

The 5th Annual

Learning Abroad Conference

Friday, November 18th, 2016

12:00 - 6:00pm

MSU International Center



Office of Study Abroad
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Welcome!

Welcome to MSU's fifth annual Learning Abroad Conference!

What constitutes "being abroad" has always been a relative term since what is "home" to one person constitutes "abroad" for another. This is true more than ever in today's global realities. MSU has a long-standing tradition of global student mobility, both in-bound and out-bound. This conference is designed as an outlet for student voices and, in a variety of media, features presentations by students currently studying abroad at MSU and students who have returned from an experience abroad. It is intended to let students present their findings to the MSU community, as well as their family and friends.

We thank our presenters and moderators for their willingness to share their experience and expertise.

We extend a sincere thank you to the conference organizers who made this event possible:

Paul Brown

Office of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education

Linda Gordon

College of Human Medicine

Karen Kangas-Preston

Department of Theatre

Alison Kolodzy

Department of History & Office of Study Abroad

Karen Lienhart

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College of Education

Gail Vander Stoep

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Oumatie Marajh

College of Social Science

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Elizabeth Matthews

Office for International Students & Scholars

Joyce Meier

Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Culture

Inge Steglitz

Office of Study Abroad

Antoinette Tessmer

Department of Finance

David Wong

College of Education

Finally, a special thank you to:

Kyle Anderson, Office of Study Abroad (Conference publicity and Supervisor for Peer Advisors)

Cheryl Benner, Office of Study Abroad (Conference publicity)

Kellie Clock, American Semester Program

James Dorsett, Director, Office for International Students and Scholars

Mike Gruszynski, G6 Studios (Videographer)

Laine Knapp, Office of Study Abroad (Graphic Design)

James Lucas, Assistant Dean, Office for the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education

Sheba Onchiri, The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program

Peer Advisers, Office of Study Abroad (Conference logistics support)

Conference Overview

12:30pm - 12:55pm

Welcome
Room 303

1:00pm - 3:00pm

Student Presentations
Rooms 303, 305, and 307

Pages 1 - 12

3:00pm - 3:20pm

Break - Light Refreshments
Room 302

3:20pm - 5:20pm

Student Presentations
Rooms 303, 305, and 307

Pages 1 - 12

5:30pm - 6:15pm

Closing Ceremony
Room 303

Student Presentors
(Alphabetical Order)

Pages 13 - 16



1:00 pm

China, USA, Belgium: Study Smart!

United States of America and Belgium

Anjie He (China)

The presenter is an international undergraduate student from China. She spent one month studying and living in Namur, a French-speaking town in Belgium. During her experience, Anjie gained valuable insight into cultural differences through academic and extracurricular activities while studying abroad. Her presentation will take you on her journey through the eyes and ears of an international student.

1:20 pm

Diversifying Study Abroad

United Kingdom

Pilar Anderson, Kiosha Miller, Jasmine Perin, and Ashly Tutwiler (USA)

The presenters spent five weeks in the United Kingdom on the Medical Ethics and Healthy Policy in London program. Their presentation will offer a perspective from an underrepresented population of MSU students studying abroad. The presenters aim to influence the underrepresented community to explore opportunities that they previously may not have believed to be achievable. This is a story of voices that have been historically suppressed that have gained a perspective on how they are perceived in different cultures.

1:40 pm

It is not a Year in a Life, it is a Life in a Year

Germany

Brooke Rupprecht (USA)

The presenter traveled to Germany to embark on a 14 month Study Abroad Experience with Michigan State University's Academic Year in Freiburg Program. This program was unique because it gave students, the opportunity to study for 2 semesters at Albert-Ludwigs Universität Freiburg, one of the oldest universities in Germany. Although the presenter arrived in Germany having taken only German 101 at MSU the semester before, Brooke quickly learned to adapt to the German culture and overcame a significant language barrier to made her experience a success. Now, Brooke will focus on the changes she has experienced in her life because of her international experience abroad.

Presentations

Moderator: Antoinette Tessmer

2:00 pm

Know Me for My Abilities, Not My Disabilities

United States of America

Mohammad R. Rawashdeh (Jordan)

The presenter is an international PhD student in Electrical Engineering from Jordan in the Middle East. In his first year of studying and after several months of his arrival to Michigan he had an accident. At the start of his ordeal he did not find anyone to help him. He could not manage his health, family and financial issues which reflected negatively on his life and progress. He passed difficult time while he suffered a lot of pain and bad health conditions and disability. But after that, he found a lot of supporting people and centers here in MSU, especially from RCPD office and his adviser's family. He gets a lot of help and support. Now he is one of leaders in different student's organizations and all his work is to help other students, especially international students and students with disabilities.

2:20 pm

Listening to the Heart of Ecuador

Ecuador

Brittany Ladson (USA)

This presenter participated in a two week program as a part of MEDLIFE (Medical Education and Development for Low Income Families Everywhere) in Esmeraldas, Ecuador. Her journey lead to appreciation for the safety and availability of resources (medical and otherwise) existing in the United States. Brittany's presentation will focus on her experiences in Ecuador at medical and dental clinics and her interactions with the women and children patients.

2:40 pm

Better Health Through Human Relationships: Lessons from Ghana

Ghana

Lauren Varvatos (USA)

The presenter studied abroad for five weeks in Ghana this past summer, doing community-based research in public health, focused on nutrition. During her experience, she learned to use a social justice framework for ethical research and to appreciate the complexity of international public health issues. Lauren's presentation will illustrate how she discovered, through living and researching in a communitarian society, that human relationships are vital to achieving optimal health care.

3:00 pm

Break: In Room 302

3:20 pm

**From the Dead Sea to the Mount of Olives:
Understanding Cultural and Religious Misconceptions**

Israel

Caitlyn Worley (USA)

The presenter travelled abroad to Israel to study at the Rothberg International School at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. During her time in Israel, Caitlyn conducted observations and interviews on various unrecognized sectors of the population. Through her research, she discovered various religious and cultural misconceptions that exist inside and outside of the historic land. Caitlyn's presentation will focus on debunking these misconceptions and understanding the diversity that resides in the country.

3:40 pm

**Rediscovering My Values:
Volunteering Abroad My Second Home**

Greece

Katherine (Cookie) Rifoitis (Greece)

The presenter studied abroad in Lesvos, Greece where she connected with her Greek roots and volunteered at a Refugee Camp as an English teacher. She is currently an international student at MSU originally from Brazil, thus in essence she is constantly learning abroad and advocating for everyone to explore new communities. During her study abroad in one of her home-countries, she experienced the serious frustrations of humanitarian work and the complexities of staying faithful to one's identity without assimilating so easily.

4:00 pm

Una bifurcation

Spain

Leonard Gross (USA)

The presenter traveled to Valencia, Spain where he studied subjects of international relations for the entire academic year. Today Lenny will tell his story about how he faced incredible adversity and how Spain changed him unalterably.

4:20 pm

**Living my Spartan Legacy:
My Journey from East Lansing to Nashville**

United States of America

Vicky Lee (Hong-Kong)

A recent graduate from MSU, the presenter moved from East Lansing to Nashville to pursue her Master's Degree in Vanderbilt University. Being the youngest and the only international student in her graduate program, she found it extremely challenging to adapt into a new environment. In her presentation, she will share her experience moving down to the South, and how the Spartan connections facilitated her transition along the way over the past few months.

Presentations

4:40 pm

The Princess and the Police

Germany

Grace Beltowski (USA)

The presenter traveled to Germany for a two-week Freshman Seminar Abroad on the topic of folk and fairy tales. While visiting Berlin, Dresden, and Munich, she studied the origins and characteristics of traditional folk and fairy tales, with an emphasis on the impact of these stories on cultures and societies throughout history. Grace's presentation will discuss how although her time abroad was like a fairy tale in itself—filled with castles, schnitzel, and rich German culture—her most valuable experience came from a not-so-magical encounter with the German police.

5:00 pm

Critically Engaging with Foreign Culture

Jordan

Jacob Leppek (USA)

After studying abroad in Amman, Jordan for two summers, the presenter found that the most valuable experiences abroad stem from the unplanned moments. Many study abroad programs offer an experience of cultural tourism, in which a group of students sees the historical landmarks and participate in famous traditions, and no more. Students are given enough information to simply navigate the foreign culture. However, this is not enough. Students must be better encouraged to involve themselves in society through interactions with foreign nationals to critically engage with the culture, giving them more than just a glimpse of the world. The presenter found that the structure of the study abroad program is key to success – when some students are interested in vacations abroad, creating a program which heavily encourages intercultural communication is key to developing valuable cross-cultural experiences. Critical engagement, rather than cultural tourism, is vital.

1:00 pm

Studying Abroad with Social Anxiety

Germany

Katrina-Monica Zacarias (USA)

The presenter went abroad with MSU's College of Arts and Letters on the Freshman Seminar Abroad to Germany. While the purpose of studying abroad is usually to travel while gaining academic knowledge, Katrina-Monica went for the purpose of being uncomfortable. They have faced mental issues such as depression and social anxiety, and their presentation will discuss how forcing yourself in an uncomfortable situation with these illnesses can still allow you to grow as a person. They hope to encourage students with similar mental situations to do the same.

1:20 pm

Wonderful Me: My Journey of Learning Abroad

United States

Jiatong Li (China)

The presenter is an international student from China. During her first year studying abroad at MSU, Jiatong tried something that she had never encountered before, and she made great progress, especially in cross-cultural communication and personal growth. In this presentation, Jiatong will talk about what she has learned from her experience, and how she gradually grew up to figure out a "wonderful herself" in her insight. Jiatong will also share several tips on how to overcome and deal with the fears before students leave for their destinations abroad.

1:40 pm

Leadership is a Spectrum

South Africa

Meghan Donovan and Wendy Starr (USA)

The presenters spent two weeks abroad with MSU's Freshman Seminar Abroad Program in Cape Town and Johannesburg South Africa studying the potential of youth to bring about social change. Their presentation will highlight the underlying theme that connects all of mankind and the ability that every human being possesses to lead in the face of adversity. They will also touch on the impact universal leadership has had on their own lives, changing their perspectives and assisting in the adjustment to college life.

Presentations

Moderator: Karen Kangas-Preston

2:00 pm

**Una Comparació de Cultura, Valors, y Gent:
A Comparison of Culture, Values, and People between
Barcelona, Spain and the United States**

Spain

Kaylie Chiles, Emily Hughes, and Robert McKay (USA)

The presenters studied abroad in Barcelona, Spain for two weeks, where they learned about the Catalan culture. While conducting research on the expressiveness and time management of Spaniards and Americans, the presenters gained insight into how they define relationships in their home culture. The presenters will relate how their experiences abroad and through research caused growth in their understanding of their own culture and led them to incorporate a stronger value on relationships into their own daily lives.

2:20 pm

9358 Miles From Home

United States

Nur Alia Binti Azhar (Malaysia)

The presenter is a transfer student from Malaysia, pursuing her undergraduate studies here at MSU in International Relations at James Madison College. In this presentation, Alia will share how her experiences as a Malaysian and Muslim in the West have affected her life. She will discuss how being totally out of her comfort zone helped shaped her identity and personal development.

2:40 pm

Building a New Home On Your Own

United States of America

Daijin He (China)

The presenter grew up in China and studied as a high school exchange student in Washington for one year. She experienced her first year in a totally new environment, a new culture within a different language. Her journey moved from excited towards anxiety in the environment, but she eventually made that environment another home. Her presentation will focus on how she gradually overcame the anxiety, and built the confidence to fit in unknown surroundings.

3:00 pm

Break: In Room 302

3:20 pm

Beyond The Horizon: A Leap of Faith

France

Kevin Ackerman (USA)

This presenter studied Business in France, two different cities: Rouen and Lyon. Throughout his time here he met people not only from France, but also from all over the world. During his time in Europe, he traveled to 13 different cities in both Europe and Africa. Through all these new friendships, he was able to see the world from new perspectives. This presentation will tackle the fear that many people have of diving into the unknown, including excerpts of a journey to a Muslim country.

3:40 pm

Discovering the Seoul in Me:**How I traveled to South Korea and why I wish I didn't leave**

South Korea

Laura Larson (USA)

Designing a new study abroad program fit for her, the presenter extinguishes the myth restraining low-income students from their study abroad goals by attending a school in South Korea where no other MSU student had gone. She was able to travel, study, and live for one year in Seoul, creating global friendships and gaining real-life experiences from unexpected obstacles.

4:00 pm

The Silver Lining:**Intersection of Mental Health and Study Abroad**

Ghana

Vanessa Burnett (USA)

The presenter spent 5 weeks in Ghana engaging in community based research in public health. Before going abroad, Vanessa experienced some life changes and was dealing with an episode of depression. Her presentation will focus on her experiences with mental health while being abroad and the positive outcomes that occurred.

4:20 pm

Embarking on an Exciting European Adventure Alone

United Kingdom

Peyton Lombardo (USA)

This presenter spent a semester studying at City, University of London (as the sole Michigan State University participant and one of few Americans at the school). She left for England not knowing a single soul and returned with friends for a lifetime. In her free time, she traveled to twelve countries throughout Europe – many of these trips by herself. Her presentation will focus on being a solo traveler and the rich opportunities it brings.

Presentations

4:40 pm

From Crossing an Ocean to Crossing an Intersection

Germany

Emma Dittmar (USA)

The presenter spent two weeks in Germany on a Freshman Seminar Abroad studying folk and fairy tales. Her education abroad experience showed many cultural and historical aspects of Germany that could be learned in a classroom but doesn't take full effect until experienced in person. Emma's presentation will focus on new perspectives that come from experiencing things that others consider to be a part of their daily lives.

5:00 pm

Beyond the Language Barrier: Lessons Learned as a Student and as a Teacher in Experiences Abroad

United States of America

Lucas Capalbo (Brazil)

The presenter has studied and worked abroad in more than eight countries. From short outreach visits to years of graduate school and work, Lucas was able to experience the process of adaptation to a new place many times. Learning from his own mistakes, he gathered some tips that can help students, teachers, athletes, and coaches to better engage with each other when being abroad or when receiving a foreigner in your own country.

1:00 pm

Oblation: Laying down your life for your country.

The Philippines

Selena Huapilla-Perez (USA)

The presenter participated in a semester long study abroad to the Philippines. She describes her time there as 'a long one, but a good one'. The Philippines became a part of who she is, and she knows a part of her will remain there always. Selena can only hope to someday return to this beautiful country that has become her home. During her semester in the Philippines she was taught that some of the best classrooms aren't bound by four walls and desk chairs; but rather unbound in the beauty of the mountains, oceans and skies. Selena got the chance to see how beautiful life can be and just how much she has left to explore! Hanggang sa muli Pilipinas (Till next time!) Selena couldn't be more thankful, even if for just 5 months, to be an Iskolar ng Bayan (Scholar of the Nation). One of the things Selena loved the most about her experience abroad was the Oblation statue at her University. It is because of the immense pride she took on with the school statue that she mentions she will always cheer Unibersidad ng Pilipinas alongside her Go Green, Go White! Selena is not only a Spartan now, but also a Fighting Maroon!

1:20 pm

Go Green! Being Environmentally Aware, Wherever You Go

Ghana

Sarah Tresedder (USA)

The presenter traveled to Ghana with MSU's MPH program to participate in community based research related to water and sanitation. While there, she was also able to make use of a grant she won to install a polytank and hand washing stations at a primary school in the community she worked with. She will be discussing her time there and how she grew as a professional, a person, and an environmentalist. There will be an emphasis on the learning the importance of cultural and environmental awareness.

1:40 pm

Small Bodies, Strong Hearts

United States of America and the Netherlands

Jianyang Mei (China)

The presenter is an MSU graduate student working on her Ph.D in higher education. In summer 2016, she participated the Fellowship to Enhance Global Understanding program in the Netherlands focused on refugee student education with faculty and other doctoral students from College of Education. In this presentation, the presenter will introduce what she learned from the experiences of refugee students and their teachers at ISK, Maastricht, and how it impacts her teaching philosophy and future work with international students.

Presentations

Moderator: Paul Brown

2:00 pm

**Service Learning in Belize:
Moving Beyond the White Savior Complex**

Belize

Emily Weiner (USA)

The presenter traveled to San Ignacio, Belize with the College of Social Science to participate in a week long service learning experience. She spent the week interacting with students in an elementary classroom and exploring the culture of Belize. Her presentation will highlight the ways in which service learning allows us to move away from the white savior complex. She will also elaborate on the personal and professional growth she gained from the experience.

2:20 pm

Lessons from Darria

Germany and Spain

Charisma Tatum (USA)

The presenter met Darria, an American who had lived in Germany for 27 years, at the tail end of her trip. Darria gave Charisma a historical lesson about Berlin, as well as some lessons that allowed her to look back on her trip and reflect. These lessons allowed her to think about her personal circumstances and reflect on how they differ from others while studying abroad, specifically, as an African American woman.

2:40 pm

**Just Kids: How One Book Turned a UK Experience into a
Passion for Poetry and Music**

England

Joe Shekoski (USA)

The presenter spent six weeks in London, England, studying literature, music, and spirituality. While in London, his observations on the culture assisted him in finding a newfound love for poetry. His presentation will go in depth on said observations and emphasize how the memoir of Patti Smith guided his travels and assisted in making his journey one of creative growth and expression.

3:00 pm

Break: In Room 302

3:20 pm

Go Abroad!

United States of America

Julie Vitsek (Germany)

The presenter is an international student from Germany who, after graduating from high school, traveled to New Zealand and the United States to work as an Au Pair. After living in the Michigan she decided to stay and get her bachelor's degree at Michigan State University. Julia has grown personally, discovered her professional path and gained knowledge about cultural differences. Most importantly, facing culture shock during her journey has helped her to become a more independent person and a lifelong learner.

3:40 pm

**Making the Temporary Last:
An Experience about Self-discovery**

Israel

Isabella Muszkat Besborodco (Brazil)

The presenter spent two months interning at a non-profit organization in Tel Aviv, Israel. She was part of a Marketing and Communications program, where she was the only Brazilian among Americans. The point of Isabella's presentation is to show that in such a small amount of time she was able to learn so much with people from various cultures, where she gained a different approach on life. Isabella's presentation will emphasize her personal growth and how it lead to her self-discovery, where she realized that it is possible to make the temporary last as long as one follows their heart.

4:00 pm

**Window Prostitution in Amsterdam's De Wallen
Red Light District**

The Netherlands

Taylor Kuminski and Kathryn Naber (USA)

In Amsterdam there is very famous area called the Red Light District. This presentation will focus mainly on window prostitution which is what the Red Light District is known for. The presenters want to debunk myths, erase stereotypes, and educate about sex workers. While sex work in the Netherlands is legal, stigmatization and negative stereotypes still affect the people who work in the sex industry and not just in the Netherlands, but in places all over the world. Right now Project 1012 is threatening the livelihood of the sex workers and brothel owners that work in the Red Light District. The government aims to gentrify the district and create an affluent tourist trap. The presenters will aim to show their lived experiences in Amsterdam and learning about this very controversial topic in the classroom and around the city.

Presentations

4:20 pm

From Student Doctor to Physician Citizen Bringing Hope to the Amazon

United States of America and Peru

Jenny (Yang) Song (Canada)

This August, the presenter joined 30 medical professionals, over 20 medical students, and over \$100,000 worth of medical supplies, treatment, and medication on a journey to help close the gap in medical availability in Peru. This was her first time participating in an international mission trip with the United States (as a Canadian citizen) and working at a US military hospital. The presenter will illustrate how the opportunity to volunteer her time and training in a population rich in architectural, cultural, agricultural, and linguistic influences but lacking in medical resources and appropriate standard of healthcare sparked her interest in international health, strengthened the link between humanity and science, and transformed her from a student-doctor into a physician-citizen.

4:40 pm

Home: What is it?

Germany

Marta Werbanowska (USA)

The presenter studied abroad for 11 months at the Albert-Ludwig University of Freiburg in Germany. Her studies and adventures across Europe and the world have caused her to question who she is, where she is from, and in particular, what is “home,” especially now. The presentation will question what it means to be home, and how the word can change, despite its intimate roots in the English language.

Student Presentors

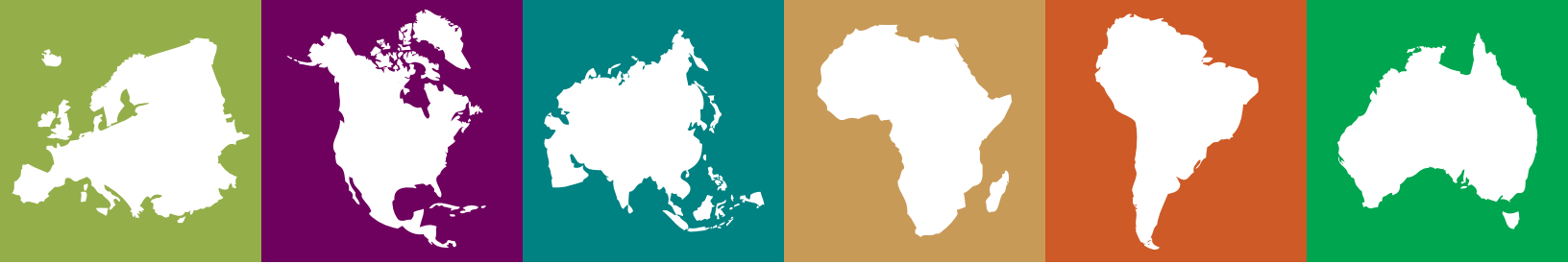
Anjie He Senior Finance	303	1:00pm - 1:20pm
Ashly Tutwiler Senior Nutritional Sciences	303	1:20pm - 1:40pm
Brittany Ladson Junior Human Biology	303	2:20pm - 2:40pm
Brooke Rupprecht Sophomore Economics & German	303	1:40pm - 2:00pm
Caitlyn Worley Senior International Relations	303	3:20pm - 3:40pm
Charisma Tatum Junior Journalism	307	2:20pm - 2:40pm
Daijin He Freshman Child Development	305	2:40pm - 3:00pm
Emily Hughes Freshman Undecided	305	2:00pm - 2:20pm
Emily Weiner Senior Elementary Education & Language Arts Subject	307	2:00pm - 2:20pm
Emma Dittmar Freshman Biochemistry & Molecular Biology	305	4:40pm - 5:00pm
Grace Beltowski Freshman English	303	4:40pm - 5:00pm

Isabella Muszkat Besborodco Junior Business	307	3:40pm - 4:00pm
Jacob Leppek Senior International Relations, Economics, & Arabic	303	5:00pm - 5:20pm
Jasmine Perin Senior Psychology	303	1:20pm - 1:40pm
Jiayang Mei PhD (4th year) Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education	307	1:40pm - 2:00pm
Jiatong Li Sophomore Business	305	1:20pm - 1:40pm
Joe Shekoski Senior English & History Education	307	2:40pm - 3:00pm
Julia Vitsek Junior Psychology	307	3:20pm - 3:40pm
Katherine (Cookie) Rifiotis Sophomore Comparative Cultures and Politics & Political Theory and Consitutional Democracy	303	3:40pm - 4:00pm
Kathryn Naber Senior Economics	307	4:00pm - 4:20pm
Katrina-Monica Zacarias Freshman Bachelor of Fine Arts	305	1:00pm - 1:20pm
Kaylie Chiles Freshman Physiology & Genomics	305	2:00pm - 2:20pm

Student Presentors

Kevin Ackerman Senior Supply Chain Management	305	3:20pm - 3:40pm
Kiosha Miller Junior Integrative Studies in Social Science	303	1:20pm - 1:40pm
Laura Larson Senior Advertising	305	3:40pm - 4:00pm
Lauren Varvatos Senior Nutritional Sciences	303	2:40pm - 3:00pm
Leonard Gross Senior International Relations & Spanish	303	4:00pm - 4:20pm
Lucas Capalbo PhD (2nd year) Kinesiology	305	5:00pm - 5:20pm
Marta Werbanowska Senior Professional Writing	307	4:40pm - 5:00pm
Meghan Donovan Freshman Nutritional Sciences	305	1:40pm - 2:00pm
Mohammad R. Rawashdeh PhD (4th year) Electrical & Computer Engineering	303	2:00pm - 2:20pm
Nur Alia Binti Azhar Junior International Relations	305	2:20pm - 2:40pm
Peyton Lombardo Junior Media and Information	305	4:20pm - 4:40pm

Pilar Anderson Senior Neuroscience	303	1:20pm - 1:40pm
Robert McKay Freshman Physical Science Interdepartmental	305	2:00pm - 2:20pm
Sarah Tresedder Senior Biochemistry & Molecular Biology	307	1:20pm - 1:40pm
Selena Hupilla-Perez Junior Elementary Education	307	1:00pm - 1:20pm
Taylor Kuminski Junior Animal Science	307	4:00pm - 4:20pm
Vanessa Burnett Graduate Student (2nd year) Master of Public Health	305	4:00pm - 4:20pm
Vicky Lee Alumni (2016), & MA student at Vanderbilt Human Development & Family Studies	303	4:20pm - 4:40pm
Wendy Starr (with Meghan Donovan) Freshman Hospitality Business & Special Ed	305	1:40pm - 2:00pm
Yang (Jenny) Song DO (2nd year) Osteopathic Medicine	307	4:20pm - 4:40pm



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