Sustainability) and Christine Her (Executive Director, ArtForce Iowa) collaborated with Drake students, local youth, and a non-profit organization to host a series of workshops and social justice-themed art exhibit (#KnowJustice: Legacies). As a long-time partnership between Drake University and ArtForce Iowa, this year’s project incorporated Drake students from Professor Nostikasari’s Environmental Justice Course who produced mini documentaries on display at the final community exhibit. [The short films on Environmental Justice in Iowa \(created by Drake students\) are available here.](#)

Additionally, the project included programming (and supplies) related to creating activism through art (and involving middle/high school youth, who were court-involved or who experienced racial trauma) and providing meals to over 300 young people who attended the workshops. The exhibit was featured at Mainframe Studies in downtown Des Moines in May 2024, with a series of events and speakers associated with it. Slay Funding supported art supplies for the project and hospitality for the youth involved in the workshops. [The virtual exhibit of “KnowJustice: Legacies is available here.](#)

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Broader Projects to Support Social Justice Initiatives at Drake

The Slay Fund for Social Justice partnered with **Chrysalis Foundation**, to sponsor two tables at their annual luncheon and community event. This year's theme was "What is a Girl Worth?" featuring Rachael Denhollander, and offered 15 Drake students, faculty and staff an opportunity to meet a prominent gender and violence activist. Relatedly, students in **United Feminist Front** were awarded a small grant to recognize and support their feminist mentors and networks on Drake's campus with a note-making campaign.

English student, Trinity Tullos, and Drake Community Press Director Professor Carol Spaulding-Kruse, collaborated with the Iowa Environmental Council on a new book called *Sacrifice State: Iowans on Environmental Justice*. The Drake Community Press provides hands-on pre-professional learning experiences for students and editorial interns, challenging them to think critically about the ways that collaborative book production can promote equity and inclusion in our communities (project continuation from FY22).

The Slay Fund continued to support the work of **Faculty Fellows within the Office of Community Engaged Learning** (Slay Faculty Fellow and Olson Faculty Fellow), along with completing a partnership for a Faculty Fellow in John Dee Bright College (awarded in FY23 and completing this year). These positions have uniquely positioned faculty as leaders in social justice, to lead mentoring efforts and programming across campus on these issues. **Professor Leslie Jackson (Occupational Therapy)** just completed her two-year position as the Slay Faculty Fellow, and we welcome **Professor Elizabeth Talbert (Sociology)** into this role.

Professors Meredith Moore & Tim Urness (Math/Computer Science) received their second year of funding to support a mentoring program for students from underrepresented groups in STEM fields: Inclusive Scholars of Digital Proficiency, meant to help recruit and retain these students at Drake University, with their cohort growing to 25 students. The entering students in the 2024 ISDP Cohort are featured here, along with their faculty mentor Professor Tim Urness.



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Professor Will Garriott (Law, Politics, and Society) completed year one of a three-year project on Prejail Diversion and Deflection Programs in the state. State-level attempts to provide alternatives to jail for those with substance abuse disorders is an essential part of a social justice-led approach to criminal justice reform, and a student-intern assisted with the summer research. Based on this project, a new course has been developed to be offered in Fall 2024 by Prof. Garriott on “Mental Health: Law, Policy, And Practice”.

Dean Alejandro Hernandez (Zimpleman College of Business) partnered with **Al Éxito**, an Iowa nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the educational achievement and transformative leadership capacity of Latinx youth and their families. Dean Hernandez led efforts, through the Slay Fund’s support, to bring an intensive summer camp experience (Al Éxito University) for high-school aged Latinx students to Drake’s campus during Summer 2024. This experience was free for students to attend, and Slay Funds were used to offset the cost of the three-day programming for student attendees and their families.

Summary

In AY 2023/2024, the Slay Fund awarded \$110,249 in new grants for social justice on Drake University’s campus.

- 16% of funding -- \$17,958 – awarded for pedagogy, student internships, research, and travel
- 57% of funding -- \$62,871 – awarded for events and speakers (including Ambassador Young’s visit and exhibition).
- 27% of funding -- \$29,420 – awarded for long term and broader projects

In addition, the Slay Fund supports **Professor Jill Allen** with a stipend each year, for her work to direct the fund.

Respectfully submitted,
Jill M. Allen, Ph.D.