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Dear friends, neighbors and community members,

What a year 2021 has been, full of uncertainty and challenge, growth and collaboration, as we continue to navigate the pandemic and social change. We have a renewed sense of what we can accomplish working together and moving forward.



This is illustrated in the stories we share in this newsletter. Also, as we wrap up the year, we

are excited to once again hold commencement ceremonies for our current and recent graduates on campus on December 18 and 19.

The holiday season reminds us of the importance of community. I am grateful for the people in our community working together to make this a better place for everyone. I look forward to the new year and the exciting opportunities it will bring for us all.

Gratefully forward,

Kristin Sobolik  
Chancellor  
University of Missouri–St. Louis



## UMSL Accelerate announces second Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Accelerator cohort

Companies producing skincare, healthy food for children and babies, accessible digital spaces, branding for entrepreneurs of color and premium popcorn seem like they could have little in common. But the founders gathered at the University of Missouri–St. Louis for [the recent] announcement of the second Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Accelerator cohort had more in common than just the possibility of a \$50,000 nondilutive capital injection.

They all hope to create positive change – whether that comes from locating their business in traditionally underutilized neighborhoods or getting kids hooked on healthy foods – and the funding from UMSL will help get them to that goal quickly. “Being able to be supported by amazing leaders has changed the game for me and my views,” Valeria Rodriguez of VR Creative said. “Knowing that it’s OK to step out of your comfort zone and out of fear and just move into greatness. You know, these dreams are bigger than us, and we lead by example.” [Read more.](#)



## Leader of the St. Louis Avant-Garde: Artist Brock Seals' background fuels his ascent

Paint cans, sneakers and recording equipment saturate Brock Seals' studio in the Grove. On a top shelf sits a Lego action figure he designed of himself. The scene feels like controlled chaos, a merging of artistic styles befitting a man who works across mediums. The 2019 University of Missouri–St. Louis Department of Art and Design graduate is in full creative swing, no longer working a day job but instead supporting himself painting canvases, performing hip-hop and fashioning custom cleats for sports stars, such as Cardinals outfielder Harrison Bader.

Both book smart and street smart, Seals draws on a wide range of influences, from pop culture to ancient philosophy. Today wearing thin blond braids, a vintage KISS T-shirt, camo pants and sneakers running the color gamut, he's a walking visual statement who pushes boundaries. Having painted "REPARATIONS" in huge letters on the street by City Hall – as well as created roller skates that look like ice cream cones – his art is both political and commercially viable. "It involves a lot of reflecting on who I am, being from St. Louis and being Black, and my culture," he says. [Read more](#) about this former Jennings High School student and UMSL graduate.

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## Under new program, Ferguson judge says every day is amnesty day for minor traffic offenses

Fox2 News, by Elliott Davis, November 1, 2021

The City of Ferguson, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Justice, has come up with a new project to avoid issuing warrants for minor traffic offenses. Instead, the courts will just put a hold on driver's licenses, a hold that will be removed free of charge when the motorists show up in court. Ferguson just calls the Missouri Department of Revenue for the hold to be attached to the license.

Ferguson was the scene of weeks of civil unrest starting in Aug. 2014 over the death of Michael Brown Jr. That prompted a look at some of the underlying causes of the violence. Municipalities collecting millions of dollars in traffic fines and fees—mainly on the backs of the poor—was one of the problems. Ferguson Judge William Goldstein says the new procedure is meant to end that abuse. [Read more.](#)

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## Historic Ferguson church hires first Black pastor in 150-year history

KSDK News, by Pepper Baker, October 25, 2021

Pastor Kerry Allison is a few months into his new role as pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Ferguson. "Do a lot of work in community, congregational life, community organizing, working with notable national figures like Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton and really just had a concern for community and how to better community," Allison said.

Allison was a pastor in Los Angeles for 13 years. Now, he's making history as the church's first African-American senior pastor, preaching to a predominantly white, upper-class congregation. The church is 150 years old and once served over 1,000 congregation members. Now, they have about 125, but one of Pastor Allison's main goals is to bring more people to the church.

"One hundred fifty years ago was quite different from it is today. A lot of separation. Blacks didn't have an opportunity to worship here and now 150 years later to have an African American to lead this church, it says something about the church," Allison said. [Read more.](#)



**UMSL** | Economic and  
Community Development  
University of Missouri–St. Louis



## Meet the UMSL Economic & Community Development team

2021 has been a transformative year at UMSL. In the spring we celebrated the inauguration of Chancellor Kristin Sobolik. To better align and support the University's community work, she strategically expanded the Office of Research Administration to include Economic and Community Development under the leadership of Vice Chancellor Chris Spilling. Accordingly, a more cohesive team has come together to connect with the community through a variety of efforts. Working with colleagues and community partners across the region, team members include:

### Top Row (L to R)

- Chris Spilling, Vice Chancellor, Research, Economic and Community Development
- Karl Guenther, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Economic and Community Development
- Claire Rippel, Education Director, Community Development
- Betty Van Uum, Special Assistant for Public Affairs and Economic Development

### Bottom Row (L to R)

- Prima Wagan, Senior Manager, Economic Development Projects
- Stefani Weeden-Smith, Director of the St. Louis Area Anchor Network
- Patricia Zahn, Director of Community Engagement & Outreach

### Not pictured

- Tasnim Haq, Creating Whole Communities Program Manager

UMSL is an engaged community partner, driving economic opportunity and quality of life in the neighborhoods around campus and throughout the region, and maximizing economic and community impact. As a public university, UMSL is a resource and asset for the community. The University works closely with community leaders – residents, alumni, school district and government officials, and business owners – to consistently engage on key issues, lift up community assets, and make positive connections with university resources.

The team members are excited about new collaborations and opportunities to make a difference in the communities around campus and welcome ideas and conversation. The general email to reach any of them is [ecd@umsl.edu](mailto:ecd@umsl.edu) or by phone at (314) 516-4165.



## Betty Van Uum makes UMSL campus her legacy

Betty Van Uum was unsure exactly what her role would be when she started at the University of Missouri–St. Louis.

It was 1983, and then-Chancellor Arnold Grobman had invited her to join his staff as assistant to the chancellor for public affairs and economic development after a storied career in politics fighting for civil rights and women's equality.....Van Uum's impact on the university has only grown in the 38 years since while serving under seven permanent or interim chancellors.

In that time, she's helped facilitate every expansion on or off campus, leading impactful initiatives such as the negotiation to bring the UMSL North, UMSL South and N. Hanley MetroLink stations to the area and the funding of the Blanche M. Touhill Performing Arts Center. She led the reconstructions of I-70 – which helped UMSL attract Express Scripts' headquarters to campus – and then Natural Bridge, through the East-West Gateway Council of Governments Great Streets Initiative. [Read more.](#)

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## Share with Us

We'd love to hear your questions and comments about UMSL and stories about great things happening in our communities. Your thoughts will help shape content covered in future newsletters to be pertinent to you and your neighbors. Leave any suggestions, questions, or stories [here](#). Thank you!

### UMSL Community Connection newsletter

[Click here](#) to sign up for the community connection newsletter.

### UMSL Community Card

[Register](#) for a community card to receive benefits and discounts at UMSL events and facilities.

### UMSL Contracts

Interested in bidding on projects at UMSL?

[Procurement Bids](#)

[Construction Bids](#)

### Community Connect

[Click here](#) to learn about resources, services and programs at UMSL available to the community.

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## Events & Resources

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### 2021 UMSL Fall Commencement Ceremony

Saturday and Sunday, December 18-19  
Mark Twain Building at UMSL

#### Saturday, December 18:

8:30AM: College of Arts and Sciences I

1:00PM: College of Arts and Sciences II

6:00PM: College of Nursing, School of Social Work, Joint Undergraduate Engineering Program

#### Sunday, December 19:

8:30AM: College of Business I

1:00PM: College of Business II

6:00PM: College of Education

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### **Vaccine Clinics including children ages 5-11**

Monday through Friday  
8:30AM to 4:30PM  
John C. Murphy Health Center  
6121 N. Hanley Road  
Berkeley, MO 63134

[Learn more](#) then make an appointments on the [Revive STL](#) website closer to the event date.  
This event is open to everyone.

Thursdays  
1:00 to 7:00PM  
Natural Bridge Library  
7606 Natural Bridge Road

Appointments are not required to get a vaccine at the St. Louis County Library clinic, but people can set up appointments in advance at [revivestl.com](http://revivestl.com). Neither proof of residency in the county nor proof of health insurance is required.

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**Flashlight Candy Cane Hunt**

Friday, December 17  
7:00PM  
Hudson Park (Upper Pavilion)  
Ferguson, MO 63135  
\$5 per person

Santa's elves have dropped candy canes all over Hudson Park and participants can help pick them up.

Enjoy hot cocoa, cookies, and write a letter to Santa before the hunt begins at 7:00pm

Click [here](#) for more information.

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**Dellwood Holiday Celebration**

Dellwood Rec Center  
Saturday, December 18  
3:00 to 6:00PM

Click [here](#) for more information.

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**Black Saturday Pop-up Shop**  
St. Vincent Community Center  
Saturday December 18  
12:00 to 4:00PM

Small local business owners will bring the community a chance to purchase last minute gifts the Saturday before Christmas.

Products will range from clothes, jewelry, sunglasses, food, waist beads, pickles, drinks, Scentsy, lip gloss, crafts, men's clothing, purses, children clothing, candles, t-shirts, home decor, lashes, and natural hair products.

Click [here](#) for more information.

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**Dellwood Holiday Lights Parade**

Saturday, December 18  
7:00 to 9:00PM  
City Wide

Click [here](#) for more information.

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St. Louis County **Library**

**St. Louis County Library**

Grab and go after school meals

Thursday, December 30  
3:30 to 4:30PM  
Natural Bridge Branch

Operation Food Search will provide free grab and go meals free of charge for children ages 5-18.

Click [here](#) for more information.

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Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.  
Holiday Observance

Monday, January 17, 2022  
11:00 to 12:30PM  
UMSL Touhill Performing Arts Center

Click [here](#) for more information.

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### **A New Year, a New Opportunity for 2022 at the UMSL Recreation & Wellness Center**

Is improved health and well-being part of your goals for 2022? During the entire month of January, special membership pricing is available--a 9-month membership at 10% off or a 12-month membership at 20% off. Also enjoy a Free Guest Pass Weekend for the month of January where members can bring in one free guest Friday-Sunday throughout the month. [Click here](#) for more information

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