FROM THE DIRECTORS

Dear Friends and Partners,

This time last year, Covid-19 had firmly taken hold in the U.S., anti-Black racism inspired a nationwide call for social justice, and we faced the most divisive election season in memory. Now, here we are, still battling Covid, trying to navigate our political differences, and continuing to experience and bear witness to the scourge of racial and economic injustice.

In that time, the Ginsberg Center has remained dedicated to continuing and increasing our civic engagement work both on the U-M campus and beyond to build healthy, just, and sustainable communities. We have done so by cultivating and deepening dedicated partnerships with community organizations, students, faculty, and staff. We are grateful to those partners who have joined us in this work, which is more necessary now than ever.

As I leave the Ginsberg Center, I do so buoyed by the dedication I’ve seen in all of you, and I will carry on this work in my new role at Brown University forever shaped by my time here. I leave the center under the capable and loving leadership of our Associate Directors Dave Waterhouse and Neeraja Aravamudan who will continue to oversee the work the Ginsberg Center has done for more than 20 years.

Yours in partnership,

Mary Jo Callan

As we step in as interim co-directors of the Ginsberg Center following Mary Jo’s departure, we are grateful to be able to continue the momentum we have built in partnership with her. While we will miss her leadership—and her friendship—greatly, she has helped us deepen and expand our work in ways that build upon our legacy as a U-M hub for partnership and community engagement.

This report, published in July 2021, at the end of the fiscal year, shares data and stories from July 2020 through June 2021. We know there is still much work to do with our current and future partners, for our communities and our world, and we embrace this challenge with the same spirit and dedication for which the Ginsberg Center is known. We remain guided as strongly as ever by our principles in service of our continued vision for inclusive democracy; thriving, diverse communities; and equity and social justice.

Yours in service,

Dave Waterhouse and Neeraja Aravamudan
OUR MISSION

The Ginsberg Center’s mission is to cultivate and steward equitable partnerships between communities and the University of Michigan in order to advance social change for the public good. Based upon this mission, our vision is for inclusive democracy; thriving, diverse communities; and equity and social justice.

We accomplish this through a three-pronged approach:

1. Empowering students to engage in positive change through social justice education, leadership development, and meaningful civic and community engagement experiences.

2. Supporting faculty and academic program staff efforts to connect socially just civic and community engagement experiences to coursework, research, and programs.

3. Connecting community organizations with students, faculty, and staff who are invested in positive social change.

Our team

Ginsberg Center staff 2021, still virtual.
WHAT WE DO MATTERS.
HOW WE DO IT MATTERS, TOO.

connecting civic learning across contexts
We support students’ integrative learning, with an emphasis on reflection.

starting with community
We match community-identified priorities with U-M resources.

centering on equity
Our students, faculty and staff, and community partners all share their interests, goals, and expectations.

fostering long-term partnerships
We establish long-term relationships with our partners beyond the scope of a particular project or engagement.

acknowledging power
Our community partners are active agents with deep knowledge about their communities and practices.

moving from individual to collective action
We bring together parties with shared interests to amplify positive community impact.
GINSBERG 2021 BY THE NUMBERS

102 new matches made between community partners, academic units & student organizations

296 academic partners from 19 schools & colleges supported through consultations, grants, and workshops

70 new community partners, bringing our total to 356

80 student organizations supported through grants & advising

STUDENTS SERVED: 4,259

STUDENTS IN ONGOING GINSBERG PROGRAMS: 471

- Workshops: 2,670
- Student Org Support: 800
- Ginsberg Programs: 471
- Alternative Breaks Support: 258
- Paid Student Employees & Interns: 60
- Literacy Initiatives: 213
- Michigan Active Citizens-Alternative Spring Breaks: 182
- Community Technical Assistance Collaborative: 34
- Student Advisory Board: 20
- Graduate Academic Liaisons: 13
- Fellows: 9
The widespread upheaval and trauma we have witnessed this past year on social media timelines, in the news media, and in our own communities have called upon each of us to reflect, to respond, to act. How do we work towards a just, inclusive, and fair democratic society? How do our partners, stakeholders, communities?

The development of leaders and citizens who challenge the present to enrich the future is central to the mission of the University of Michigan. The Pathways to Civic Engagement and Community Change* describes a range of possibilities by which we can engage in and contribute to communities to further our mission and exercise our own power to create a better world.

These pathways intersect and overlap, demonstrating the interdependent nature of working toward the common good. There is no one single “best” path and most people move through multiple pathways over time.

Each pathway outlines opportunities to engage from any location, in public health-informed ways. For positive social change to occur, our communities rely on all of us engaging in multiple ways, along various pathways. This positive change creates conditions, access, and opportunities for everyone to have enough of what they need to thrive, which in turn creates healthier, more vibrant, equitable, and sustainable communities.

These pathways, listed on the following page, have provided a lens and guidance for the Ginsberg Center’s work this past year and will continue to do so going forward.

*Adapted from Pathways of Public Service, in partnership with the Haas Center for Public Service, Stanford University.
THE PATHWAYS

Policy & Governance
Participating in democratic political and deliberative processes, policymaking, and public governance.

Direct Service
Working to address the immediate needs of individuals or a community, often through direct interaction with the people or place being served.

Community Organizing & Activism
Involving, educating, and mobilizing individuals or groups to influence or persuade others toward attitude, policy, or cultural change.

Community–Engaged Learning & Research
Connecting coursework, academic research, and outside of the classroom experiences to community-identified concerns to enrich knowledge and inform action on social issues.

Philanthropy
Donating or raising funds and resources for nonprofits and other non-governmental organizations that engage in work that contributes to the public good.

Social Entrepreneurship
Using ethical business approaches to create or expand market-oriented responses to social or environmental problems, often with particular emphasis on addressing the needs of under-served groups.
One of the Pathways for Civic Engagement that was more important than ever this past year was Policy & Governance. During the Fall 2020 semester, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic and an unforgettable election season, Dr. Mara Ostfeld, Assistant Professor in Political Science, tapped into multiple Ginsberg Center resources—including matchmaking, course consultation, and preparing students for community engagement—to help bolster research work in her Detroit Votes course.

Ostfeld had previously taught the course with a focus on increasing voting participation in Latinx communities. For Fall 2020, she extended the research into the other “majority-minority” Metro Detroit communities, including Dearborn, which has a large Arab-American population and the largest Muslim population in the US per capita.

“There’s been a lot of research on how we increase voting participation, (but) a smaller body of that work that’s focused on historically marginalized communities,” Ostfeld says. “I really just wanted to delve further into that body of work and see what we can contribute.”

Using Ginsberg’s partner-centered matchmaking approach, Ostfeld connected with the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS), an opportunity she describes as “really helpful and meaningful” to her class’ research. A representative from ACCESS spoke with students about the history of the organization, its experience with community voter outreach, and effective messaging strategies for getting out the vote.

Teaching a community-engaged course in the time of Covid can be tricky, particularly when researching voter participation—a field of research that typically relies on door-to-door interviewing and face-to-face conversations with community members. The challenges of the pandemic forced Ostfeld’s class to pivot creatively to other forms of outreach, such as targeted mailers in different community languages with QR codes.

Though Ostfeld acknowledges that “everything is different” when it comes to community-engaged teaching right now, she notes that giving students the opportunity “to recognize and learn how frustrating and bumpy and messy the process is” has been an invaluable learning experience.

Ostfeld says that Ginsberg’s community-engaged learning support was crucial to connecting with partners and overcoming initial hurdles: “Getting more tools for approaching some of these subjects was really helpful to me.”
America Reads Tutoring Goes Virtual and Discovers Unexpected Benefits

The Ginsberg Center’s literacy work—including America Reads and Readers & Best—is one of the most powerful ways we provide direct service to schools in our surrounding communities. In a typical year, our America Reads program involves U-M students providing in-person tutoring to children in grades K-3 in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Detroit schools.

This, of course, has been no typical school year. Faced with the challenge of taking a largely in-person, essential initiative online, Ginsberg not only adapted our approach but did so in a way that has allowed us to reach even more area students and help teachers provide students with more individualized attention during a particularly challenging school year.

Raven Jones, Ginsberg’s America Reads and Literacy Programs Manager, notes that it was a very quick pivot to undertake. She says the biggest challenge was the initial coordination of technology, with students and schools operating on different platforms.

Once the technical issues were resolved, Jones, participating teachers, and students discovered advantages to virtual tutoring. Says Hillary Wooley, a K-5 teacher at Ann Arbor’s Logan Elementary School: “Online tutoring allowed me and the tutors to give students individual attention and to differentiate levels of support.”

It also gave Wooley the ability to check in with the U-M tutors—something previously difficult to do with everyone’s schedules. “After each session I would meet with the tutors,” she says. “I could match tutors with the neediest students and they could work together one on one.”

Wooley believes those conversations also helped the tutors feel more involved: “They knew their feedback was important and being applied to classroom lessons.”

Remote tutoring also allowed Ginsberg to offer family tutoring. “If schools didn’t think it was possible to connect in their classrooms, we encouraged them to pass the tutoring information on to families,” Jones says. “We served about 80 families, some with more than one student in their household.”

For U-M students like Pin Yi Lee, virtual tutoring was a game-changer, allowing her to participate in America Reads from her home in Taiwan: “The online format enabled me to actively participate in the program, despite being so far away.” The biggest challenge, she says, was coping with the time difference. “Luckily, I was living according to EST because some of my U-M classes were synchronous.”

“The solid foundation of Ginsberg’s literacy programs was essential to our being able to quickly and effectively take our tutoring online,” Jones adds. “It was a success across the board and allowed us to provide direct service despite the year’s challenges.”
COMMUNITY ORGANIZING & ACTIVISM

Ginsberg Center Grant Supports Community-Engaged Scholarship to Bolster Immigration Resources

Establishing and fostering long-term relationships with academic partners allows the Ginsberg Center to support them along a number of different pathways—including those that directly impact the work of community organizing and activism. Our relationship with Dr. Odessa Gonzalez Benson, Assistant Professor at the U-M School of Social Work and a member of the U-M Detroit School of Urban Studies Faculty Cluster, is one such example.

In recent years, Gonzalez Benson’s wide-ranging work has included aspects of advocacy, philanthropy, and immigrant welfare. In 2018, she received a Ginsberg Faculty Community-Engagement Grant to advance her research and direct work with grassroots organizations that support Grand Rapids’ substantial immigrant and refugee community. (Michigan’s second most populous city is home to about 8,000 immigrants). Gonzalez Benson’s team worked with the organizations to help them build capacity and also conducted a study to better understand how they leverage opportunities and connect with each other.

As a result of this partnership, Gonzalez Benson’s collaboration with the Ginsberg Center has become even more robust in the past few years and now includes course consultation, research consultation, and the incorporation of Ginsberg student workshops in coursework. Gonzalez Benson says her team has also applied Ginsberg’s community engagement principles to their connections with dozens of immigrant and refugee-run community organizations, as well as resettlement agencies such as Samaritas and public entities like the US Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Neeraja Aravamudan, Ginsberg’s Interim Co-Director, notes that this relationship has allowed for a deepened, more sustainable impact on the grassroots refugee and immigrant organizations.

“Dr. Gonzalez Benson offers a great example of community-engaged scholarship that is integrated into both teaching and research in an ongoing way,” Aravamudan says. “Our work ultimately aims to build long-term partnerships and she is really committed to that approach, as well.”

Kick-started with a Ginsberg Faculty Community-Engagement Grant, the research initiative continues to grow thanks, in part, to Ginsberg’s ongoing grant consultation. Building off the Center’s initial support, Gonzalez Benson’s team has since been awarded a $60,000 grant from the Michigan Institute for Clinical and Health Research, as well as additional funds from the Detroit Urban Research Center, the Institute for Research on Women and Gender and others. Four publications have been produced from the research initiative, with two more currently under review, and the team has presented their work globally on several occasions.

“One-on-one consultations with Ginsberg staff have been so helpful,” Gonzalez Benson says. “The Center’s support was crucial as I started at U-M for setting into motion my research, and my community-engaged work has only deepened since then.”
Ginsberg Match Provides Important Social Connections During Pandemic

Ginsberg Center’s partnership with the University of Michigan Public Design Corps (UM-PDC) offers a key example of how work shifted during this pandemic year. The summer program connects U-M students in Architecture, Urban Design, and Urban and Regional Planning with mission-driven organizations to tackle pressing economic, environmental, social, and spatial challenges that have been made more acute by the ongoing Covid-19 health crisis. Student-faculty teams and community partners explore ways architecture, urban design, and planning tools can be used in community-focused, community-led projects.

UM-PDC is led by U-M faculty members Anya Sirota, Associate Dean for Academic Initiatives and Associate Professor of Architecture; María Arquero de Alarcón, Associate Professor of Architecture and Urban and Regional Planning; Irene Hwang, Assistant Chair of Architecture and Lecturer in Architecture; and Jacob Comerci, Academic Innovation Project Manager and Lecturer in Architecture.

In 2019, UM-PDC consulted Ginsberg for help identifying and matching with potential partners, as well as guidance on public engagement workshops and best practices. Student contributors participated in Ginsberg Center workshops to establish a foundational understanding of community engagement and co-design methods.

Last summer, Ginsberg paired UM-PDC with SAGE Metro Detroit, which provides services and advocacy for older LGBTQ+ adults. With shared storytelling an essential component of SAGE’s work in creating community and minimizing isolation, the pandemic provided a pressing challenge.

“SAGE offered Porch Talks and wanted to make them safe and continue during the pandemic so SAGE members wouldn’t feel isolated,” says Hwang. Working with UM-PDC allowed SAGE to brainstorm creative ways to safely support participants during Covid.

“We were able to gather critical stories and voices during a time when connection is especially important,” says Angie Perone, SAGE Executive Director. “Students interviewed LGBTQ+ older adults [about their coming out stories] and produced high-quality videos that we can archive in our records as well as use in upcoming virtual events and fundraising. We were especially impressed with the attention to detail, concern for the participants, and commitment to the project that each student brought.”

“The videos tell powerful stories about discrimination, racism, intersectionality, and hope. We need these conversations now more than ever, and this project brought these stories to life.”

Angie Perone, SAGE Executive Director

Hwang notes that the partnership with Ginsberg doesn’t just provide benefits for the students and community partners involved—it also benefits U-M faculty: “The fieldwork, these particular delivery issues, developing a whole new co-curricular model—this hadn’t been done before at Taubman.”

She adds: “We learned so much from Ginsberg’s connections, resources, and models for building new relationships. Ginsberg is helping us be ambassadors for the community.”
In A Unique Service Year, MAC-ASB Teams Adapt Support for Community Organizations

Providing student leadership education, guidance, and experience is a core part of the Ginsberg Center’s work and our work supporting the Michigan Active Citizens-Alternative Spring Break (MAC-ASB) program provides a clear example. Under normal circumstances, Ginsberg supports a wide variety of student teams as they plan, prepare for, and participate in trips all over the country (and beyond) to do hands-on service work with community organizations.

With travel and most in-person service opportunities off the table this year due to Covid-19, Ginsberg’s MAC-ASB team was challenged to change its focus and determine how to support partners and provide students with meaningful service opportunities during a pandemic. For most of the MAC-ASB teams, the answer was service in the form of fundraising to support community organizations in a safe and accessible way.

The six teams raised more than $4,000 for nine different organizations across the country through methods that ranged from Giving Blue Day—U-M’s annual fundraiser for programs and causes—to restaurant nights, Instagram bingo boards, and a Mitten Miles 5K.

“It was a big challenge for our students to adapt to virtual fundraising, especially those who have been on our MAC-ASB team for three years,” says Alison Climes, Ginsberg’s Student Engagement Coordinator. “But they really take to heart Ginsberg’s mission of starting with community-identified priorities and that helped guide them as they made the transition, remembering that even if the means changed, the goal to support our partners remained the same.”

Sabrina Iqbal, a Ginsberg MAC-ASB team member, says that while pivoting to fundraising efforts was an adjustment, it also came at a time when organizations really needed it. “We knew the pandemic had put a financial strain not only on many of the organizations that we work with but also on the families and friends that usually are the ones who donate money to these organizations,” she says.

One of this year’s beneficiaries was Unity Gardens, a nonprofit community garden and education center in South Bend, Indiana, and a long-standing MAC-ASB partner.

For the MAC-ASB students, the experience provided a different type of learning experience. “The biggest message we as a team learned was the value of flexibility and understanding,” Iqbal explains. “None of us can predict what the future holds, especially during a pandemic, so we tried keeping the mindset of going with the flow. And we also learned the importance of thinking outside the box to overcome challenging situations.”
Ginsberg Community Engagement Grant Helps IDC and Groundcover News Improve Distribution

The Ginsberg Center provides multiple forms of financial resources for student groups and organizations to engage in positive change through social justice education, leadership development, and meaningful service experiences with the community. In particular, our Community Engagement Grants allow us to deepen partnerships between student organizations and community organizations or agencies who are working together to address a community-identified need.

This year, one of those grants went to U-M’s Impact Design Collaborative (IDC) to support work with their partner, Groundcover News, a street newspaper that helps low-income members of the community make the transition from homeless to housed. A collection of designers, architects, and planners seeking to initiate change in the design field and the built environment, IDC uses design principles to address local issues.

IDC’s aim was to help Groundcover News improve the efficiency of their distribution via redesigned mobile newspaper carts that were both more aesthetically pleasing and practical.

To that end, IDC used their Community Engagement Grant to help fund the design of a prototype of the new cart, as well as to purchase the materials for the construction of some carts. According to Camilla Lizundia, an IDC project manager, the grant itself was just one of many aspects of how Ginsberg has supported—and continues to support—the project, from inception to fruition.

“We really appreciated how receptive the Ginsberg Center was when we were in the brainstorming phase of our project,” she says. “Also, the steps to apply for the grant encouraged us to foster a deeper relationship with Groundcover News.”

The team found particular value in Ginsberg’s Entering, Engaging, and Exiting Workshop, which helped them approach the project mindfully. “For us, that workshop helped us stay conscious of and accountable for the impact our project has on surrounding communities,” Lizundia adds.

As with most things, the pandemic has slowed the construction of the prototype cart a bit, but IDC has already begun the process of constructing the carts from their visual rendering. IDC is continuing into these next phases with Ginsberg principles guiding them.

“It’s so easy for U-M students to enter into a new community, ask for what benefits U-M, and then leave,” Lizundia says “But with this project, our team really tried to establish a long-term partnership with long-term solutions that benefit Groundcover first, then U-M’s goals.”
The Covid-19 pandemic meant greater need for support for many community organizations, and more students eager to provide it. However, health restrictions due to the pandemic meant there were fewer in-person opportunities to do so. Those factors all required the Ginsberg Center’s Connect2Community team to adapt our tool’s functionality and function and content to provide community support and service opportunities in a time of crisis.

Connect2Community is an online portal that connects University of Michigan students, staff, and faculty to engagement opportunities with non-profits, schools, and other community agencies. In a typical year, the vast majority of these opportunities are for in-person service.

A collaboration with the United Way of Washtenaw County and Eastern Michigan University, Connect2Community required all three partners to create coordinated Covid landing pages on their websites. Those pages became among the top ways users found (and continue to find) Connect2Community.

“There was definitely a big increase in the number of people wanting to help out,” says Sarah Gallagher, Ginsberg’s Connect2Community Student Coordinator. “Students and community members really wanted to be involved in Covid response. Connect2Community views went way up. We saw thousands more views in March and April compared to the previous year.” (The site received 14,867 views across the two months, versus 7,620 last year.)

Connect2Community had to be transformed into a resource for all the urgent needs that the community had while still maintaining a robust database of non-crisis service opportunities. “It was essentially a complete refresh of our site,” Gallagher says. “There was a lot of brainstorming.”

There was also an uptick in the number of new community partners signing up to post their opportunities. In addition, both new and existing partners turned to Ginsberg for help in thinking differently and creatively about opportunities for virtual volunteers, which was brand new territory for many of them. Resulting opportunities varied from help sewing masks to technical assistance to social media support.

“There’s no question that it was a very fast, very challenging experience to rise to the needs of both students and the community during Covid. It was unlike anything we’d done before,” Gallagher says. “But Connect2Community is about being resourceful in the name of service, so we were well-equipped to pivot the site to quickly serve the unique needs of that moment.”
Much of the Ginsberg Center’s work with students is dedicated to providing education and opportunities to practice civic engagement, with the hopes of instilling lifelong habits of democracy (such as voting, education, and engaging in dialogue) that will, in turn, impact social change for the greater good. This year provided a lot of challenges that required us to adapt more traditional efforts to reach student voters with great agility—which was only possible because of our well-established foundation of democratic engagement partnerships on campus and beyond.

The Ginsberg Center continued to serve as the conference and campus lead in the Big Ten Voting Challenge (BTVC), a conference-wide non-partisan competition aimed at increasing the rates of student voter registration and turnout. This year, the BTVC focused on online voter registration and messaging around safe, absentee voting to minimize the number of students present at campus polling locations on Election Day.

Ginsberg was also part of a growing campus coalition for this work, which included the Ann Arbor City Clerk’s Office, University of Michigan Museum of Art (UMMA), Stamps School of Art and Design, the Ford School, and University Housing, as well as Central Student Government, and the student organization Turn Up Turnout.

An on-campus satellite City Clerk’s office, a collaborative effort between the City Clerk, U-M’s Government Relations, UMMA, Stamps, and the BTVC, opened in September at UMMA. Over the course of six weeks, students and local residents used the office to register, complete, and submit absentee ballots, and/or use the ballot drop box for mail-in ballots. The satellite office saw 5,412 registrations and 8,501 ballots cast. During the two-day period leading up to Election Day on November 3, more than 1,000 registrations and absentee ballots were processed and cast at UMMA.

In addition, Ginsberg participated in a University-wide Democracy & Debate theme semester, creating and sharing Election 2020: A Non-Partisan Primer through Michigan Online and in workshops, orchestrating Democracy Café discussions for students, and creating other resources for student voter education and registration that were shared with faculty for use in classes. Ginsberg was also central to the development and operation of a tri-campus collaboration. The collaboration focused on student voting, with a team composed of staff from the Flint, Dearborn, and Ann Arbor campuses, and a focus on equitable access to resources, including a texting platform, the GoVote website, and an email platform for questions.

While student voter turnout data for the 2020 Big Ten Voting Challenge won’t be available until later this year, Ginsberg’s democratic engagement efforts—in partnership with others both on campus and off—played a key role in U-M’s efforts during a year that challenged all of us to grapple with our understanding of and commitment to democracy. Opportunities to practice principles of democracy extend well beyond the voting window, and Ginsberg remains committed, as always, to promoting learning and opportunities for democratic engagement for U-M students and partners.  

Keeping Students Invested in Democratic Engagement
GINSBERG IS
community engagement
equitable partnerships
student leadership
capacity building
learning in community
democratic engagement
collaborating for impact
SOCIAL CHANGE
GINSBERG IS...
supporting our partners in the following ways:

COMMUNITY

**listen**
- to community needs and priorities

**connect**
- with University partners

**steward**
- ongoing partnerships across U-M

STUDENTS

**connect**
- work to priorities of community organizations

**engage**
- through meaningful service or civic engagement

**support**
- engagement through grants, advising, and transportation

**educate**
- to prepare for engagement and positive impact

FACULTY

**connect**
- courses & research to community-identified priorities

**design**
- courses, programs or research to integrate community

**prepare**
- students to thoughtfully enter, engage, and exit communities

**research**
- impact of engagement on student learning
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