

URBAN STUDIES UPDATE



Fall 2023

Newsletter for Alumni and Friends

Director's Letter

Dear USP Community,

Welcome to fall semester! It's actually still June as I write this letter – the production of these newsletters takes more advance time than you would think – so I have no tales to tell about my family's summer adventures, which are mostly planned for August. But we are looking forward to trips to the West Coast and Colorado that will hopefully recharge our batteries before the semester starts.

Things at USP are continuing to return to normal as the pandemic recedes, and we are back to hosting in-person events open to the public. We held our State of Milwaukee Summit last fall for the first time since 2019. Our topic was Covid-19 and Racial Equity in Milwaukee: What Have We Learned and Where Do We Go from Here? Speakers included Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson, Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley, Greater Milwaukee Foundation President Ellen Gilligan, and Greater Milwaukee Committee President Joel Brennan. Coordinating the schedules of these movers and shakers was a major challenge, but it was a great night for USP.



We also held our Student Research Forum last spring for the first time in several years, featuring keynote speaker Claire Dunning, who gave a great talk on her recent book, *Nonprofit Neighborhoods: An Urban History of Inequality and the American State*. Also on the program was a documentary film by USP master's student **Nateya Taylor** focusing on Milwaukee public artist Muneer Bahauddeen, and a panel discussion on community collaboration and methods of urban research moderated by Associate Professor of History, Architecture, and Urban Studies **Arijit Sen**.

A warm welcome to our incoming graduate students, whose profiles you can view on the following pages. This cohort includes several students from the Milwaukee area along with three students from Iran. Please make them feel welcome.

A few changes have been made to **Jamie Harris'** title and job duties that everyone should know about. He will continue to serve as associate director of USP, but his official title is now Teaching Associate Professor. The program faculty voted unanimously at last spring's meeting to extend faculty voting rights to Jamie, to allow him to serve on thesis and dissertation committees, and to teach U/G courses for graduate credit. Long overdue!

On a sad note, we recently learned that former USP and sociology professor **Ann Greer** passed away last spring. Ann was an active and long-time member of the USP faculty until her retirement in 2011. She did research and taught courses in the area of health policy and served as advisor to many USP graduate students, with whom she was very popular. Many of us who have been around for a while remember Ann for her quick smile and lively presence at USP social events, which she made a point of regularly attending. A full obituary can be found here. <https://uwm.edu/sociology/news/ann-greer-professor-emerita-in-the-sociology-department-passed-away-in-april-2023/>

I'll close with a word of thanks to our awesome program alumni. We have received generous donations from many of you this past year and for that we are deeply grateful. Your gifts to USP allow us to provide research grants to graduate students to help them complete fieldwork and other research activities for which extra funding is needed. Every dollar helps. Please consider making a contribution this year. As always, thanks for your support for USP.

Best wishes for a happy, healthy, and productive year.

A handwritten signature of Joel Rast in black ink.

Joel Rast
Director
Urban Studies Programs

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Program Updates from the Associate Director

Please join me in congratulating our graduates!



Dr. Jamie Harris

Undergraduate Students

Rakeem Brown, BA

Nathaneal Hemze, BA, *Magna Cum Laude*

Natalie Hernandez, BA, *Cum Laude*. See Spotlight on page 7.

Neena Lewis, BA, *Magna Cum Laude*

Samantha Lopez, BA

Cameron Neubauer, Certificate, *Honors in the Major, Magna Cum Laude*

Eli Norlander, BA, *Honors in the Major, Magna Cum Laude*

Rachel Oelsner, BA, *Honors in the Major, Summa Cum Laude*

Juan Olmos-Garcia, BA

Ann Seigfreid, BA, *Magna Cum Laude*

Hunter Turpin, BA, *Magna Cum Laude*

Henry Wehrs, BA, *Honors in the Major, Summa Cum Laude*

Graduate Students

Tathagato Chakraborty, PhD, (Advisor: Marcus Britton) Dissertation Title: "Designing to (De) Concentrate: An Analysis of Poverty Deconcentration Goals in Qualified Allocation Plans." See Spotlight on page 6.

Melissa DeNomie, PhD, (Advisor: Anne Bonds) Dissertation Title: "How Effective is Community-Engaged Research at Addressing Food Challenges? A Qualitative Examination of Perspectives of Academic and Community-Based Researchers."

Dameon Ellzey, Master's degree, (Advisor: Anne Bonds), Paper Title: "The Chat: A Program to Support Black Male Mental Health."

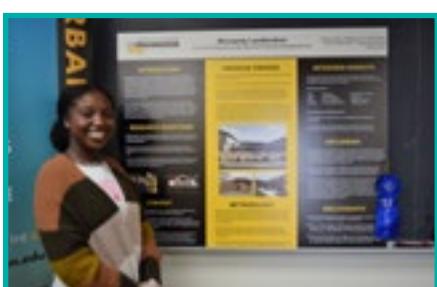
Madeline O'Dea Fruehe, Master's degree, (Advisor: Amanda I. Seligman) Thesis Title: "The Context and the Commissioner: The Effect of Milwaukee's Health Commissioners' Social, Cultural, and Historical Understanding of Milwaukee's People During the Last Five Pandemics."

Milika Miller, PhD, (Advisor: Doug Ihrke) Dissertation Title: "Evaluating the Impact of Program Evaluation."

Kacee Ochalek, Master's degree, (Advisor: Joel Rast) Thesis Title: "The Evergreen Challenges of Healing: An Evaluation of Urban Green Space in Harambee."

Sai Sun, PhD, (Advisor: Lingqian Hu) Dissertation Title: "Reaching Non-work Destinations: Accessibility and Its Impacts on Travel Behavior."

Nateya Taylor, Master's degree, (Advisor: Amanda I. Seligman) Thesis Title: "Black Autonomy as a Form of Resistance and a Symbol of Rebellion: A Comparative Study of Robbins, Illinois, and Milwaukee Bronzeville (1920-1970)." See Spotlight on page 7.



Neena Lewis

Undergraduate Awards

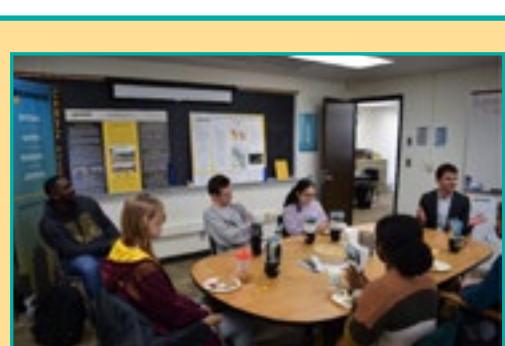
Urban Studies major **Neena Lewis** won the Undergraduate Student Best Poster Award for: "Monopoly Landlordism: The Tenant Experience with Berrada Properties Management Inc." **Eli Norlander** received an honorable mention for his poster, "LLC Takeover: The Financialization of Milwaukee's Rental Markets".



Yuchen Zhao

Graduate Awards

Yuchen Zhao, PhD Candidate in Urban Studies, received the Graduate Student Best Poster Award for: "Exploring the Foodway in Milwaukee: A Case Study in Midtown Neighborhood". **Russell Star-Lack** received an honorable mention for: "Community Control, But at Whose Cost: Neighborhood Improvement Districts in Neoliberal Milwaukee".



Capstone Last Class
Reception & Speaker, Spring 2023

The last Capstone Seminar class included a visit from urban studies alum, **Trevor Jung**, BA '17, who is the current Transit Director for the City of Racine and previously served on the Racine Common Council and Plan Commission.



25th Annual Student Research Forum



Dr. Arijit Sen & Liam Farin



Nateya Taylor



Dr. Claire Dunning



Presenter **Russell Star-Lack** and attendees during the poster session

The Urban Studies' 25th Annual Student Research Forum returned after a three-year hiatus to showcase student research posters, panel presentations on community collaborations and urban research, and scholarship on the history of "nonprofit neighborhoods" and urban inequality.

Part of the afternoon event included a panel presentation titled, "Community Collaborations and Methods of Urban Research," moderated by Prof. **Arijit Sen** (Architecture & Urban Studies) and with presentations on the Cherry Street Community Garden project in the Midtown neighborhood by his field school students: **Liam Farin** (BA student, Urban Studies & Undergraduate Fellow), **Maria Francis** (PhD student, Urban Studies and Urban Studies PA), **Hidayah Osman** (BS Student, Architecture & Undergraduate Fellow), and **Yuchen Zhao**, (PhD Candidate, Urban Studies).

Nateya Taylor (MS Student in Urban Studies & the 2021- 2022 Urban Studies Racial Justice Community Project Grantee) presented her 15 minute documentary that she directed, wrote, narrated, and edited, titled: "The Good Land: Muneer Bahauddeen – Vision" and held a talk back following the screening. The documentary examines the life and work of a Milwaukee public artist and which emphasizes the need to showcase more of the positive changes that are happening in Milwaukee's Black community. It can be viewed here. <https://youtu.be/2aTT-Vm01QQ>

This year's keynote speaker was Dr. Claire Dunning, an historian and Assistant Professor at the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland, College Park. She is the author of **Nonprofit Neighborhoods: An Urban History of Inequality and the American State** (University of Chicago Press, 2022). The title of her talk: "Nonprofit Neighborhoods: Solving Urban Problems in Public and Private" discussed the federal government shift in funding and urban governance to nonprofits in the 1960s, and the ways that influenced political and economic activity and shaped urban inequality for decades to come. A reception followed the address.

This year's dissertation research grant awardees were acknowledged at the Student Research Forum's Award Ceremony, and include **Xiaohan Gu** for her dissertation, "Travel Experience on and Satisfaction with Public Transit among Older Adults in Milwaukee County," and **Yuchen Zhao**, for his dissertation, "Navigating the Modern Food Landscape of a Segregated Neighborhood: A Close Study of Cherry Street Community Garden."



Xiaohan Gu Accepting Award from Dr. Jamie Harris

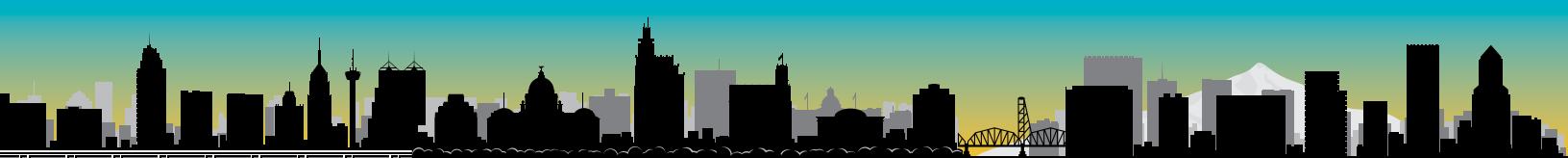
Internship Highlight



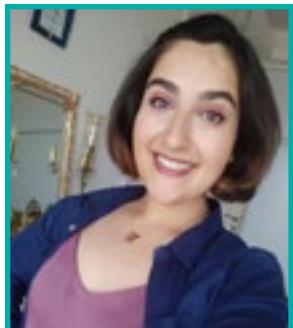
Ryan Lawrence

Urban studies major **Ryan Lawrence** recounts his experience interning at the City of Milwaukee Mayor's Office last spring semester. He describes his time working in city government as "a rewarding experience that teaches you many aspects of local governance, office work, and building personal relationships." Many of his tasks involved community outreach in the form of written official mayoral correspondence, constituent services, and helping staff in performing governmental work. "The internship is a great entry point to learning about government and its functions and to provide useful career and life skills. And the experience has helped to solidify my plans to one day run for public office in my hometown of Baraboo, Wisconsin".





Incoming Graduate Students



Sana Avar (PhD Student)

I am a PhD student from Iran. I received my master's degree in urban design and my bachelor's degree in urban planning. I have always tried to have a versatile character, as I care about music, playing the piano and Hang drum. I am a photographer, I am into playing tennis and swimming professionally, I am a travel and nature lover and also, I have an eye in fashion. I have always been interested in cities and their histories since I was a teenager during my school years. I enthusiastically spent my free time wandering in my hometown and exploring hidden aspects of urban spaces such as streets. My focus in my field is public spaces design and analysis. Through my work experience and education, I realized that I cannot just design a public area based on the solid principles learned in university. Various contributors to a proper design, including the social-cultural contexts, must be addressed. Indeed, participating with local people in all design stages and doing ethnographic research on the regions are integral parts of designing a public space. In drawing things to a close, I have always desired to have a pivotal role in designing better and more inclusive spaces helping vulnerable people, including women, and exploring city transformation over time. I want to pursue my academic efforts to discover the mutual effects of public space for its users over time because a place can undergo numerous social-spatial transformations and take various titles, meanings, and roles in urban discourse.



Maryam Karbasi Dehkharghani (PhD Student)

I obtained my master's degree in Architecture from Bilkent University in 2021 under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Giorgio Gasco. My master thesis topic was "Public Life of Urban Squares: A Human Behavior Study of Kizilay and Ulus Square." This research made me study people's public behavior (Sitting, Standing, Walking) in urban areas based on the effective qualities of spaces like visual aesthetics, psychological comfort, and morphological attributes. Growing up in an artistic family gave me inner talent in both painting and visual perception. This is why I found that studying architecture at university can satisfy my imagination of space, material, and color. I graduated with a bachelor's degree in Architectural Engineering from Tabriz University, Iran. During my BS studies, I got fascinated by theories about the aesthetical qualities of the environment.

This led me to bring my focus on the visual characteristics of space for my final project, in which I tried to experiment theory of "Serial Vision" by Gordon Cullen in an urban park. Since then, my research interest has been focused on promenade architecture, visual aesthetics of urban spaces, urban morphology, urban walking, human behavior in public spaces, space syntax, and human-centered urban design. I got fascinated by the comprehensive training PhD program in Urban Studies, the research profile of faculty members and the variety of courses offered by the University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee. This insured me that the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee can be a perfect option for me to build my future as an academician. I am very excited to pursue PhD degree in Urban Studies program.



Sinai Mendoza-Zarate (Master's Student)

I was born in Oaxaca, Mexico, in a small town where people are lively, and generous, where you can breathe clean air and drink pure water. However, economic disparities have pushed people out of their hometowns in search of better lives. My migration story began in 2004 when my mom decided to pack her bags and move to Milwaukee in search of a better horizon; a couple of years after that, I joined her. I attended a charter school in the heart of the Southside of Milwaukee and graduated with a bachelor's in International Business from the Cardinal Stritch in 2018. During my undergrad, I found my voice and began my advocacy journey on different issues such as environmentalism, economic disparities, immigration, race, and women's rights. I based my work on intersectionality and interconnections of beings. I am currently the owner of Ladi Nayaase,

an organic, sustainable beauty brand whose mission is to bring healing to women of color and the planet through the acknowledgment of caring for our bodies. As an undocumented citizen, I've navigated systems that are not welcoming to people like me. However, I have not let that stop me from entering spaces and advocating for my community. This fall, I will join the Urban Studies Program, which I hope will prepare me to continue learning, advocating, and studying the complexities of my undocumented community. I hope to focus on the economic impact this community plays in the development of our city and dive deep into the lack of resources available for this community to thrive. In my free time, I love to run and hike. I am a daughter, a wife, and a mom to a 3-year-old German Shepherd.



Incoming Graduate Students Cont'd



Jack Rongstad (Master's Student)

I graduated from the UWM with a Bachelor of Arts in Urban Studies. The program encouraged an interdisciplinary approach, valued qualitative research, and taught practical skills that are valuable in the nonprofit world. The faculty also emphasized the importance of understanding history as a tool for understanding contemporary urban problems. As someone with a passion for history, this helped me thrive in the program. My senior thesis focused on Milwaukee's Mitchell Park and the massive mid-century conservatories (the Domes) within the park. No comprehensive history of Mitchell Park or the Domes existed, despite their monumentality and the increasingly urgent need to address the crumbling structures. I later had the privilege of presenting a portion of my honors thesis at the 2022 Urban Affairs Association (UAA) conference in Washington, D.C., which was a highly impactful experience. By concentrating on

Urban/Metro Economic Development, I hope to refine my writing, data collection, and data analysis skills while expanding my historical research through the use of place as a lens to understand urban change. More generally, I am someone who has always been drawn to activism and is deeply passionate about social justice. In 2020, I met with like-minded students to found a UWM chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). I have planned numerous events and marches, both on and off campus. Currently, I spend much of my free time organizing with a national group that provides political education through several online courses.



Fatemeh 'Darya' Salehi Mava (PhD Student)

I am Darya Salehi, an Iranian woman specializing in urban planning and urban design. In fall 2023, I will begin a doctoral program in urban studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. With a bachelor's degree in urban planning engineering and a master's degree in urban design from Tarbiat Modares University of Tehran, Iran, a doctorate is the continuation of the journey that I started in 2011. During my bachelor's thesis, I extensively explored and designed the urban spatial structure and environmental efficiency within the historical district of the city, aiming to enhance mental and physical well-being as well as economic mobility. During my master's program, I acquired valuable knowledge and expanded my horizons through leadership in large-scale urban initiatives centered on designing and planning affordable houses, public spaces, and a road network that was guided by community priorities and placed a strong

emphasis on sustainability. Additionally, I had the distinction of being the first female researcher in Iran to employ both quantitative and qualitative methods in evaluating the reciprocal influence of different public spaces and social activities within segregated communities characterized by low-income levels and high crime rates. This research endeavor spanned a duration of two years and was undertaken for the purpose of my thesis. I began my professional career in January 2019, as manager of the urban design section of Karmani Urban Planning and Architecture Company. In addition to architectural projects, I have completed several urban renewal and regeneration projects incorporating community asset-based development as a means of creating social equity and economic growth in segregated neighborhoods. Therefore, I am particularly interested in topics including democratic place-making, social equity, public space, social and economic sustainability, neighborhood segregation, community-based planning, and urban policies-economic mobility. In the end, it provided a general overview of my academic and professional life, and I believe that during my doctoral program at the UWM we will take another significant step towards achieving a sustainable and healthy community for all members of society.

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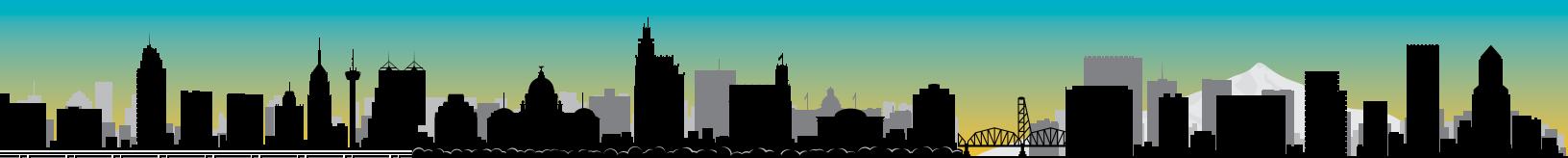
Check out the Fall 2023 issue <https://people.uwm.edu/epolis/>

SEE STUDENT, FACULTY, AND ALUMNI NEWS AT:

<https://uwm.edu/urban-studies/category/news/>



USP Alums, Jamison Ellis & Isabella Rieke were married in January.



Events Recap - Out and About with Urban Studies

2023 Urban Affairs Association Conference in Nashville, TN



Students at UAA



Roundtable with USP students & faculty



Tathagato Chakraborty Presenting at the UAA

Urban Studies Milwaukee Summit: Covid-19 and Racial Equity in Milwaukee: What Have We Learned and Where Do We Go From Here?



Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson



R-L J. Rast, Mayor Johnson, Mke Cty Executive David Crowley, Ellen M. Gilligan, Joel Brennan



Q & A at Summit

Alumni - In Their Own Words



Tathagato Chakraborty, PhD '23

As an international student from India, my experience within the Urban Studies Programs (USP) has been nothing short of transformative. The program's interdisciplinary approach has opened up a world of opportunities for research on one hand, and on the other, the teaching experience as a graduate TA has enriched my academic journey. Throughout my doctoral studies, I have been fortunate to have the guidance and support of exceptional USP teachers and scholars who have consistently challenged me intellectually, guided me academically, and offered valuable professional mentorship and networking. Their unwavering dedication has played a pivotal role in shaping my growth as a researcher and academic.

My dissertation focused on examining the role of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) in expanding socio-spatial opportunities for low-income renters. Employing a mixed-methods approach, my research

explored the evolution of opportunity within housing policy using qualitative methods, as well as the spatial reorganization of LIHTC based on policy changes using quantitative methods. Drawing from various disciplines such as sociology, geography, urban planning, urban economics, and public policy, I aimed to shed light on issues of racial justice and equity within the realm of socio-spatial opportunity.

What truly sets USP apart is the exceptional collaborative environment and the accessibility of experts in almost every field of urban research. USP provided me with exceptional opportunities for collaboration with allied programs, which have significantly impacted my career trajectory. Notably, I gained hands-on experience in developing and implementing a microtransit solution alongside the Urban Planning faculty, and I created an Opportunity Index for the Metro Milwaukee area for the Center for Economic Development. These collaborative research experiences have fostered a passion for interdisciplinary work and played a crucial role in shaping my career.



Alumni - In Their Own Words - Cont'd



Nateya Taylor, MS '23

My time at USP has been lifechanging in the best way. This program was the stepping stone that helped me determine where I wanted to go in my career. Its interdisciplinary curriculum and flexibility allowed me to explore all my intersecting interests in Black communities, film, and photography. The summer after completing my first year in the program, I added on a graduate certificate in Digital Cultures to my Urban Studies degree where I took film and photography classes to enhance my technical skills behind the camera and tell visual stories about urban communities. I am thankful that USP also helped me enhance my skills as a visual storyteller by selecting me for the Racial Justice Community Project Grant in 2022, which helped fund a documentary film series titled "The Good Land" that I created about Black leaders creating positive change in Milwaukee. Another pivotal moment in the program was completing my master's thesis titled "Black Autonomy as a Form of Resistance and a Symbol of Rebellion: A Comparative Study of Robbins, Illinois, and Milwaukee Bronzeville (1920-1970)." The thesis is an interdisciplinary study at the intersection of history, geography, and sociology. Through archival research and secondary data analysis, the thesis explores how two majority Black communities in the Midwest practiced resistance through Black autonomous practices in response to racial discrimination during the Great Migration.

Now that I've graduated, I am working as a Communications Specialist at the Institute for Research on Poverty at UW-Madison where I help disseminate nationwide poverty research through writing, audio, and visual storytelling. Simultaneously, I independently work as a multimedia storyteller, creating documentary films and other projects centered around Black history, culture, and wellness for the business I founded, Naesthetycs LLC. Eventually, I would like to return to school to pursue a PhD in either African American Studies, Public History, or Urban Studies. I will definitely consider USP when that time comes. I am thankful for the amazing experience I had the last 2 years in this program.



Natalie Hernandez, BA '23

One of the best decisions I've ever made was to trust myself and change my major to Urban Studies with a certificate in Urban Planning because it allowed me to gain skills and experiences that have shaped my academic, career, and personal goals. As a first-generation student amid a global pandemic, changing majors felt like a critical decision but I'm glad I made the switch! The major's interdisciplinary approach allowed me to enroll in classes that best align with my career goals and skills that I wanted to strengthen. The faculty played an important role in my academic success by being supportive and engaging, especially **Jamie Harris, Kirk Harris, and Amanda I. Seligman**. The major requires a capstone course in which students create their own research project. My project focused on the cultural history and identity of the Cesar Chavez Drive Business Improvement District (BID), located in the south side of Milwaukee. My methodology consisted of an

interview with the BID's current executive director, Azael Flores, as well as examining a variety of documents regarding the Chavez BID. The research project was a great learning experience, and the capstone class played a critical role in preparing me to confidently conduct this research.

As for post-graduation plans, I will continue my internship at the City of Milwaukee Department of Public Works - Transportation Operations Unit, until the end of the summer. In the fall I'm going to New York City for a 9-month long fellowship, NYC Urban Fellows, in which I will be placed with an agency that works with the NYC government to learn about public policy through a hands-on approach.

Thank You for Supporting Student Research!

All of us would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our donors whose gifts go directly to support student research.

Anonymous

Aaron (MS '79) & Francis M. Wolfe Bertling

Dr. Gregory Carman (PhD '10)

Jeff Eagan (MS '78)

John C. Huethner (MS '69)

Kenneth Robinson (MS '80)

Dr. Linda F. Scheible (PhD '91)

James Sponholz (MS '89)

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