



Holistic Approaches to Cultivating Graduate Student Diversity and Success at the University of Minnesota

Dr. Maija Brown & Dr. Aimzhan Iztayeva
Gardner Institute Graduate Student Experience Conference
March 26th, 2024

Land Acknowledgement

Asheville is built within the original homelands of the Eastern Cherokee tribes. We honor and respect the Indigenous peoples who were forcibly removed from, and who are still connected to, this territory. We also acknowledge that words are not enough. We must ensure that our institutions provide support, resources, and programs that increase access to all aspects of higher education for our American Indian, Native American and Indigenous students, staff, faculty and community members. We invite you to:

Land Acknowledgement

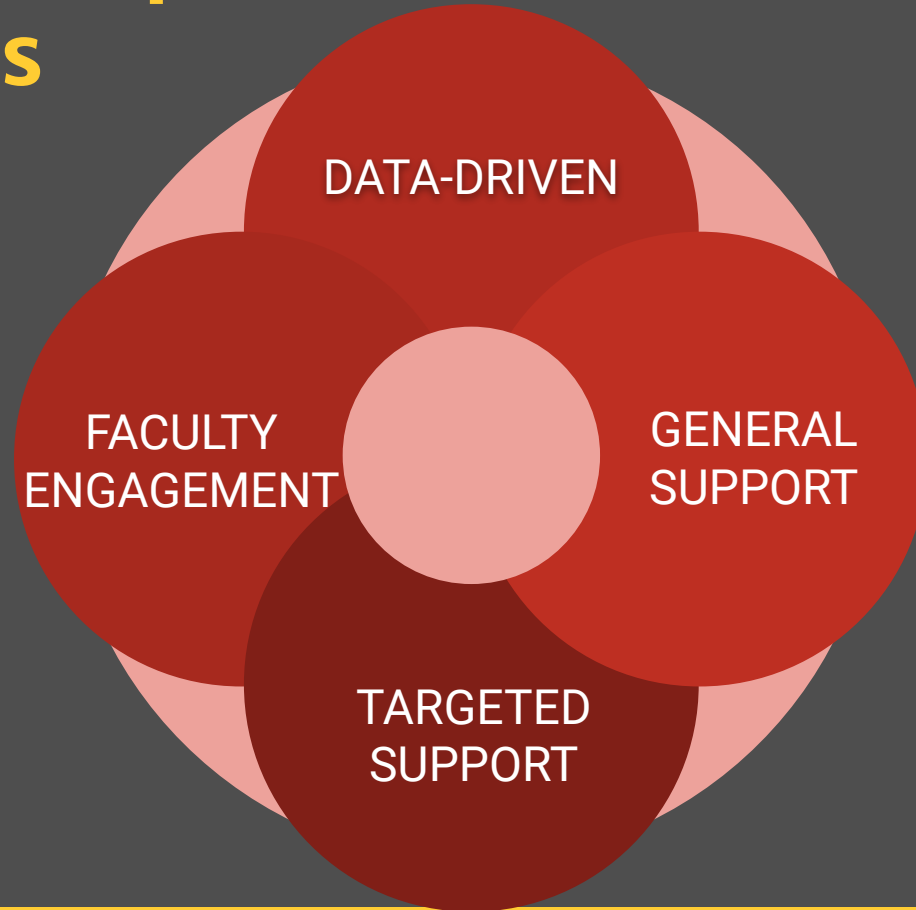
- Take a moment to honor and acknowledge the Native Indigenous peoples from the land you are joining us from today.
- Give some thought to your own ancestry and the generations that came before you.
- Think about your role in decolonizing yourself and the work in which you engage.

What to expect?

- Overview of support available to all graduate students
- First-generation graduate students
- International graduate students

- In-depth review of Community of Scholars Program (COSP) that focuses on domestic diversity
- COSP Writing Initiative
- COSP SPARK magazine


Different perspectives on holistic approaches





Mission: Reveal hidden curriculum

Knowledge and skills that matter for student success but are not explicitly talked about and explained.





What informs our work

- Targeted surveys
- gradSERU
- Working with faculty



gradSERU survey

Graduate Student
Experience in the
Research University

Every student
has a voice.

TAKE THE GRADSERU SURVEY

z.umn.edu/gradseru2023

gradSERU

- Professional development support
- Well-being
- Mental health
- Specific student populations

Advising resources

Effective mentorship enhances relationships between faculty and graduate students and trainees, yielding success for both individuals and programs.

Resources for Effective Advising and Mentoring of Graduate Students and Trainees

[Expand all](#)

+ PRINCIPLES AND VALUES OF ACADEMIC ADVISING AND MENTORING

+ LEARNING ABOUT UNACCEPTABLE AND EGREGIOUS FACULTY BEHAVIOR

+ ADVISING STATEMENT

+ COLLABORATING WITH STUDENTS AND TRAINEES

Faculty Advising Resources



Advising and Mentoring International Graduate Students

○ Student populations served



12,373

All University of
Minnesota
Graduate
Enrollment



20%

First-generation
college students in
graduate programs



25%

International
graduate students

Graduate Education Resources (GEAR)

GEAR 1

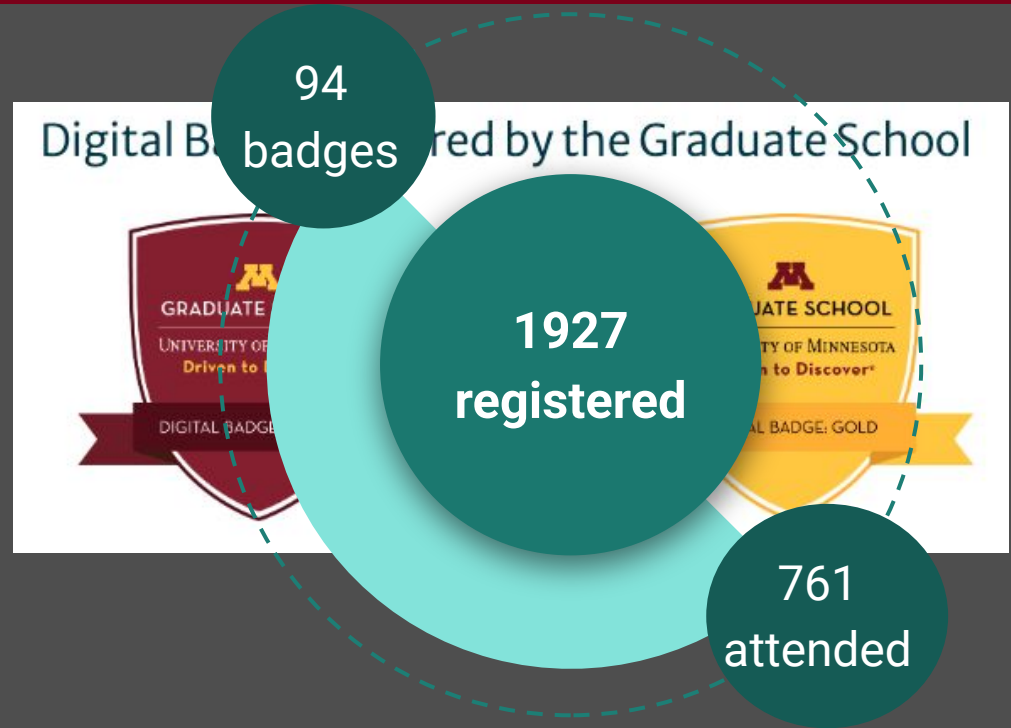
Online modules that help students navigate their first year of graduate education

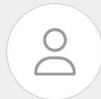
gear+

Focuses on every phase of graduate school beyond the first year.

Academic & Professional Development Workshops

- Data Visualization
- Project Management 101
- Generative AI for Research
- Introduction to Entrepreneurship
- & much more!





This badge was issued to [Aimzhan Iztayeva](#) on January 25, 2022

✓ [Verify](#)

🎉 [Celebrate](#)



Project Management Maroon Badge

Issued by [University of Minnesota](#)

Through lecture and hands-on activities, students participated in two 90-minute sessions focusing on the basic concepts of project management. Students are now able to: define major characteristics of a project, be familiar with various formats of Work Breakdown Structure, understand Project Scheduling terminology (such as critical path analysis, triple constraints, and slack), know the difference between cost estimating and cost budgeting, and expose students to estimating and budget methods.

📄 Experience

📚 Foundational

🕒 Hours

💰 Free

Skills

Analysis

Communication

Critical Thinking

Leadership

Problem Solving

Project Management

Earning Criteria

📄 To demonstrate content knowledge, students were required to take a test with a passing score of 80% to receive a digital badge.

Individual Development Plan

- Communicate with advisors and mentors
- Identify goals and assess strengths and weaknesses
- Define a plan to develop skills

First Steps Checklist 1	My Advisor 4	My Research & Writing 4	My Career Development 4	My Financial Support 4
 First Steps Checklists	 Years 1-2	 Years 1-2	 Years 1-2	 Years 1-2
	 Years 3-4	 Years 3-4	 Years 3-4	 Years 3-4+
	 Years 5+	 Years 5+	 Years 5+	 Years 5+
	 My Current Goals	 My Current Goals	 My Current Goals	 My Current Goals

- Council of International Graduate Students = (CIGS)
- Council of Graduate Students = (CGS)
- Disability Resource Center = (DRC)
- First-Gen Graduate Students
- Gender and Sexuality Center for Queer and Trans Life = (GSC)
- Graduate School Diversity Office (GSDO)
- Community of Scholars Program (CCSP)
- Graduate Students of Color Alliance = (GSOCA)
- Graduate Student Community Organizations and Graduate and Professional Support Resources
- Graduate and Professional Student Parents = (GPSA)
- Improving Campus Climate =
- International Student and Scholar Services = (ISS)

x FIND ASSISTANTSHIP EMPLOYMENT AND SEARCH FOR FUNDING SOURCES

Tasks for Years 1-2: Research and Writing

[Expand all](#)

+ EXPLORE CAMPUS WRITING RESOURCES

+ EXPLORE CAMPUS LIBRARY RESOURCES AND BEST PRACTICES

+ IDENTIFY YOUR DISCIPLINE'S ACADEMIC WRITING STYLES AND EXPECTATIONS

+ ASSESS YOUR OWN RESEARCH AND WRITING PRACTICES

+ DISCUSS EXPECTATIONS OF THE PRELIMINARY EXAMS WITH YOUR ADVISOR

+ SUBSCRIBE TO FREE ONLINE RESEARCH AND WRITING PLATFORMS

Tasks for Years 3-4: Research and Writing

[Expand all](#)

Quick recap

- Gear1 and Gear+
- Workshops and badges
- Individual Development Plan



Being a First-Gen College Student in a Graduate Program >



First-Gen Connect

- Association of First-Generation Graduate Students
- Panels
- After workshop sessions
- Networking events
- Social events



Online resources with a focus on job search

Social events

Workshops

Friday Grad Commons

Research *Express*

Goals

Foster sense of belonging

by helping students feel connected, accepted, and valued.

Empower students

to take ownership of their graduate experience.

Cultivate equity and inclusivity

by creating a welcoming environment for everyone.



Replicability

```
graph LR; A((IDENTIFY CONCERNS)) --- B((PILOT)); B --- C((FUNDING)); C --- D((BUILD CONNECTIONS));
```

IDENTIFY
CONCERNS

PILOT

FUNDING

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CONNEC-
TIONS

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Different perspectives on holistic approaches





GRADUATE SCHOOL
DIVERSITY OFFICE

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover®

To support & enhance graduate education
by serving in an advisory capacity,
leading initiatives, &
collaborating across the U of M system.

Graduate School Diversity Office Pillars



COSP



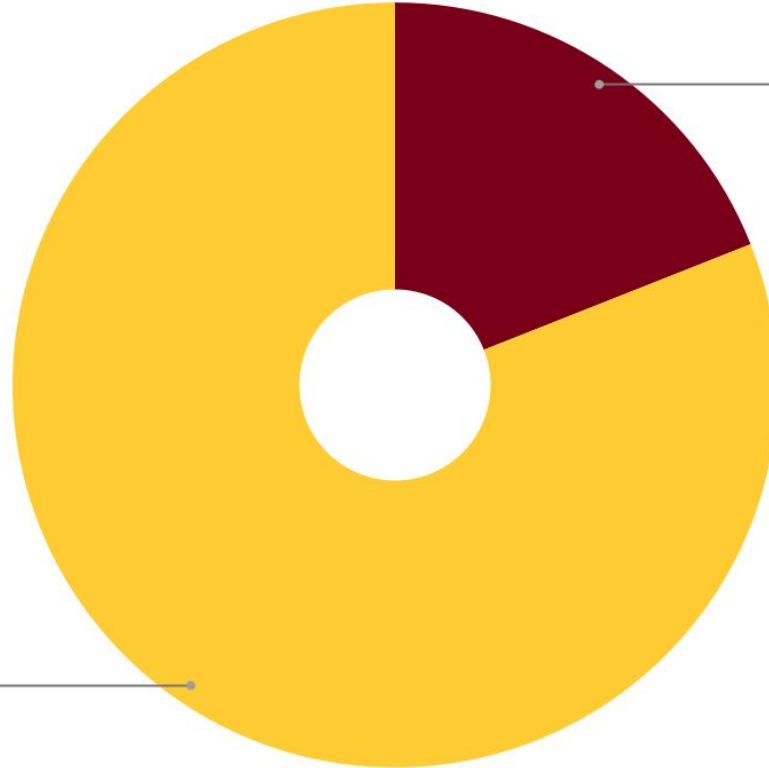
COMMUNITY
of SCHOLARS
PROGRAM

C.O.S.P. Scholars are:

- DOVE Fellows
- Graduate Students of Color *and*
- Native American Graduate Students *who are*
- U.S. Citizens & Permanent Residents

Student populations served

Total University of
Minnesota
Graduate
Enrollment: 12,373



COSP Scholars
19.0%

Non-COSP Scholars
81.0%

COSP Lounge & Event Space





GSDO VALUES

COSP Programming & Resources

- Peer Support Groups 1st & 2nd Year
- COSP Writing Initiative
- Faculty Panels & Workshops
- Annual Winter Ice Skating Gathering
- Identity-Based Community events
- Individual Consultations
- Community Engagement
- Student Organization Support
- COSP Travel Grant
- Diversity Predoctoral Teaching Fellowship
- Achieve & Uplift: Graduation Celebration



COSP Writing Initiative:

Building Writing & Scholarly Communities of Practice



- Small Writing Groups
- Annual Writing Retreat
- SPARK E-zine
- SPARK Editorial Board

Mindfulness exercise

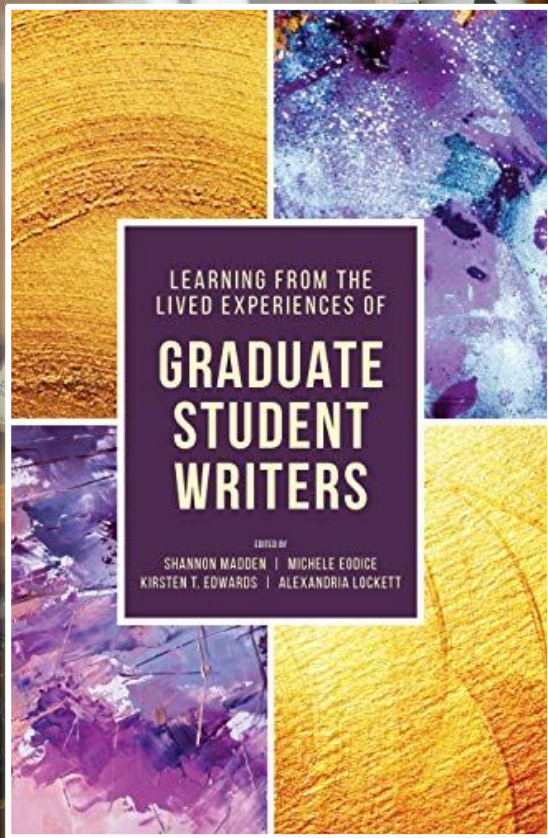




Bringing a
holistic
approach
to writing

I am a
writer.





GRAD SERU 2023

“When considering future participation, please identify the types of programming you are most likely to participate in from diversity units at UMN.”

19% Events dedicated to writing
n=626 of 3247 respondents

25% Peer mentoring
n=771 of 3247 respondents

45% Small gatherings
n=1476 of 3247 respondents

COSP Small Writing Groups

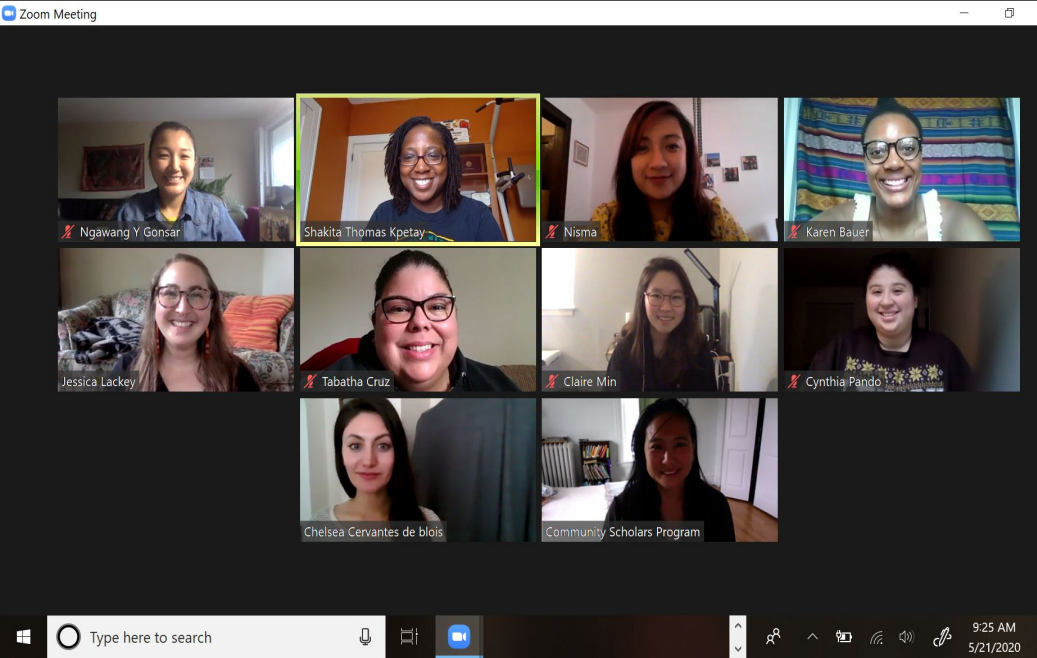
5 REASONS TO JOIN A SMALL WRITING GROUP

1. Be in a **community** of writers
2. Stay **motivated**
3. Establish a writing **practice**
4. Be **accountable**
5. **Network** with other COSP Scholars

Small Group Writing Log					
Week 1— Feb 6					
Name	Reading/Commenting	What are my goals for the day?	What did I do?	Reflection	Positive Thought/ Affirmation
Yessica		Today I want to have one paragraph written	I was able to write 3 paragraphs for my annotated Bib	I should make a list of articles I want to use for my annotated bib.	It was great meeting you all! You all did a great job for our first day. Keep writing!
Eliza		Today I want to add the summary paragraph of	I re-ordered articles to make a logical flow and wrote a few sentences.	I need to better organize lists of articles in each section.	Thanks for the accountability! Looking forward to a good semester with you guys.
Week 2— Feb 13					
Name		What are my goals for the day?	What did I do?	Reflection	Positive Thought/ Affirmation
Yessica		Today I want to read and annotate two articles	I read one chapter of a book and annotated it.	I felt very tired today and it took me longer than usual to read and concentrate. I have been think of possibly using the pomodoro technique during the writing group.	You can do it!
Eliza		Today I want to add another paragraph to my setup section.	I added a few paragraphs and almost finished the section.	I started off strong but got distracted and tired by the end-3 hours is long!	Organizing work beforehand can make the writing flow a lot easier.
Tabatha		Read and annotate 1-2 articles			
Week 3— Feb 20					
Name		What are my goals for the day?	What did I do?	Reflection	Positive Thought/ Affirmation
		working on a short essay for my research design course. want to get a good outline	I finished the outline and sent it to my advisor for		
				productive day.	You got this!
				prefer to write from rough outline organizing	
				ie I write-I'll try in the future.	Another sub-section down!
Feb 27					
				Reflection	Positive Thought/ Affirmation
Yessica		start an outline for my african archeology essay exam	I got two short paragraphs done and I answered a couple of emails	wasn't feel very motivated due to lack of sleep. I did get some stuff done but I wish I could have done more.	You are stronger than you think.
			I got through a few sub-sections of the	I am getting better and pushing through a rough draft, particularly being ok with it not being perfect	

COSP WRITING LOGS

COSP Annual Writing Retreat (in person/virtual)



SPARK

MAY 2024 VOLUME IV
REJUVENATION IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH

IN THIS ISSUE

The Manifestation of Transborder Love: How Hmong Women Reconcile Traumas through Retelling Supernatural Stories by Mao Lee

Kitchen-Table Talk by Ahlam Hassan, Nou-Chee Chang, Angelina Momanyi & Peng Nelson

A Seat at the Table- Reflections of a Hmong Woman Scientist by Duha Vang



SPARK Mission

- Amplify
- Transform
- Develop Writers

SPARK Editorial Board:



Sean Golden,
CEHD



Hannah Jo King,
CFANS



John Dieck, CLA



Antavia Paredes-Beaulieu,
CSE



Maija Brown, Graduate School
Diversity Office



Writing consultancy-based approach

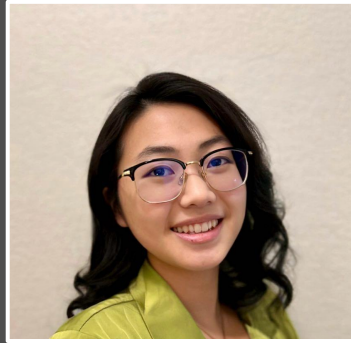
Collaborative

Nonviolent

SPARK Contributors:



Vanessa Anyanso



Nou-chee Chang



Monique Davis



Ahlam Hassan



Shania Kuo



Mao Lee



Angelina Momanyi

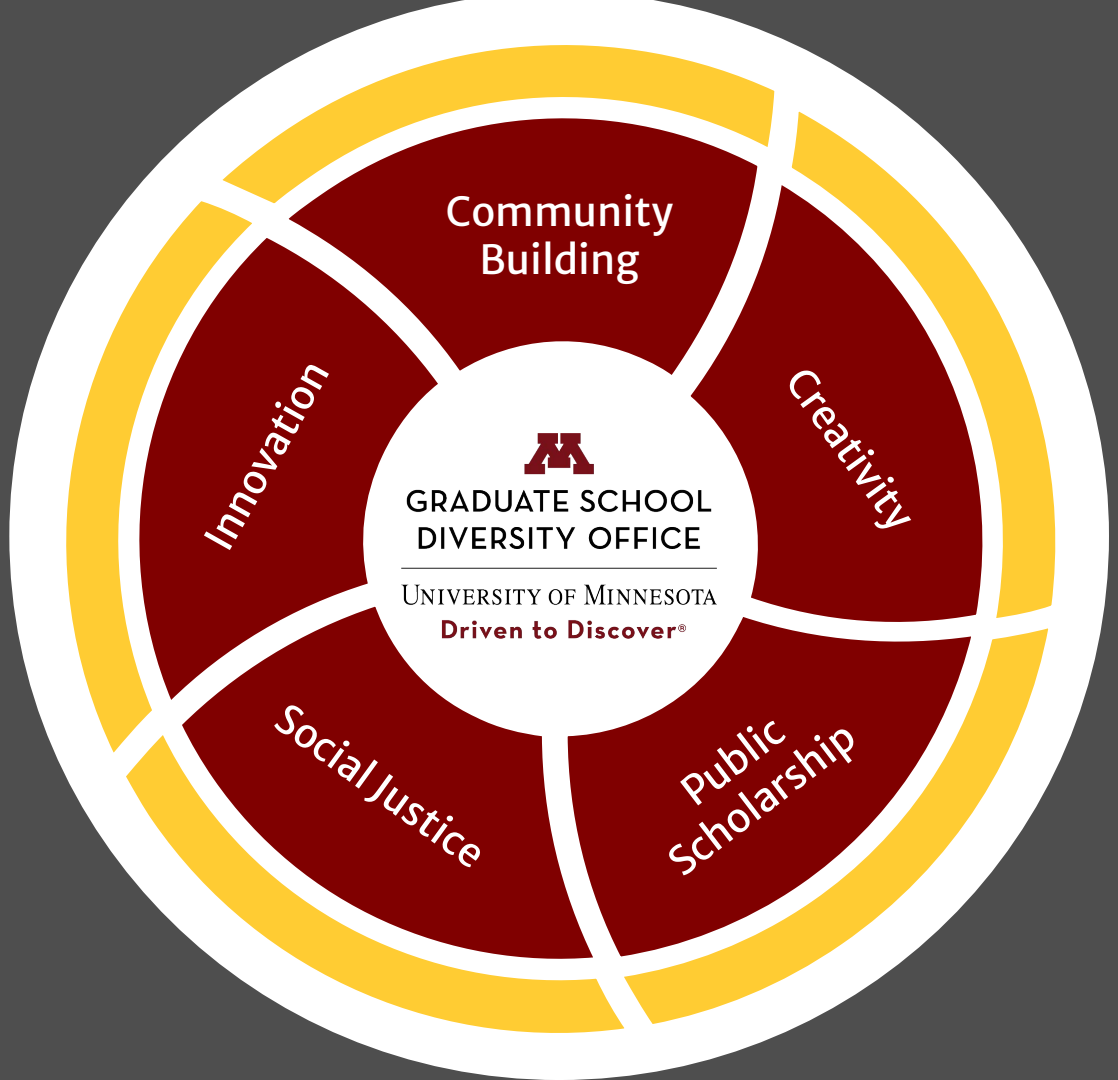


Peng Nelson



Duha Vang

SPARK Values Reflected in the Research Stories:



Key Takeaways

Foster sense of belonging

by helping students feel connected, accepted, and valued.

Empower students

to take ownership of their graduate experience.

Cultivate equity and inclusivity

by creating a welcoming environment for everyone.