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# Letter from the Vice-Chancellor

Dear 2023-2024 academic year,

This year has been a testament to our resilience at the institution, our ingenuity that transformed “what was” to “what is possible.” True to our core values of trust, access, innovation, success, inclusion and engagement, at UMSL, we transform lives and that transformation involves building community and partnerships in our collective efforts, even when those efforts are challenged. The end of the academic year is a great time for reflection as we move into the planning stages during the summer in anticipation for the newness (the action phases) of the next academic year will bring. We must continue to engage in this work, not because of the return we want from others, but we do so because of the return we want in ourselves.



**Dr. Tanisha Stevens**  
Vice Chancellor of Diversity,  
Equity, and Inclusion

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*“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”~ Dr. Seuss, The Lorax*

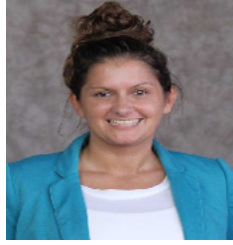
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# Updates from UMSL's Title IX & Equity Office

Dear Campus Community,

As we close out the Spring 2024 semester, I cannot help but reflect on the past few months and the changes our office has gone through. Although I have been an employee at UMSL for close to 9 years (and a student before that), this is my first full semester in the role of Director of the office. I can confidently say that I am excited with the direction our office is taking, as well as the small changes we have made in the past few months.

As our team continues to grow and develop, my hope is that we continue to be the strongest advocates for the Equity and Title IX processes, while also participating in more targeted training across campus and becoming more involved, generally.



**Jessica Swederske**  
Director of Title IX  
and Equity at UMSL

**If you would like to make a training request from our office or have any questions, you should always feel free to reach out at: [titleix@umsl.edu](mailto:titleix@umsl.edu) or [swederskej@umsl.edu](mailto:swederskej@umsl.edu).**

## Welcome to Libby Cozzoni!

As of April 8th, 2024, the UMSL Title IX and Equity Office has added a new team member!

Libby Cozzoni joins our team as the Lead Investigator for Equity and Title IX Investigations. Coming to UMSL from the Missouri Commission on Human Rights, Libby has an understanding of the investigative process and conducting investigations related to potential discrimination and harassment. Her skillset makes her an asset to UMSL and we are beyond thrilled to welcome her to our team. Libby is frequently out and about on campus. If you see her, please give her a warm, UMSL welcome! Welcome Libby!

# Updates from Conflict Resolution and Mediation Services (2023-2024)



**Marlo Goldstein-Hode**  
Director of Conflict  
Resolution & Mediation  
Services

This concludes the first year of ODEI's Conflict Resolution and Mediation Services. The goal of this office is to foster a healthy conflict culture by helping employees and teams navigate workplace conflict more constructively. We do this through training, coaching, resources, and mediation services.

Over the 2023-2024 academic year, nearly 150 employees participated in one or more of the eight webinars offered as part of the Conflict Resolution Skills series. We also launched a self-paced Canvas course for individuals who were not able to attend the webinars.

Additionally, 30 faculty and staff members invested in their skills by participating in intensive 5-hour mediation skills workshops. Several employees and supervisors utilized our conflict coaching services to confidentially discuss how to navigate challenging workplace relationships and issues. We were also able to provide customized training and conflict assessment to groups in two different units.

And, finally, we provided mediation services to individuals who needed additional support to have difficult conversations about workplace disagreements, issues, and conflict.

For any Conflict Resolution or Mediation Services inquiries you can reach Marlo via email at [marlo@umsl.edu](mailto:marlo@umsl.edu)

Please [click here](#) to see the summer schedule of webinars, in-person workshops, and an intensive mediation skills workshop.

We also offer on-demand learning resources to enhance your conflict competence skills at your convenience: <https://www.umsl.edu/mediation/resources.html>

For more information about our services and resources, visit [www.umsl.edu/mediation](http://www.umsl.edu/mediation)

## UMSL FORUM FOR COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

Divisions in society seem to deepen with each passing year as we sort ourselves among like-minded peers. Meaningful engagement with diverse viewpoints outside of heated televised debates or public gatherings is becoming increasingly uncommon. In response to this increasing divide, ODEI collaborated with UMSL Community Engagement and Outreach and MU Extension to launch a new dialogue initiative: The UMSL Forum for Community Dialogue.

The forum used the [National Issues Forums Institute model of deliberative dialogue](#), which relies on guided conversations on political or controversial topics and asks participants to gather in small groups to investigate specific solutions to issues with the help of a facilitator.

### Economic Vitality: How Can We Improve Our Communities?

The first forum took place in October 2023 and focused on the topic of [Economic Vitality](#).

During the session, groups explored scenarios aimed at enhancing the economic vitality of the region. These included making the community appealing to employers, preparing workers and communities for self-sufficiency, and ensuring equitable opportunities for all residents. Each group chose a different option, emphasizing the absence of a definitive answer. The exercise encouraged active listening and dialogue over debate, fostering deeper comprehension and potential pathways to solutions.

### Economic Justice: What's Possible in the 314?

Our second Forum was hosted in March on 314 Day, a St. Louis holiday and participants discussed [Economic Justice in the St. Louis Region](#). Nearly 50 people, including UMSL faculty and staff as well as roughly two dozen community members, gathered in the Regional Center for Education and Work.

"We just wanted to start with a basic understanding of what economic justice is – a basic set of moral principles for which economic infrastructure is developed around the ultimate goal, which is to create an opportunity for each person to create a sufficient material foundation upon which to have a dignified, productive and creative life. The goal of economic justice really is to create opportunities for all," said Myron Burr, Coordinator of Initiatives in the ODEI.



Small groups engaged in discussions about economic vitality in our first Forum for Community Dialogue

Myron moderated a panel discussion between five individuals in the St. Louis Region who have been working towards Economic Justice.

- Stefani Weeden-Smith: Director of [St. Louis Anchor Action Network](#)
- Jaclyn Belt: UMSL MPPA Graduate, Chief Transformation Officer at [Beyond Housing](#)
- Kelly McGowan: Founder and Executive Director of [Transform 314](#)
- Durrell Smith and Stephen Davis: [St. Louis Development Corporation](#)

We look forward to exploring more topics in future Forums for Community Dialogue.

# A Year of Events

Check out all of the exciting events and initiatives hosted by the ODEI this year!

## TRANS 101



## HOMECOMING DOOR DECORATION CONTEST



## DONUTS WITH ODEI



## MLK DAY-A DAY OF CELEBRATION AT UMSL



## UMSL WOMEN TRAILBLAZERS AWARD CEREMONY



## NAVIGATING ANTI-FAT BIAS IN COLLEGE



Stefani Weeden-Smith speaks during the panel discussion at our Second Forum for Community Dialogue

# Get to Know Our Team

We bring a diverse set of talents, knowledge, and experiences to this increasingly complex work.

## Dr. Tanisha Stevens

Dr. Tanisha Stevens is the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, overseeing inclusive excellence and fostering a sense of belonging among students, faculty, staff, and the community.



As Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) and member of the Chancellor's Cabinet, she aligns campus efforts and spearheads initiatives for greater equity and unity. Under Dr. Stevens' leadership, UMSL engaged in the Equity Institute's 8-week facilitated training program and established the Chancellor's Inclusive Excellence Award. She organized the university's first Virtual Gathering for Racial Unity and secured HEED recognition from Insight into Diversity for three consecutive years.

Dr. Stevens represents UMSL in community partnerships, including the St. Louis Citywide Plan for Education, Post-Secondary Equity Network, and corporate liaisons with CORTEX and St. Louis Public Radio.

Dr. Stevens holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Missouri-Columbia, a master's in Counseling from Saint Louis University, and a doctorate in Educational Leadership & Policy Studies from the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

## Jessica Swederske

Jessica Swederske serves as the university's Title IX Coordinator & Chief Equity Officer.



Ms. Swederske is committed to creating an environment that allows all students, faculty, and staff to feel safe.

Ms. Swederske completed her undergraduate degree in Psychology at UMSL, as well as her graduate degree in Public Policy Administration. After completing her course work, Ms. Swederske worked for the state of Missouri, as a Probation and Parole Officer, monitoring individuals convicted of sex offenses. It was this position that allowed Ms. Swederske to view fairness and equity from different perspectives.

Ms. Swederske has a passion for working with people, which ultimately led her back to UMSL in 2015. Ms. Swederske is committed to conducting fair and thorough investigations in order to provide the decision makers with all relevant facts. Furthermore, it is her goal to make sure everyone who comes through her office feels seen and heard.

## Kenny Miller

Kenny rejoined the University of Missouri-St. Louis in Spring 2024, assuming the role of Intake Coordinator/Office Support for the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Prior to joining ODEI, Kenny served as a substitute educator and later as a lead librarian with Kipp St. Louis Public Schools.



His journey at UMSL began as a student, where he earned his BA in History, a minor in Spanish, and the Honors Certificate of completion from the Pierre Laclède Honors College. During his undergraduate years, Kenny was actively engaged across campus, contributing to various student-led publications within the Honors College, but he is most proud of his time spent serving as Editor for Brain Stew. Additionally, he held a pivotal role within the Office of Student Involvement as Student Program Manager, overseeing the Student Activity Budget Committee and collaborating with Recognized Student Organizations campus-wide to facilitate student led events and club activities. It was in this role that Kenny received the Student Affairs Student Employee of the Year award in 2022.

With a deep appreciation for UMSL's vibrant community, Kenny is thrilled to return to his alma mater and continue his journey in a capacity that fosters collaboration across campus.

## Libby Cozzoni

Libby Cozzoni serves as the university's Lead Investigator for the Office of Title IX and Equity.



Libby joined the University of Missouri-St. Louis's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion staff in the Spring of 2024.

With her passion in public service, Ms. Cozzoni is dedicated to serving the public with integrity, compassion, and efficiency while upholding UMSL's values and mission.

Ms. Cozzoni completed her undergraduate degree in Psychology at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Shortly after graduation, she began working for Missouri Commission on Human Rights (MCHR) within the state of Missouri's Department of Labor, at first as an Intake Officer, and then a Human Rights Officer, investigating complaints of employment, public accommodation, and housing discrimination. Ms. Cozzoni also contributed to MCHR's early resolution process facilitating negotiations between parties and providing conflict resolution. During her employment with the state, Ms. Cozzoni completed her Masters' in Legal Studies with Washington University. Ms. Cozzoni's background equips her to navigate complex cases with sensitivity and professionalism, always prioritizing the rights of all parties involved.

**Myron Burr**

Myron is the Coordinator of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Initiatives. Myron joined the University of Missouri-St. Louis in the Spring of 2022 and serves as the coordinator for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Prior to joining the ODEI staff, Myron worked at Lindenwood University as an instructional designer and chair of their DEI Task Force. While at Lindenwood, Myron was instrumental in developing and leading the university's first Day of Dialogue – an annual campus-wide event where students, faculty, and staff take the opportunity to examine their individual and institutional role in building a shared community. He is passionate about dialogue and creating space for everyone to participate in the conversation around equity and inclusion. Myron is excited to continue the work and collaborate with others across campus to make UMSL a more equitable and inclusive place to learn, live, and work.

Myron received his BA in Communication from DePauw University and his MA in Higher Education from Lindenwood University.

**Dr. Marlo Goldstein-Hode**

Marlo (aka Dr. Hode) is the Director of Conflict Resolution & Mediation Services.

She facilitates in-person and online educational opportunities for faculty and staff on topics such as constructive communication, conflict resolution and cultural competence.

She also helps develop and launch strategic initiatives and partnerships across campus to work collaboratively towards achieving UMSL's Inclusive Excellence goals. Marlo holds a courtesy and adjunct faculty position in the Department of Communication at the University of Missouri - Columbia. As a scholar, she has several publications in peer-reviewed journals and book chapters on various topics including sexual harassment, neurodiversity, racial issues on campus, and the effectiveness of online professional development courses. She also serves on the editorial board of the Journal of Diversity in Higher Education.



## Marlo and Myron in the Morning

The Marlo and Myron Morning Show is a new initiative out of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The show allows the ODEI team to engage campus in a unique format.

Hosted by Dr. Marlo Goldstein Hode and Myron Burr, The Marlo and Myron Morning Show is a bi-weekly radio show streamed live from the UMSLRadio.org radio station in the Millennium Student Center. The hosts use a blend of music and personality to discuss DEI related topics in a down to earth format.

This season was all about conflict. The morning show explored 'Love and Conflict' (Valentine's Day episode), 'Conflict Styles', and 'Conflict Stories.' We are excited to see what topics the show explores next



Marlo and Myron wrapping up another great radio broadcast

**UMSL** | Conflict Resolution  
and Mediation Services  
University of Missouri–St. Louis

## Thank You For Reading

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter. Your support and engagement mean a great deal to us. Stay tuned for more updates and events from our office.

To schedule an in person, or remote meeting with our office you can reach us at [odei@umsl.edu](mailto:odei@umsl.edu).

Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

152 JC Penney North

Phone: (314) 516-5695

E-mail: [odei@umsl.edu](mailto:odei@umsl.edu)

Website: <https://www.umsl.edu/odei/index.html>

ODEI Blog: <https://blogs.umsl.edu/diversity/>

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