



**AVENUE SCHOLARS.**  
Your Foundation for Success



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The inaugural Intern Omaha Expo was held Nov. 18 at the UNO Scott Conference Center. Organizers said 35 businesses were represented at the Expo, and 14 schools attended. Over 400 high school juniors attended the Expo, including 250 Avenue Scholars juniors.

### *New Director of Career Programs & Business Outreach*

## **Lisa Sterba encourages Scholars ‘to dream’**

Being fully retired does not suit Lisa Sterba, set to assume duties July 1 as the Avenue Scholars Director of Career Programs and Business Outreach. “Encouraging students to dream and supporting them in those dreams” does suit her plans to continue her work in the field of education.

Coming to Avenue Scholars from serving in a variety of roles over 35 years with the Omaha Public Schools, Sterba is currently working with staff to determine the nuances and goals of combining two positions — Director of Career Programs and Director of Business Outreach — into one.

“I’ll be working to provide more collaboration and communication between High School, Post-Secondary, and Career staff,” she said. “I would like to ensure that we have more continuity and consistency so that as kids are going into high school or are in their final two years of high school, that they are better prepared for the future.”

Communication and coordination with Omaha businesses have been crucial to the growth of the Avenue Scholars program.

“I’m looking forward to bringing in more businesses for partnerships and jobs, which will be just a blast,” Sterba said.

Sterba, in reviewing annual reports with CEO/President Ken Bird and incoming COO Jim Sutfin, has noticed

“we do lose some kids” over the years.

“Hopefully, we will be finding ways to plug up some of those holes,” she said. “Program consistency is a key. I want to ensure that one site works in the same way as another site”

Sterba is most excited that in her role she will be helping to ensure that students have clear plans for their futures.

“As I went through the annual report, I saw pictures of students I knew from working at Lewis and Clark, and they are students that when they leave, you hope they are going to find the right path,” she said. “It was very enlightening to see that the future was bright for those students. They had the potential but maybe just did not have the vision. It’s very encouraging to know through working with high school coaches, MCC, and career coaches

that we will be getting kids to see opportunities they may not have seen before.”

Prior to officially starting her duties at Avenue Scholars, Sterba is reviewing some students’ career plans, attending some leadership meetings, and communicating with staff members. Ensuring that students have clear and practical road maps to successful careers is a primary focus.

“I would like the career plan to be a map for their future, and I want them help write their destination; it can’t all be on the coach,” Sterba said.



Lauren Linton, a 2018 Millard South graduate, works as a Teacher's Assistant in the Human Relations Class, being taught this semester at Millard North High School.



## Peer Mentor, TA programs expand

Lauren Linton, a 2018 graduate of the Avenue Scholars program at Millard South High School, continues to benefit from opportunities a new Peer Mentor program is providing through Metropolitan Community College.

Doug Pierson, Special Projects Consultant, says this program is modeled after a peer mentor program MCC has utilized for a “couple years” now in Explorer 1000 classes. The peer mentors’ duties includes modeling “good student behavior,” helping students with their in-class work, and assisting the instructor.

After an MCC Navigator suggested to Pierson that Avenue Scholars could benefit from the program for the AS high school students, he worked with James Cloyd, the MCC Dean of Student Experiences and Innovation, to have peer mentors work with the Avenue Scholars students enrolled in the Explorer 1000 classes. Cloyd then interviewed and trained a group of mentors to work with Scholars last spring and this fall. Nine Avenue Scholars schools participated.

A few of the nine mentors happened to be Scholars attending MCC. Linton was one of those hired to be a mentor. Linton has continued to work as a mentor and teaching assistant for Millard North High School Career Coach Allison Goff.

“While I was in Avenue Scholars at MCC, a director of the MCC Peer Mentor program reached out to me about a new pilot program at the high schools,” she said. “I’ve always loved being involved with Avenue Scholars. I thought this was a good opportunity to get my foot in the door and learn more about being a teacher.”

Linton, currently attending the University of Nebraska at Omaha, has enjoyed staying connected to Avenue Scholars.

“My favorite thing about the program has been the students,” she said. “I really enjoy getting to connect with so many different kids. I’ve been able to share my own personal experience with AS and help the students figure out what paths they want to take.”

According to Pierson, the Teaching Assistant program is currently being utilized on a trial basis in seven of nine schools. TAs help to monitor Canvas progress, work with students 1 on 1, and monitor class work time when coaches have meetings with students. In some cases, TAs are able to help with grading.

“It’s modeled in some ways after MCC’s mentoring program,” Pierson said. “We hope to continue it next year.”

Yoseth Peralza, a senior Scholar at Ralston High School, listens intently to the instructions of a MCC teacher during an Introduction to Power and Process class.



## Classes prepare Scholars for future

In preparation for post-secondary education at Metropolitan Community College, Avenue Scholars students are enrolled in a series of classes during their senior year of high school: Explorer 1000, Human Relations, and Senior Academy.

All seniors are required to take Explorer 1000, with a few exceptions due to scheduling. Senior Academy and Human Relations are optional, depending on their “senior experiences.”

Explorer 1000, which seniors take during first semester, helps students finalize their MCC programs of study. It also helps students to understand their academic strengths and barriers. Students learn more about note taking, test taking, and how to improve reading comprehension in higher-level texts.

“The course uses an interactive textbook on the Canvas platform, so it is a great first experience in higher-level texts,” says Beth Leach, Ralston High School Career Coach. “Another benefit is that the course lasts the traditional semester in length, so it gives students time to become comfortable with Canvas and course expectations.”

Human Relations is a general education course, taught at Millard North for the spring of 2022.

“This is a course that dives into the human elements of workplace issues such as diversity in the workplace, creating a resume and cover letter, appropriate behavior in the workplace, conflict, ethical behavior, and understanding personal strengths to help students understand the value they can bring to an organization,” Leach said. “The Human Relations course helps students see themselves as valuable contributors to society as employees.”

While Explorer 1000 and Human Relations became part of the curriculum over just “the past couple years,” Senior Academy has been a core part of the Avenue Scholars program for the past 10 years.

For Senior Academy, seniors who are on track to graduate are allowed to leave their schools in the afternoons during second semester to attend classes at MCC. While on campus, students choose from a variety of classes taught by MCC instructors. Classes offered this year are

*AS classes continued on Page 4*

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*“Avenue Scholars, the leader  
in bridging the gap between  
education and business,  
guarantees careers for our  
youth of hope and need  
through supportive relation-  
ships, individualized coaching,  
education, and training.”*

# Community Engagement

## Avenue Scholars staff, new Youth Council focus on Social Justice



JAMAR DORSEY, Ed.D.

Hello all and welcome to the Community Engagement Corner. I am excited to share with you the many activities Avenue Scholars has engaged in last quarter. I believe we can all be active members of the Omaha community, and Avenue Scholars staff has been very active. This column will provide you updates on the Inclusion Book Club, Community Advisory Committee, the return of Power Hour, and the joint Youth Council.

The Avenue Scholars book club, named the Inclusion Book Club, read its first book *Why are All the Black Kids Sitting together in the Cafeteria* and engaged in the first follow-up discussion. The discussion included members of the Avenue Scholars family who began to share their personal experiences and how those experiences relate to the students they work with every day. The key takeaway from the meeting was how important it is to build relationships, understand perspective, and create a space where everyone feels included. Avenue Scholars staff is looking forward to using the platforms of Men of Standard and Flourish (both social/emotional support groups) to continue to impact students' lives. The next Inclusion Book Club meeting will be May 6, and the reading/discussion will be built around James Baldwin's book *The Fire Next Time*. It will be my honor to facilitate those discussions.

The educational lecture series is creating intentional space and time for staff discussion and learning topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace. The three-part series will help staff understand concepts and create an action plan on how they can continuously grow in these areas. The series has three parts and will introduce a variety of concepts, such as unconscious bias, inclusive language, and microaggressions. The most recent session concluded with microaggression. Staff has been empowered to learn about a topic; they have been provided with tools to educate themselves and others; and they have learned to be all right with being uncomfortable. The educational lecture series is scheduled to return in the fall of 2022 with three new topics. More to come from the Avenue Scholars family.

The Avenue Scholars "Power Hour" segment scheduled for April 6 will feature Avenue Scholars staff. In a tribute to the workplace Avenue Scholars will look at journeys of women in the workplace as we continue the celebration of Women's History Month.

Lastly, the Youth Council will hold its next meeting April 20. Group members are excited to present their response to social justice and how they can impact others in the Omaha community. This youth council is designed to be a platform where students can speak their truths and address issues through dialogue on a quarterly basis. Additionally, students will identify a project-based activity that addresses and seeks to resolve a community issue. The Youth Council will host an event July 20. More details will be announced soon.

The Avenue Scholars Community Advisory Committee met March 16. The group was excited to hear that Avenue Scholars will be hosting two in-person celebrations this spring. The first will be students transitioning from high school to post secondary and the second will be the induction ceremony of close to 250 new Avenue Scholars students.

Until next time — don't conform to the environment, make the environment conform to you!

AS classes \_\_\_\_\_ continued from Page 3

as follows: Pre-Algebra, Intermediate Algebra 1, Accelerated Intermediate Algebra, Business Math, Technical Math for Trades, Reading and Responding, Applied Communications, English Composition 1, Introduction to Information Technology, and Introduction to Power and Process.

In addition, 12 students are enrolled in a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) certification program at QLI.

"Senior Academy has been a great way to engage students at MCC before they enroll full time in the fall after graduation from high school," Leach said.

Peer Mentor \_\_\_\_\_ continued from Page 2

Goff certainly hopes the program continues, considering how much Linton has helped in her Millard North classes.

"I love having Lauren in my classroom," Goff said. "She is knowledgeable about the Avenue Scholars program, and she is a walking success story. She is relatable, and the students look up to her. Lauren has been a tremendous asset to me in my classroom because she is able to manage the student demands as we work through the curriculum, while ensuring the necessary check-ins to keep students on track with their SMART goals."

Linton knows both the mentor and teaching assistant experiences will benefit her future plans.

"I am currently considering becoming a teacher after I graduate from UNO," she said. "This position has been a great opportunity to see what it's like to teach high school students firsthand, as well as being part of a non-profit organization. One option I'm also considering is continuing on with AS either at the high school or post-secondary level."