



MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNITY AND TEACHER LEADERS

MACTL News & Notes | Spring 2021



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Dear MACTL Alumni,

We hope all of you and your loved ones are doing well and staying safe! As the world distributes the COVID-19 vaccine, the MACTL community looks forward to resuming face-to-face gatherings. Here is an update of exciting MACTL news!

MACTL and Chicago Teachers Union Partnership

We have a wonderful new partnership with the Chicago Teachers Union! Through this partnership, Chicago Public School (CPS) teachers will be able to enroll in the MACTL program and register for classes at reduced tuition. Please share this opportunity with your CPS colleagues. This successful partnership is encouraging MACTL to pursue other district partnerships. If your school district would like to create a partnership with MACTL, please contact us.

MACTL Alumni

MACTL is proud of our extraordinary MACTL alumni. (We brag about you all the time!)

1. We invite you to help us promote your accomplishments. Please stay in touch and inform us about your personal and professional achievements so we can share them in the MACTL Newsletter and our social media outlets.
2. We would like to invite you to speak to the current MACTL students. This can be done informally during the cohort orientations or more formally as guest speakers in our classes.
3. We would like to begin a MACTL presentation series wherein members of the MACTL community present to the NEIU university and beyond. If you are interested in presenting in this type of forum, please let us know.

In this newsletter, we introduce five MACTL alumni who work at NEIU. While applauding what they do, we believe that their experience and advice will inspire our current and future MACTL students. On behalf of the MACTL program, we truly appreciate them and look forward to hearing more from our alumni.

Sincerely,
The MACTL faculty

Spotlight: MACTL Alumni in NEIU

Ashley K. Agron, Assistant Director



As a 2018 MACTL graduate, Ashley works in the NEIU Office of Alumni Relations. As the Assistant Director, she manages graduate programming (Graduates of the Last Decade: G.O.L.D); assists with planning NEIU Signature Events & Fundraisers such as NEIU Weekend, The Golden Gala and Alumni Awards Ceremony, Kane Golf Outing, Proud to Be NEIU Day, and Giving Tuesday; is the fiscal agent for Office of Alumni Relations and three student scholarship opportunities; and maintains the NEIU Alumni Association web pages and social media outlets. Ashley also oversees F.A.N. (Future Alumni Network) which is the student membership portion of the NEIU Alumni Association that includes student philanthropy efforts, the student-alumni mentoring program through MentorCity, volunteer management, and scholarship fundraising.

Ashley sees NEIU as her home away from home. As a double alumna graduating with both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees, she has spent most of her time over the last sixteen years at NEIU as a student and staff. She loves NEIU for the experiences she had as a student and hopes that through her work she can provide even better experiences for the current students.

In her spare time, Ashley and her family actively engage in community activities. April 2nd is Autism Awareness Day. Throughout the month of April, she and her family support Autism Awareness events.



How did the MACTL program prepare you to lead in your current position at NEIU?

“As an undergrad, I enjoyed philanthropic events and programs. When I first started my position as the Assistant Director of Alumni Relations in 2016, I was able to apply my philanthropic experiences as an undergrad at NEIU to my work responsibilities. Through the MACTL program, the research I conducted was on student philanthropy. It was because of my research in the MACTL program that I further understood the psychology of philanthropy which I have now applied to the programs and activities that I oversee. The increase in student engagement and understanding of philanthropy that I have witnessed over the last two years is on account of how the MACTL program enhanced my skills for my current position.”

What did you most enjoy about the MACTL program?

“Being part of a cohort really helped build camaraderie amongst my peers. We were able to help support each other in times of need and cheer each other on through our accomplishments. We are a MACTL family!”

If you could go back in time to when you were a MACTL student, what advice would you give yourself?

“Choose a research topic you are passionate about and focus on a singular aspect that you like to uncover/dive deep into. If your research topic is too broad, there will be too many moving parts and not enough time to include them all.”

Jesse Franco, Information Technology (IT) Associate

As a 2019 MACTL graduate, Jesse works in the NEIU Ronald Williams Library. As an IT Associate, he helps students, faculty and staff use library technology to conduct research and leverage technology skills. What Jesse enjoys most about working at NEIU is working with the people in this institution.

How did the MACTL program prepare you to lead in your current position at NEIU?

“It taught me to look at all the possible angles and to consider other points of view.”

What did you most enjoy about the MACTL program?

“The subjects covered and the cohort system.”

If you could go back in time to when you were a MACTL student, what advice would you give yourself?

“Don't procrastinate.”

Valentina Gamboa-Turner, Assistant Director



As a 2018 MACTL graduate, Valentina works as the Assistant Director of Angelina Pedroso Center for Diversity and Intercultural Affairs. Her work involves student advising, cultural programming, community partnerships and upholding Pedroso's mission of equity and inclusion. Valentina enjoys working with the Pedroso team members to co-create intentional programming that supports our diverse NEIU community. She is very honored to continue to learn from Dr. Wheeler (MACTL faculty) on how to leverage university resources to support our community.

How did the MACTL program prepare you to lead in your current position at NEIU?

“MACTL prepared me to utilize research and the literature to make strategic moves in my role as an Assistant Director. During my time as a MACTL student, I benefited from the mentorship of faculty such as Dr. Holland, Dr. Wheeler, Dr. Makris, Dr. Miners and Dr. Pulido. These faculty embody the very best practices of being student-centered and I carry that over to my role at the Pedroso Center.”

What did you most enjoy about the MACTL program?

“My classmates, I am so inspired by all of the education leaders I had the privilege to learn with. We are still in contact and continue to support each other especially in a city like Chicago with its complex educational landscape.”

If you could go back in time to when you were a MACTL student, what advice would you give yourself?

“Be patient with yourself and trust that you belong. I like many of us struggle with imposter syndrome. However, working through it I grew and now as I utilize the skills I learned, and I am confident that I can tackle any challenge.”

Brittany Pines, Director

As a 2017 MACTL graduate, Brittany works as NEIU's Director of Student Success and Retention where she currently directs a U.S. Department of Education Title III grant focusing on our STEM students and creating a stronger pathway with Triton College. In addition, Brittany had the opportunity to write (along with others) a new Title V grant, CASA (Creating Access to STEM for ALL) also through the U.S. Department of Education that was awarded in October 2020. This new grant, which Brittany will also direct, will create freshman/sophomore STEM-focused cohorts. Brittany loves working with the students and her colleagues. She has had the opportunity to work with and learn from some talented and dedicated faculty and staff.



How did the MACTL program prepare you to lead in your current position at NEIU?

“One of the biggest strengths of the MACTL program is that it created a space in which educators and community organizers could learn alongside and with one another. It dispelled the myth that these two categories should be treated as two separate "units" and that when working in tandem, change is possible. I have brought this idea with me as I lead various STEM initiatives that often cross boundaries and units both within and outside of NEIU.”

What did you most enjoy about the MACTL program?

“My cohort was amazing. We truly were a family and without them, I would not have gotten through. The faculty also created a space for us to feel supported, create community, respectfully challenge each other, and learn from one other.”

If you could go back in time to when you were a MACTL student, what advice would you give yourself?

“Be patient, create a system of support, and anything is possible.”

Trease K. Sockol, Office Administrator

As a 2017 MACTL graduate, Trease works in the Student Union, Event and Conference Services. She works with a team to successfully operate the student union, which also includes commencement, outside vendor relations, Uber shuttle service and the units’ budget. Trease enjoys helping students matriculate towards their degrees in a variety of ways.

Trease has a hockey family. Her boys played hockey all through school and one of them continues playing at the college level. It is very exciting and fast-paced and she loves cheering on his team, especially when it is her son scoring!

How did the MACTL program prepare you to lead in your current position at NEIU?

“The MACTL program teaches its students to have a voice as a leader, no matter what position you have and to offer suggestions and that valued. I offer support and insight that contributes to the success of operations.”

What did you most enjoy about the MACTL program?

“The MACTL program, in addition to a Master’s degree, offered an endorsement on my teaching license. Course-wise, there was one course that was with Dr. Brian Schultz which was held in the summer and we toured many different neighborhoods in Chicago. That course was amazing and really put cultural relevancy as a top priority one! I learned so much about the different neighborhoods in Chicago and how they were born.”

If you could go back in time to when you were a MACTL student, what advice would you give yourself?

“To open up and allow yourself to be present in the moment.”



Got an update? Please email us. We will be sending out a periodic MACTL News & Notes. We would love to share your news!

