

THE DIFFERENCE YOU MAKE

LEAD IMPACT REPORT 2020-21

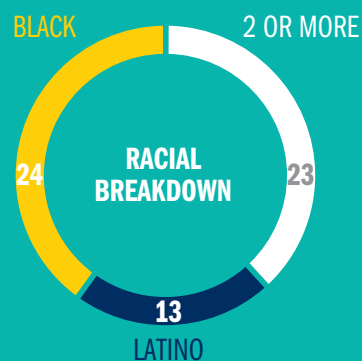
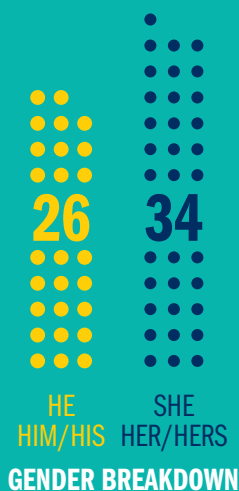
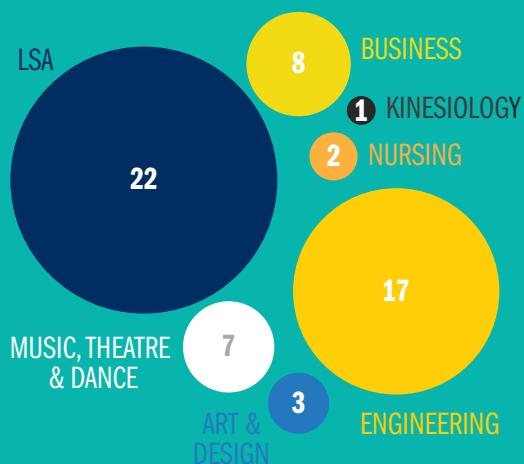


LEAD SCHOLARS

2020-21 LEAD CLASS SNAPSHOT



SCHOOL/COLLEGE



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



It was a different year for everyone, but the LEAD Scholars program allows us to see the adversity in a new light by representing a fundamental truth: difference is a uniting force. Cultures, races, socioeconomic backgrounds, upbringings, and experiences — diversity is rooted in differences, which is exactly what brings LEAD scholars together at the University of Michigan.

These students are so uniquely different, but you've created a community where they all belong. Through the LEAD Scholars program, you are fostering inclusion, recognition, a space to explore their purpose, and the freedom to be their most authentic selves.

Your gifts are the common thread that keeps these students intrinsically connected, particularly during a year that forced them apart. Because of you, their education and U-M experience didn't stop—it just looked different. Learning opportunities and community programming continued virtually; networking events and social engagements took on a new meaning. LEAD scholars discovered that whether they are on campus or across the nation, they remain forever connected to the University, to alumni, and to each other.

The legacy and impact of the LEAD community has never been more far reaching than it is right now, and that's because of your generous support.

This is the story of the difference your gifts make — **the difference you make in the lives of every single one of these LEAD scholars.** As their remarkable stories unfold, you'll hear about the ways they're setting forth in this world to make a difference of their own.

Thank you, and Go Blue!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ayanna McConnell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Ayanna McConnell
Executive Director, University/Student Engagement and LEAD Scholars Program

HUNTER PHELPS '21



*Hunter Phelps, '21
Detroit, MI | Major: Business | Minor: Entrepreneurship*

As Hunter Phelps reflects on her recent graduation, she looks back at some of the most invaluable things that got her to this moment. **She says the experiences, connections, and community your support creates are what catapulted her entire career as a young Black female working in corporate America and running her own business.**

In May 2020, Alumni Association board member and LEAD donor Kathleen Wilson-Thomson, '79, extended a connection that served as the catalyst for Hunter's career with Walgreens. Then the company's executive vice president and global chief human resources officer, Kathleen wanted to provide LEAD scholars access to internship opportunities and bring their talent to Walgreens.

Hunter applied, was accepted, and spent her 2020 summer doing a virtual internship in the merchandising and marketing analyst program. In August 2020, Walgreens extended a return offer for a full-time position; she accepted and stayed in close touch with the team as she

finished her degree. **This kind of support opens doors and provides access to the network that's a driving force behind the dreams of LEAD scholars.**

"LEAD equipped me with the skills and confidence I needed to get that internship. The moment I started my freshman year, LEAD offered so many different events and opportunities to network with peers and professionals. I didn't pass them up—whatever came my way, I tried and gave it my best learning along the way.

"In February 2021, I was invited to participate in a LEAD panel event hosted in partnership with Walgreens about the future of women in corporate America. I talked about exploring the power of networking and what I learned through my internship. I shared how the connections I made are what led me to be a part of that very event, explaining that **none of this—including my job offer—would have happened if it weren't for LEAD.**

"What makes the LEAD program different is its intimacy—it really does feel like a family, even at these events. The LEAD team works hard to make sure the events aren't generalized, but catered perfectly to us; I feel like the guests are speaking specifically to LEAD scholars versus speaking to a whole group of U-M students. I've learned so much and have made a lot of different connections.

"One of my goals is to use my learned power of networking and connections to expand my business, Terry Lu Naturals. I started this

"I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS ARE ALLOWING STUDENTS LIKE ME TO FULFILL THEIR DREAMS AND SUCCESSES."

natural hair and skincare line my freshman year, and I've been running it through my entire college journey while simultaneously building my career at Walgreens. My dream is to have a storefront, but I'd also love to work my way up within Walgreens and eventually explore ways to get my brand into their stores.

"Your gifts to LEAD have made amazing contributions to my life, both financially and academically, and they've helped with my mental health. In this community, I know I am surrounded by people I can relate to who are experiencing the same things as me; we can talk about our struggles and our successes.

"Thank you so much. **I want you to know that your contributions are allowing students like me to fulfill their dreams and successes."**

BUILDING AN UNSTOPPABLE NETWORK OF PEOPLE AND OPPORTUNITIES

Your gifts extend far beyond scholarship support, establishing a community for these students on campus and across the country. It's not just a place you've given them to belong, but a family-like network that grows with them along their journeys as Michigan students and, one day, as alumni.

A critical part of this community are the events that bring scholars together to form and strengthen connections, especially during a year of limited in-person experiences. Personal, professional, social—your gifts create opportunities for these LEAD scholars to grow and thrive in every aspect of their lives.

You are the foundation of this network, the creator of this community. It is your generous giving that unites scholars as they turn connections and experiences into lifelong milestones and relationships.

“THE LEAD PROGRAM IS A SOURCE OF GUIDANCE AND COMMUNITY FOR ME AS I ADVANCE EACH YEAR. I HAVE PARTICIPATED IN ACTIVITIES SUCH AS FRIDAY FUN GAME NIGHTS, COMMUNITY EXTRAVAGANZAS, MLK SYMPOSIUMS, DRAIN YOUR BRAIN, WEBINARS, AND ALUMNI TALKS. I FEEL FORTUNATE FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD LASTING FRIENDSHIPS WITH FELLOW LEAD SCHOLARS THROUGH EVENTS, SHARED CLASSES, AND ALIGNED ACTIVITIES.”

LAKYLA THOMAS, '23

“THE LEAD COMMUNITY HAS DONE A SPECTACULAR JOB OF ENSURING THAT STUDENTS STAY INVOLVED AND MOTIVATED. FROM MEMBERS OF THE LEAD PROGRAM TEAM REACHING OUT INDIVIDUALLY, TO THE CARE PACKAGE THAT WAS SENT OVER WINTER BREAK, TO OUR VIRTUAL COMMUNITY EXTRAVAGANZAS, I CONTINUE TO KNOW THAT I’M A PART OF THIS GREAT COMMUNITY DESPITE BEING PHYSICALLY DISTANT. I ABSOLUTELY LOVE THE COMMUNITY EVENTS; PLAYING GAMES IN BREAKOUT ROOMS, GETTING TO MEET NEW SCHOLARS AND BOND WITH THEM, AND, OF COURSE, THE PLAYFUL COMPETITION DURING OUR TRIVIA GAMES ALL MAKE THE LEAD COMMUNITY FEEL LIKE A FAMILY, AND I COULD NOT BE HAPPIER TO BE A PART OF IT!”

YASINE BACCOUCHE, '23

“I TRULY HAD A GREAT TIME AT THE LARGE MONTHLY LEAD MEETINGS, WHERE I COULD ENGAGE WITH MY FELLOW LEAD SCHOLARS IN NEW, FUN WAYS. I THINK THAT THE LEAD ADVISORY BOARD HAS DONE A FANTASTIC JOB OF PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET WITH ONE ANOTHER, EVEN IN ZOOM FORMAT.”

JUAN CERESA, '24



“I HAVE MET A LOT OF AMAZING LEAD SCHOLARS AT EVENTS, AND WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TALK ABOUT OUR MAJORS, LIFE EXPERIENCES AND FUTURE HOPES. IT’S BEEN AN INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE!”

GENESIS GRANT, '24

VICTORIA ANDRIESSEN '18

After graduating from U-M in 2018, Victoria Andriessen set out to begin her career at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in reproductive epidemiology research. Now, as she applies for medical school and continues her career at NIH researching adult and pediatric endocrinology, she's also engaging with her community and connecting to a deeper calling. **She shares how her LEAD experience shaped her and prepared her for this experience—and how your gifts made it all possible.**

“During the pandemic, like many of us, I was feeling very powerless. My partner heard about the Virginia Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), and I immediately jumped at the opportunity. I knew it would allow me to support public health initiatives within Arlington County and potentially be deployed to help in places affected by natural disasters. **After being a LEAD scholar, the opportunity to be part of another organization with such a community-oriented mission really spoke to me.**

“I started as a volunteer in June 2020, helping with the mass COVID-19 testing site. In January 2021, I joined the MRC staff as the volunteer coordinator, and we began our vaccination clinic. The people that I work with—clinic leadership and community volunteers—are so focused on creating a solution and making these services free, accessible, and equitable to all within the community. It's a very altruistic experience, and it's so rewarding to see the tangible difference these efforts make.

“I JUST WANT TO
THANK YOU FOR
PROVIDING A SPACE
FOR SCHOLARS
TO BECOME
BETTER HUMANS
WHEN THE WORLD
NEEDS THEM MOST.”

“I meet and work with new volunteers and patients from all different backgrounds, so I need to know how to approach every situation differently; **LEAD taught me those really critical skills.** Serving on the LEAD Advisory Board was one of my first experiences in a leadership position, and **it taught me how to address the needs of others and diversify my communication style, which made me a more effective leader.** In LEAD, we gave each other the grace to be honest and open about



Victoria Andriessen '18
Arlington, VA | Major: Biopsychology, Cognition, and Neuroscience

needing support in any way; because of that, I'm seeing how I can approach my volunteers to help them feel supported. I work with clinic leadership to empower and support our volunteers, and they turn around and offer that same support to the greater Arlington community. Together, we're creating a cycle of service and support.

"I don't think I would have these abilities if not for the people I met along the way and the

opportunities I gained through LEAD. That's the most incredible domino effect there is.

"I want to thank you for giving me a space where I could learn and gain skills that aren't teachable in a classroom and for supporting my academic endeavors as I pursued my education. **I just want to thank you for providing a space for scholars to become better humans when the world needs them most.**"

WOLVERINES, VICTORS, THE LEADERS AND BEST, LEAD SCHOLARS

Above all, these students are remarkable people with a breadth of talents, making a difference in their community at U-M and beyond. As the world's next generation of leaders, their accomplishments reflect how incredible they truly are, and their plans for the future show how far their dreams reach.

The following is a peek inside some of their lives that demonstrates some of the amazing things LEAD scholars have been dedicating themselves to as they work toward becoming University of Michigan alumni.

**SEE HOW THEIR STORIES ARE
UNFOLDING AS THE AMAZING,
KIND, AND TALENTED HUMANS
YOU ENABLE THEM TO BE.**



JUAN MARQUEZ, '21 | PRODUCER OF A VIDEO FOR GIVING BLUE DAY, U-M'S ANNUAL DAY OF GIVING



“PERFORMING ‘DRACULA’ VIRTUALLY AS A RADIO DRAMA WITH THE STUDENT-RUN THEATER GROUP RC PLAYERS WAS A COMPLETELY NEW, BUT REALLY FUN EXPERIENCE FOR ME. IT WAS A GREAT WAY TO KEEP BUSY AND ENGAGED WITH THE ARTS DURING THE PANDEMIC.”

MARIA LOCICERO, '21

Recipient of the Residential College's "Robbie" award for outstanding achievement in the creative arts and the "Charlie" award for exhibiting the spirit of RC.



RONNIE ALVAREZ, '21

Recipient of a Martin Luther King Jr. Spirit Award for exemplifying the leadership and extraordinary vision of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

MARC YBARRA, '21 | CAPTAIN OF THE U-M MEN'S SOCCER TEAM AND NOMINATED FOR THE NCAA MEN'S SOCCER SENIOR CLASS AWARD





KHALIF ADEGEYE, '22

Freelance photography business owner and leader of a team across the U.S., China, and Singapore on a project through U-M's optiMize program, which focuses on tackling mental health issues faced by young adults



“RECEIVING THE LEAD SCHOLARSHIP MEANS A LOT TO ME AS A FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT COMING FROM DETROIT BECAUSE IT ALLOWS ME TO WORK ON MYSELF AND BETTER THE COMMUNITY AROUND ME WITHOUT HAVING TO WORRY ABOUT FINANCIAL STABILITY.”

RYAN NOBLE, '24

Vice president of The Original Dreamers, a nonprofit that provides mentoring for young students to help them build initiatives in their communities

SAMANTHA RIOS, '23 | CAST MEMBER IN A SOCIALLY DISTANCED, FILMED VERSION OF “NEWSIES IN CONCERT” WITH THE U-M STUDENT-RUN MUSICAL THEATER ORGANIZATION MUSKET





DANIELLE TAYLOR, '24
Program assistant for Q.U.E.E.N.S., a sisterhood built to support young black girls in the Cornerstone School System

JALEN MASSEY, '21 | STUDENT MANAGER FOR U-M MEN'S BASKETBALL



THOMAS (TEX) BONASERA, '22
Music director for the Epsilon Chapter of Phi Mu Alpha, accepted into the Berlin Opera Academy



“ I COULD NOT BE IN SUCH A SUCCESSFUL POSITION WITHOUT THE HELP OF LEAD, AND, FOR THAT, I AM ETERNALLY GRATEFUL.”

JORDAN NWOGU, '21
Third-round pick in the 2020 MLB draft, started training with the Chicago Cubs as a left fielder and designated hitter while finishing his degree

EDMUND BLACK III, '23 | MEMBER OF THE MICHIGAN MARCHING BAND AND LEAD ADVISORY BOARD





“ I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTAKE IN WORK THAT AIMED TO EMPOWER THE LATINX/HISPANIC COMMUNITY IN STEM HERE AT MICHIGAN, SPECIFICALLY DURING THESE TIMES WHERE A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT WAS DIFFICULT FOR MANY STUDENTS. UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF A SUPPORT SYSTEM THROUGH MY EXPERIENCES IN THE LEAD SCHOLARS PROGRAM, MY ULTIMATE MISSION WAS TO PROVIDE SHPE MEMBERS A SIMILAR SUPPORT SYSTEM, A FAMILIA, WITH THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF PROVIDING THEM THE RESOURCES FOR CONTINUOUS ACADEMIC, PROFESSIONAL, AND PERSONAL GROWTH.”

JOCEYLN ORTIZ, '21

President of SHPE (Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers)



“ THANKFULLY, MY LEAD EXPERIENCE OVERLAPPED WITH MY BSU EXPERIENCE; THE SAME BLACK STUDENTS THAT I MET AT MY FIRST LEAD RETREAT BECAME FAMILIAR FACES IN BSU MEETINGS. AS SPEAKER, I WAS ABLE TO GIVE BACK AND WORK FOR THOSE SAME BEAUTIFUL, BLACK, TALENTED FOLKS, AND LET ME TELL YOU, THERE IS NO BETTER FEELING.”

THOMAS VANCE, '21

Speaker of the Black Student Union



MEN OF COLOR IN LEADERSHIP

Your support gives male scholars an opportunity to gather in a space where they can talk about their professional experiences and endeavors as men of color. The third annual Men of Color in LEADership event was hosted virtually this year with a special focus: prioritizing self-care and creating balance

during a difficult time. Scholars and guests spent the afternoon engaging in a Q&A with panelists Ryan Mundy, '07, former Michigan football player; Paul Viera, '81, Alumni Association board member and founder and CEO of EARNEST Partners; and Martino Harmon, vice president of student life at U-M.



“EVERYTHING THAT WAS DISCUSSED AT THE MEN IN LEADERSHIP EVENT WAS VERY INSIGHTFUL, AND IT WAS BENEFICIAL TO HEAR THE TOPIC OF MENTAL HEALTH DISCUSSED SO OPENLY. ESPECIALLY AMONG MEN, THE TOPIC OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUCH DISCUSSIONS HAS BEEN GREATLY STIGMATIZED AND LOOKED DOWN UPON, BUT CONVERSATIONS LIKE THESE ARE VERY REWARDING AND I COULDN'T BE MORE APPRECIATIVE FOR THE LEAD TEAM HOSTING SUCH AN EVENT.”

YASINE BACCOUCHE '23




“EVENTS LIKE MEN IN LEADERSHIP HELP ME FEEL LIKE LEAD IS NOT ONLY SUPPORTING ME FINANCIALLY, BUT ALSO IN OTHER AREAS OF MY LIFE IN ORDER TO HELP ME SUCCEED. I THINK BEING ABLE TO HAVE DISCUSSIONS WITH OTHERS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH WAS EMPOWERING BECAUSE IT IS NOT A TOPIC THAT IS COMMONLY DISCUSSED SO OPENLY, BUT HAVING THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ABOUT IT REALLY HELPS YOU SEE THAT EVERYONE HAS WEAKNESSES AND WORKING TOGETHER TO ADDRESS THEM IS A POWERFUL TOOL. ALTHOUGH IT IS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO ENGAGE IN THE COMMUNITY DURING COVID-19 AND A VIRTUAL SCHOOL YEAR MADE IT DIFFICULT TO MEET OTHER LEAD SCHOLARS, I DO THINK THIS EVENT HELPED ME FEEL CLOSER TO THE LEAD COMMUNITY IN GENERAL. I APPRECIATE EVERYTHING THAT LEAD HAS DONE FOR ME AND THE OTHER LEAD SCHOLARS.”

JOSH GORDON, '23







“FOR AS LONG AS I COULD REMEMBER, I WAS EXCITED ABOUT ATTENDING COLLEGE, BUT I THOUGHT COVID-19 WOULD ROB ME OF A GREAT FRESHMAN YEAR. I WAS COMPLETELY WRONG! **THROUGH LEAD, I’VE HAD SOME OF THE MOST AMAZING EXPERIENCES AND HAVE MET SOME OF THE MOST AMAZING PEOPLE THAT I WILL REMEMBER FOR A LIFETIME. I CAN’T WAIT TO MAKE MORE MEMORIES IN THE YEARS TO COME!”**

LAUREN LOTT, '24



TIMMY THOMPSON '23

Timmy Thompson knows this much is true: without LEAD, he wouldn't be at the university of his dreams studying the major of his dreams at the School of Music, Theatre & Dance. Not only have you made such an incredible financial impact, but you also provide a strong community of peers, faculty, and alumni with opportunities for students like him to branch out.

He shares how **his biggest dreams and achievements have come to fruition because of the support system he's established and the opportunities he's discovered through LEAD.**

"This past semester, I decided to write my own short film. **I wanted to make something**

meaningful, because as a Black LGBTQ person from a predominantly white town, I'm always looking for stories I can relate to. I wrote 'Only Have Eyes for You' as a love story about a quirky, naive, Black, queer college student exploring his sexuality and dating experience.

"The Department of Film, Television, and Media sent out a mass email on my behalf looking for people interested in helping produce the film and so many LEAD Scholars responded, including one with a particular passion for art direction and telling diverse stories. **It was amazing to see how many people from LEAD wanted to help bring my story to life.** I suddenly had a team of creative minds and funding from four different grants provided by University units and programs. Filming took place over a weekend in April, and it's now in post-production. When it's complete, we'll find ways to distribute it and navigate the local film festival circuit.

"This was an amazing learning opportunity for me, and I want other students to see what's possible with the right support, the kind of support I get from LEAD. **The LEAD community reminds me that there are so many diverse people to learn from, and it inspires me to seek out other opportunities to make my voice heard.**

"I was in my hometown last summer during the peak of the Black Lives Matter protests. Being part of the town's 2% Black population, my friend and I thought our worries about this scary climate were something the community needed to hear, so we organized a peaceful

**“YOU ARE
MAKING DREAMS
COME TRUE BY
ALLOWING US
TO MATERIALIZE
THOSE DREAMS
INTO REALITY.”**



*Timmy Thompson '23
Wayne, NJ | Major: Musical Theatre
Prospective Minor: Performing Arts Management and Entrepreneurship (PAE)*

march with the help of the local theater community. Nearly 2,000 people showed up, including aspiring performing artists, speakers and singers from churches and universities, and Assemblywoman Shavonda E. Sumter.

“After the march, we arranged biweekly roundtables with Assemblywoman Sumter and a few local police forces to talk about policy change, even touching on things being introduced at the legislative level.

“My passion and confidence to help enact these efforts tie directly back to LEAD. I’ve learned so much about my identity and how

to embrace being a person of color. You need exposure to experiences and great leaders because both teach you to be proactive, to love yourself, and how to carry yourself in your skin. **These are the gifts you have given me with the LEAD community.**

“Simply put: I would not be here without your support, and so many of my friends who are also doing these amazing things wouldn’t be here either, **so thank you—that can’t be said enough. You are making dreams come true by allowing us to materialize those dreams into reality.**”

A GROUNDBREAKING GIFT FOR THE LEAD SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Historic changes and more transformative support for students like Timmy Thompson are unfolding after the LEAD Scholars program received the largest gift in its history—\$2.5 million from the Patricia W. Mitchell Trust.

The gift honors the legacy of Columbia Pictures Television founder John H. Mitchell, '39, and his wife, Patricia Mitchell. It will continue their commitment to **fostering ethical leadership, equal opportunities, and a diverse landscape within the film and television industry.** The Alumni Association matched the gift and created three funds to support various components of the LEAD Scholars program—scholarship aid, professional development, and community engagement to support LEAD scholars pursuing careers in entertainment, media, or business.


This gift is invaluable for minority students who historically don't have the same access, networks, and resources to pursue careers in this industry. Timmy says this support is going to have a deep impact on students, making their career pursuits feel less like a dream and more like a real possibility.

"This makes my heart sing. We need to know that there are people in this industry who are just like us achieving the very dream we're chasing. **Having this exposure and access is going to make a huge difference; it's going to show us that there is a path and give us a road map on how to get there.**"



“THIS GIFT IS GOING TO MAKE OPPORTUNITIES SO MUCH MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR LEAD STUDENTS LIKE ME — MAKING IT IN THE INDUSTRY IS GOING TO SEEM LESS LIKE A DREAM AND MORE LIKE A REAL POSSIBILITY.”

TIMMY THOMPSON, '23



**THANK YOU
FOR MAKING
A WORLD OF
DIFFERENCE
IN THE STORIES
OF OUR LEAD
SCHOLARS.
EVERY SINGLE
GIFT HELPS A
NEW CHAPTER
UNFOLD.**

HATS OFF TO YOU

“JUST THE MERE FACT THAT YOU INVEST IN STUDENTS LIKE ME TO CONTINUE THE MICHIGAN LEGACY IS AMAZING. NOT ONLY ARE YOU GIVING US FINANCIAL SUPPORT SO WE CAN FOLLOW OUR DREAMS, BUT YOU’RE GIVING US THE GIFT OF A FOREVER FAMILY.”

HUNTER PHELPS, '21

For more information on LEAD, please visit alumni.umich.edu/LEAD

