

## 2021 Student of Achievement Award Recipients

*The MSU Women's Center is proud to highlight thirteen students who have enriched our campus through their hard work, inclusive spirits, community activism, and leadership. We are honored to have an opportunity to recognize each of these students who have contributed much to Montana State University. The following is a very incomplete list of their activities, accomplishments, recognitions, and the many ways they wish to make our world a better place. Thanks to each and every one of you and the best of luck to you all upon graduation!*

### **Lyla Brown She/Her**

Lyla will graduate this spring with a degree in Sociology-Criminology and minors in Psychology and Women's Gender & Sexuality Studies. Lyla has made the most of her years at MSU as a program coordinator for the Diversity and Inclusion Student Commons (DISC), student director of the Late Night Streamline bus service through ASMSU, a Resident Advisor, and a Sustained Dialogue moderator. She is Co-founder and former President of the Black Student Union, a member of the African Student Association (ASA) and the Queer Straight Alliance (QSA). Lyla's honors include this year's MSU Homecoming Leadership Pillar Winner, recipient of Forward Montana's 25 Under 25 Award, a Christy Foundation Scholarship Winner, and One of Nine African American Leaders in the Pacific Northwest. Lyla has co-presented several Women's Center Sack Lunch Seminars, and her greatest passion and efforts while at MSU lie with social justice, and diversity, equity and inclusion. After graduation, Lyla has been accepted to an Adult Education Master's program to facilitate educating adults about healthcare access.

### **Olivia Filialuna They/Them**

Olivia is graduating in May with a degree in Organismal Biology and minors in Statistics and Museum Studies. During their time at MSU, Olivia has served as a Diversity and Inclusion Ambassador in the DISC, a Sustained Dialogue moderator and as a part of the planning committee for the Rainbow over the Rockies conference in April of this year. They have also served as President of the National Residence Hall Honorary and as a member of the Residence Hall Association,

where they have focused on making activities for residents more accessible and sustainable for all students. Since 2018, Olivia has been a part of the Cripps Mycology lab. They are also currently completing an internship with at the Museum of the Rockies in the Cultural History department. After graduation, they plan to attend a master's program in Museum Studies, and hope to use their knowledge and experiences from MSU to encourage more community-based and inclusive programming to museums. Olivia will advocate for greater inclusion of gender and race in museum studies and in museum exhibits and operations.

### **Natalie Hall She/Her**

Natalie is graduating this spring with a degree in Applied Mathematics. During her career at MSU, Natalie has served with the VOICE Center as a Student Advocate, an Advocate Mentor, an after-hours crisis advocate and peer educator. She is currently the President of Students Against Sexual Assault and a current chair and board member of the Survivor Fund. Natalie has also served as an ASMSU Diversity and Inclusion Liaison member. She has volunteered with many organizations such as Sacks off Main-- supporting the Bozeman Help Center, and Bounty of the Bridgers' Food Pantry. Natalie is also a member of Alpha Omicron Pi and the Math Club. She has been nominated for a Day of Student Recognition Award, has been honored as New Member of the Year for her sorority, and as the Homecoming Ambassador of Involvement 2020. After graduation, Natalie would like to use her knowledge of mathematics, particularly statistics, to aid in service, inclusion and human connection, perhaps working as a

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data analyst/ specialist for a non-profit addressing social justice and human need.

## **Katy Hilburn** She/Her

Katy will graduate in May with a degree in Chemical Engineering. While at MSU, Katy has served as an educator, peer mentor and volunteer for the MSU VOICE Center on campus. In addition, she has served as the HEART Initiative secretary, an Engineers without Borders Financial Team member and sanitation member, and an MSU Honors College Advisory Committee member. Katy is a Cameron Presidential Scholar and recipient of the MSU Vice President for Research Scholarship, as well as a Semptemveri Award. Katy is a researcher in the MSU Food Product Development Lab, investigating intellectual protections for marginalized communities and how universities and researchers can facilitate fairer and more culturally sensitive research. Upon graduation, Katy would like use her degree to lead the energy industry in a more sustainable direction and advocate for healthy and fair workplace practices for those in the industry.

## **Anne Kreeck** She/Her

Anne will graduate May 1st with a degree in Applied Mathematics. During her time here at MSU, Anne has served as the co-president of Queer Straight Alliance, secretary of the Math Club, a tier three representative on the Sports Executive Board, a Club Sports representative to the Rec Sports and Fitness Advisory Board, and as a member of Out in STEM (oSTEM). Her role as the Swim Club President met an extraordinary challenge when the Rec Center's roof collapsed in 2019, but she and the club's secretary were vigilant and successful in keeping the organization running and thriving. Anne was accepted to present research at (last year's cancelled) NCUR 2020 and has been reaccepted and is presenting at NCUR 2021. Anne is proud to be an undergraduate researcher in the STEM field as a woman and member of the LGBTQ+ community. Anne has submitted testimony against Montana's HB 112 bill in

the fight for the rights of transgender athletes in interscholastic sports. Anne has also volunteered with the Girl Scouts of Montana and Wyoming. After graduation, Anne plans to use her experience in STEM and in sports and diversity work to increase inclusivity and identities in STEM fields and in sports.

## **Alexi Kyro** She/Her

Lexi is graduating on May 1<sup>st</sup> with a degree in Microbiology and Environmental Health, with minors in Global Health and Hispanic Studies. During her time at MSU, she has worked closely with Guardians of Living Water, the Big Horn Valley Health Center, Crow Environmental Health Steering Committee and Messengers for Health, an Indigenous led non-profit. Within these organizations, Lexi has collaborated with the Apsáalooke community to eliminate inequities they face. Last summer, Lexi helped implement and has continued to work with a Tribal Health Improvement Program on the Apsáalooke reservation. She is an intern with South North Nexus in Bozeman and La Guajira, Colombia, conducting livelihood analysis in similar bioregions. Through this work, more can be learned about the impacts of shock (climate change, COVID, political turmoil) within these global regions. Lexi worked in the Pincus Lab at MSU researching the mechanism of toxicity for ricin and a cure for HIV. She runs for the MSU Cross Country and Track Team. After graduation, Lexi would like to eventually provide primary care for a rural, underserved population, placing emphasis on preventative and community care.

## **Elena Lewis** She/Her

Elena will graduate this spring with a degree in Cell Biology and Neuroscience. As a student at MSU, Elena has served in the VOICE Center as an advocate and peer educator. She has completed the DISC's Safe Zone training in order to serve our LGBTQ+ student effectively, and has demonstrated her leadership skills in her position as a course assistant and Leadership for Future STEM Professional's course work. Elena has

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worked as a Smarty Cats Tutor and a specimen collector for the COVID-19 Symptomatic Student Testing Center. Elena is the recipient of the Academic Achievement Scholarship, has consistently been on the Dean's List and is a member of the MSU Honors College. Upon graduation, Elena plans to complete the education and training to become a psychiatrist. Working in the VOICE Center has made Elena realize her passion for helping others, and being a psychiatrist is a great opportunity for her to continue her work with vulnerable populations using her strong background in STEM.

## **Allison Reinhardt She/Her**

Allison graduates in May with a degree in Political Science and a minor in Global Health. Allison has developed a passion for public service. She currently serves as the student lobbyist for the Montana Associated Students representing 40,000 students in the Montana University System, is a Delegate for the Henry Clay Center for Statesmanship, a Delegate for the New Leadership Montana Summer Institute, an ASMSU Senator, Student Liaison for the University Planning Council, the MSU Legislative Committee, the Outreach and Engagement Council and for the Bozeman Public School Board. Allison was selected as a delegate to the United States Senate Youth Program in Washington, D.C. She won sixth nationally (first in Montana) in the Nation for the Voice of Democracy speech contest, as well as the Torlief Aasheim Community Involvement Award and an Award for Excellence. Allison has volunteered as an Honors College Ambassador. After graduation, she would like to use her experience and education to continue in public policy and encourage young people, especially women and girls, Indigenous communities and rural communities to be active participants in our political system.

## **Mayuri Singh She/Her**

Mayuri will graduate on May 1<sup>st</sup> with degrees in Chemical and Biological Engineering and a minor in biomedical engineering. During her time at MSU, she

worked at the DISC with Sustained Dialogue as a dialogue moderator, leading discussions on diversity, equity, intersectional identities and mental health. Mayuri serves as Student Director of the Honor's Presents series and is ASMSU's Director of Diversity and Inclusion. Her work in Dr. Stephanie McCalla's lab focuses on disease diagnosis and biosensors, and she received funding for this research through INBRE. Mayuri is a member of the MSU BIPOC Action Planning Committee and a Diversity & Inclusion Ambassador. She has been recognized with by the Undergraduate Scholars Program, an Honors College Dean's Excellence Scholarship, and an Award for Excellence. She has volunteered with the MTREP, Planned Parenthood of MT, Compassion Project, Gallatin Valley Food Bank and Bozeman United for Racial Justice. She is a member of The American Institute of Chemical Engineers, the Society of Biological Engineers, and the Society of Women Engineers. After graduation, Mayuri will pursue a PhD in biomedical engineering and continue her work to improve equity and accessibility for all identities within the healthcare system. She will work to develop rapid diagnostic tools that are affordable and impartial for medical issues that disproportionately affect BIPOC and lower income areas.

## **Madison Tandberg She/Her**

Madison will graduate in May with a degree in Computer Science and a minor in Mathematics. During her time at MSU, she has been involved with the MSU Leadership Institute, currently as the Senior Associate, where she has advocated for events and discussions surrounding the 2020 elections, climate change and Black Lives Matter. She has participated in and served as an officer in the Association for Women in Computing, and as a member of the Women in Engineering Student Advisory Board. Madison is an undergraduate researcher in the MSU Security and Privacy Lab, and has been recognized with the Torlief Aasheim Community Involvement Award, an Award for Excellence, a Semptemviri Award, a National Science

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Foundation's Research Experience for Undergrads, a Cameron Presidential Scholarship, a Hambly Women in Engineering Scholarship, and was selected as an Honor's Intern with the FBI. Madison has volunteered with Mountain Time Arts and with Heart of the Valley. After graduating, Madison would like to combine her passions for service, justice and leadership, technology and security, and encouraging women and girls to pursue educations in engineering and computer science.

## **Tiga Ward She/Her**

Tiga will graduate in December with a degree in Industrial and Management Systems Engineering. During her undergraduate career at MSU, Tiga has volunteered as a TRIO Peer Mentor and helped coordinate and facilitate First Generation Student Day. She is a member of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) and has served as the Secretary, Internal Representative, and Regional Representative. Tiga has been honored with the Emerging Scholar's Grant Award for SHPE, the Hambly Women in Engineering Scholarship, and a Montana Access Scholarship. She has also worked as the ASMSU Secretary, is part of Earthtone Outside for BIPOC outdoor activity accessibility, and is an EMPOWER Scholar. Tiga has also collaborated with TRIO and the DISC to train TRIO mentors in Safe Zone education. Throughout her career at MSU, Tiga has strived to support first generation students like herself and encourage marginalized students to run for leadership roles within student and professional organizations and clubs. After graduation, Tiga will continue to work towards a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive future.

## **Mikayla Wood She/Her/ella**

Mikayla is graduating this spring with a degree in Chemical Engineering and a minor in Hispanic Studies. Her career at MSU includes research work with Dr. Stephanie McCalla and volunteer work with Engineers without Borders. In her lab work with Dr. McCalla, Mikayla is driven by the project's goal of increasing

medical care in limited resource settings. She uses her position in her engineering cohort to encourage intersectional feminism and young women's participation in STEM careers. As a member and officer of Engineers without Borders, Mikayla has strived to bring issues of power dynamics, "voluntourism," colonialism and the white savior complex to the forefront of the club's activities and projects. Mikayla has served as an Honors College Ambassador and co-presented a Women's Center Sack Lunch Seminar for our MentHERship series. She has received a Presidential Scholarship, an Award for Excellence, the Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering's Outstanding Senior Scholarship and was a 2020 Goldwater Scholar. After graduation, Mikayla plans to pursue a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering at University of Texas at Austin to research sustainable energy solutions.

## **Max Yates He/Him**

Max will graduate in May this spring with a major in Biochemistry and minors in Economics, Global Health and Hispanic Studies. During his time at MSU, Max has been a part of the Callis Lab in the Chemistry/Biochemistry Department as a research assistant for the Center for Interdisciplinary Health Workforce Studies in the College of Nursing. He worked as a research intern at the Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia. Max is a member of the MSU Honors College and Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity. He has volunteered as a tutor in the Native American Student Success Center and for Eagle Mount in Bozeman. He has served as an Advocate, Peer Educator and crisis line staffer for MSU's VOICE Center. Max was a Truman Scholar in 2020 and a Rhodes and Marshall Scholarship National Finalist. He was a Presidential Scholar and a recipient of an Award for Excellence. After graduation, Max plans to eventually attend the University of Cambridge to obtain an MPhil in Population Health Sciences and eventually medical school. He hopes to help shift the model of healthcare and work in a rural area to help equip Indigenous communities fight the injustices of the medical system.



Margaret recently presented this information to the President's Commission on the Status of University Women's Executive Committee and pointed out that 1 of 5 female students in the U.S. struggle to pay for (or cannot purchase) menstrual products each month. Additionally, 84% of teens in the U.S. have missed class or know someone who has missed class due to a lack of menstrual hygiene products. The average cost for products per menstrual cycle is \$13.25/month. At twelve cycles per year, that adds up to almost \$160/year. This may not seem like a large amount to many folks, but for students working two or three jobs in addition to their studies, it adds up to a substantial amount of money. And

## The Menstrual Product Access Campaign at MSU

By Betsy Danforth

Margaret Davies, a senior in Mechanical Engineering at MSU and a couple of her colleagues, are heading up an initiative to expand free menstrual products for the MSU community. Currently, the Strand Union Building (SUB) offers free period products which are paid for by ASMSU in addition to machines and part replacements. This initiative, however, would expand that effort to all classroom buildings as well. As Margaret pointed out, many campuses around the nation have already put this project of offering free and accessible menstrual products to all who need them into action, and she also noted an appropriate fit with the retention initiative in MSU's Strategic plan to reduce disparities for students who are economically disadvantaged.

let's face it, with women already at a disadvantage as far as gender pay equity goes, earning anywhere from 72% to 89% of what their male counterparts earn, this is an added burden.

So what can YOU do? Margaret and her colleagues proposed raising funds for start-up money if MSU's Facilities Services would agree to continue the project with machine maintenance supplies, and they agreed! So, after much research and pricing out machines and parts in order to get 95 machines in 45 classroom buildings up and running, they have figured out that they will need \$20,000. If you, your department, your friends, colleagues, students, etc. would like to donate to this campaign, contact Margaret directly [Margaret.ruth.davies@gmail.com](mailto:Margaret.ruth.davies@gmail.com) for more information!

## Constructions of Bodies and “Medical Necessity”

By Anna Campbell

A concept of great importance to all of us, in its entirety, is our bodies. We *are* our bodies, so the care of them is essential to our lives. In order to analyze the relationship between bodies and the healthcare system, great specificity is required. In the U.S., the system is rife with effects from the constructions of bodies by systems of power. Determinations of what is medically necessary may seem like a minute detail in the grand scheme of things, but to this day, “the concept of ‘medical necessity’ continues to serve as the primary gatekeeper for the utilization of healthcare services.” (Daniel Skinner, 2013). Due to the high cost of healthcare, many Americans rely on insurance to cover medical costs. Without coverage or money to pay out of pocket, treatments become unattainable. Medical necessity should be the dominant factor in determining coverage of medical procedures, but there is no consistent definition provided for the term “medically necessary.” In the U.S., this all too often comes down to the whim of the for-profit insurance industry. Even Medicare and Medicaid delegate this decision making, beyond basic benefits, to private third party groups (Dolgin, 2015) (Skinner, 2013). The passage of the Affordable Care Act (2010) cemented this policy. While most definitions share a core set of values, between each claim specialist, acting under each medical director, within each insurance group, there is room for discretion (Dolgin, 2015).

By nature, entities created within a culture built upon systems of power are entrenched in its constructions. This is certainly true of the healthcare system. Beyond the immense inequalities that affect distribution and access, bodies themselves are the victims of prejudice and power inequalities once inside the healthcare system’s hold. Those individuals with power over the bodies upon which healthcare is performed are subject to hegemonic culture and the biases follow. There is ample evidence that “claims have been approved or denied depending on the

contractors’ individual views about the medical necessity of the care at issue” which “can reflect ideological or political agendas” (Janet Dolgin, 2015). Decisions of insurance personnel regarding medical necessity are influenced by their own internal beliefs of what is necessary for other bodies--these decisions all too often have serious consequences for marginalized folks in particular.

Bodies have no inherent meaning on their own. In fact, though sexism existed culturally, before the scientific revolution, bodies were not even considered one of two sexes or genders (T. Laqueur, 1992). Constructions of sex and gender were placed on the body as the science to examine the body progressed. Women’s bodies were constructed as frail, with weaker, thinner bones. Based on skull size, women were likened to children (T. Laqueur, 1992). Biological variation was given meaning to explain preformed prejudice. Women's bodies were established as property in need of management and restraint by men.

This construction of women’s bodies has largely informed today’s insurance industry. One of the most alarming instances regarding medical necessity has been brought to court three times since the Women’s Health Amendment to the ACA in 2012: in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* (2014), *Zubik v. Burwell* and *Trump v. Pennsylvania*. In all three cases, institutions of power sought exemption from the requirement for contraceptives to be completely covered by insurance plans under the ACA. It was argued that institutions providing healthcare, such as universities and employers, should have the right to deny coverage of contraceptives on the basis of religious or moral beliefs (Amiri, 2020). Some opponents consider coverage of birth control “akin to promoting prostitution because sexuality concerns behaviors that are choices” (Daniel Skinner, 2013). Here, regulation of contraceptives is weaponized as a method of control over the female body. The rhetoric surrounding the concept of “choice” is a framing of the issue that “preventive services” should only be considered necessary in “absence of behavior modifications” (Skinner, 2013). Thus, the classification of contraception as not

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medically necessary would be a practice of control over a specific population's bodies deemed in need of restraint. In the same vein, women's bodies are coded in a specific way in relation to men, so rejection of this notion can result in consequence. For example, lesbian women are less likely to be offered or receive coverage for cervical and breast cancer screenings.

Another intersection of medical necessity and the LGBTQ+ community is prominent in the care of transgender persons. Oftentimes, gender affirming care can be classified as medically unnecessary on the grounds of being "cosmetic" or "experimental" procedures (Lambda, 2021). In 2021, "Many health plans are still using exclusions such as 'services related to sex change' or 'sex reassignment surgery' to deny coverage to transgender people for certain health care services" (Transgender, 2021). Constructions of the sex and gender binary have rendered transgender care as gratuitous, therefore not necessary. In contrast, evidence shows these procedures can have enormous benefits to the wellbeing and lives of many people, and under a hegemonic system that demands conformity, can be argued as necessary. (Lambda, 2021) (Brigitte Amiri, 2020).

Race has also proved to be a construct placed on the body with extensive healthcare related consequences. With origins in colonialism and slavery, BIPOC bodies have been contrived as biologically different and therefore in need of altered levels of medical care. Black bodies were established as closer to animals than White bodies, a convenient theory for racist slave owners who tortured them. Beliefs such as these "were championed by scientists, physicians, and slave owners alike to justify slavery and the inhumane treatment of Black men and women in medical research." (Kelly Hoffman et al., 2016). In the 19th century, prominent physicians sought to establish the "physical peculiarities" of Blacks that could "serve to distinguish him from the white man." Examples

included the testing of "mustard gas and other chemicals on Black soldiers during World War II" by the US military and the collaboration between the Tuskegee Institute and US Public Health Service that infected and left Black patients untreated with syphilis from the 1930s through the 1970s (Hoffman et al., 2016). Today, these prejudices surrounding pain tolerance are still accepted. In a study conducted by researchers at the University of Virginia in 2016, 12% of first through fourth year medical students believe "Blacks' nerve endings are less sensitive than Whites'." (Hoffman et al., 2016).

This translates to the determination of medical necessity. On average, Black patients are less likely to be approved for angioplasty or coronary bypass surgery than their White counterparts, and more likely to be approved for only older and less effective cardiovascular medications. Black patients are also more likely to only be offered and covered by insurance for "less desirable treatments" as first lines of treatment. As a particularly horrifying example, African American and Black patients are more than three times more likely to have limb amputations as a result of diabetes than white bodies (Sophie Trawalter, 2012). Additionally, both Black and Latinx patients are consistently considered less able to accept and adhere to treatment regimens (Hall et al., 2015). Prejudices like these have an extraordinary effect on which medical treatments marginalized people have access to, and therefore their very humanities.

Ultimately, medical necessity determinations made by physicians, insurance groups and their employees are influenced by the systems of power in which they are built and trained. By continuing to dehumanize and limit certain bodies to lesser healthcare, this system perpetuates the marginalization of women, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups of humans.

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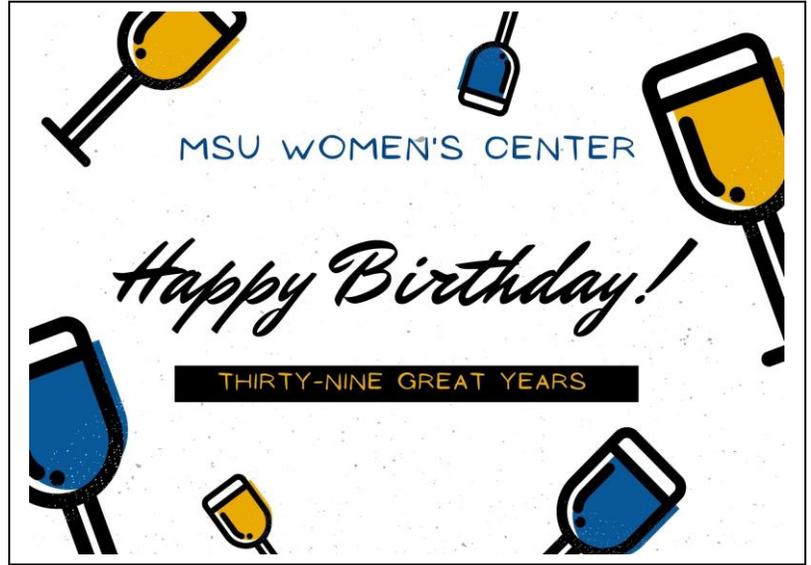
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## Thirty-nine Dollars for Thirty-nine Years!

The MSU Women's Center is celebrating our **39th Anniversary** this year! We continue to provide quality **programming** and offer **resources** to MSU students, faculty, staff, and Bozeman community members. We keep an ear open to contemporary issues and concerns and provided **Sack Lunch Seminars** including: *Journey to Becoming an Anti-racist*; *Knowledge, Bodies and Power*; *MentHerShip: Women and Mentoring in STEM*; and *What are Your Politics Doing in My Birth Control?* **This year's co-sponsorships** included: a screening of the film *Picture a Scientist* with a follow-up **panel discussion with MSU professors** as well as a virtual discussion of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment called **The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment: The Missing Voices in Women's Suffrage**

With your help we can continue to expand our resources and sponsor more exciting and relevant speakers, workshops, and events on campus! **Celebrate 39** great years of the MSU Women's Center!

**Please Mail Donations to:** Women's Center, P.O. Box 172100  
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