

# IMPACT REPORT

SPRING 2021

## ALUMNI HIGHLIGHT

### Cate Crowley

Happy 60th anniversary to the EMU Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) program! Since 1960, the CSD has been preparing future speech-language pathologists for successful careers—like alumni Cate Crowley.

In 2008, Crowley decided to study abroad in South America during her last year of undergrad. Upon graduating the following year with degrees in Spanish and women's studies, she decided to continue living in Chile, taking a job teaching English to adults in different medical and business professions.

On her first day of class, Crowley met an individual with the title "fonoaudiólogo"—the term for speech-language pathologist in Chile. Unaware of what SLPs did, she asked him questions in hopes of learning more about the profession.



CATE CROWLEY

**I realized immediately that this is what I wanted to study. It was my "lightbulb" moment.**

"He answered many questions for me about language development and phonology, and I realized immediately that this is what I wanted to study. It was my "lightbulb" moment," said Crowley, "The fonoaudiólogo allowed me to observe him as he worked with hearing-impaired adolescents, which was absolutely amazing. As I began to research SLPs more, I learned that the field has so much variety and demand around the world."

Upon arriving back in the U.S., Crowley was eager to research her options for grad school. Wanting to be part of a high-quality program that would provide excellent professional development, she decided on the Master's program at Eastern Michigan's College of Education - Communication Sciences & Disorders.

**Crowley felt EMU was her best option for two reasons:**

- She did not have to pay for out-of-state tuition.
- Atypical of other graduate programs in the country, EMU did not require an undergraduate degree in speech language pathology or communication science disorders—in fact, the COE allowed her to make up classes needed from undergrad to remediate her understanding.

As Eastern's experienced instructors deepened her study of bilingual speech-language pathology, a flame was ignited in Crowley. She now knew for certain she chose the right field, and developed ambitions to help adults whose first language is not English.

But after hands-on elementary work with Detroit Public Schools in the city's Mexican Town neighborhood, and after spending three years with multicultural preschool-aged children at Ypsilanti's famous Perry Early Learning Center, Crowley had another "lightbulb" moment—her goal shifted from wanting to work with adults, to Spanish-speaking children and their families. She hoped to advocate for their rights and help them knock down barriers faced through traditional school systems.

Graduating from EMU in 2015 with a desire to positively impact those around her, Crowley has found an amazing way to do just that in Las Vegas, Nevada—home to a large bilingual population. The city and state does not have enough professional providers in the medical field, nor at the school level, to meet the speech therapy needs of its children.

After being in the field for over five years, Crowley has seen how often bilingual children are recommended for speech therapy by teachers who don't recognize that the child's English pronunciations are influenced by their native language or dialect spoken at home, and are not the result of a speech impediment.

Crowley's current workplace in Las Vegas, Let's Talk Therapy, has given her many rich experiences to help bilingual children and their families. She continues to learn about ways to help them navigate speech-language difficulties, handle insurance/medical providers and work with schools.

Looking back, Crowley tells us she couldn't be happier she found her purpose in pursuing a career that allows her to serve the community. She is grateful to the student in Chile who introduced her to speech language pathology, and for the program at EMU that helped her mold, set and achieve her goals.

✓ To make a donation to the Speech Language Program Fund in honor of the CSD 60th Anniversary, visit [emich.edu/give](http://emich.edu/give).

## READ MORE...

- [How One Student Uses Clubhouse to Help Neurodistinct Women](#)
- [Dean Michael Saylor to Retire After Winter 2021 Semester](#)
- [Despite Medical Emergency, EMU COE Student Remains Determined to Become a Teacher](#)

Like our student body, the array of scholarships available at EMU is diverse. They cover every college, every discipline, and were established by donors from differing backgrounds. The commonality is that they provide often-crucial support to recipients. Scholarships help ease the growing financial burdens of college while motivating students to excel in their studies and stay on track to graduate. These scholarships exist because you established and contribute to them. This report provides a small snapshot of the impact of your continued support. You ARE the difference. Thank you for your generosity.

## PROGRAM REPORT

### How One Student Uses Clubhouse to Help Neurodistinct Women



BEN-ONI MORGAN-JOHNSON

You may have heard of Clubhouse, the audio social network that has attracted millions of people eager to engage with and listen in on conversations about anything and everything. But for Ben-Oni Morgan-Johnson—an EMU Brehm Fellow who last April completed the Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Master's program—it's a vital tool for connecting and helping neurodistinct women—that is, women who experience developmental and acquired sensory and cognitive distinctions.

Morgan-Johnson considers neurodistinction to include, but is not limited to ASD, Post Traumatic Brain Injury, ADHD, dyslexia, dysgraphia, as well as mood and personality distinctions\* such as borderline, depression or bipolar I and II.

A native of Plano, Texas, Morgan-Johnson chose Eastern specifically for its acclaimed ASD master's program, remarking how unusual it is for a school to have such a degree. Through the financial and institutional support of their Dolores S. Brehm Fellowship, Morgan-Johnson selected the "Helping Interventions in a Multicultural Society" program of study because they want to incorporate a counseling lens into their work.

As a former program coordinator for the Disability Resource Center under Dr. LaMarcus Howard and current Graduate Assistant with the Office of the Ombuds under Julia Heck dealing primarily with institutional accessibility and student crisis, Morgan-Johnson witnessed the impact of real-time equity and inclusion and their gift for holding space for the most vulnerable—often those experiencing disability.

"The work I am doing now is directly connected with the research I continue to do through the Brehm Fellowship," said Morgan-Johnson, "It gave me the space to create, dream and actualize the world I envisioned for neurodistinct people. One that does not ask them to change for the environment but that the environment changes for them. Not just consider them, but meaningfully include them. Just as Alice Wong reminds us - "access is love."

Around mid-November last year, Morgan-Johnson joined Clubhouse and, after a little exploring, decided to host a room titled "Neurodistinct Women Check-in", with the intention of seeing if anyone needed to vent or simply talk. Simultaneously, they were asked by a parent of an autistic child to administrate a Clubhouse club, aptly named "Black Neurodiversity".

Over the course of the month, Morgan-Johnson would wake up at 5:30 a.m. to meditate in anticipation of holding space for 10-40 neurodistinct women from across the world—often for as long as five hours a day.

"These check-ins have turned into a real community of love and support," said Morgan-Johnson, "AND I even got connected to Judy Singer, the creator of the term neurodiversity, through Clubhouse. AND neurodistinct entrepreneurs and leaders in their own countries like Rosalin de the Africa Dyslexia Organization ([africadyslexia.org](http://africadyslexia.org)). So, to say the very least, my work with Black Neurodiversity has been transformative, revolutionary and life-changing."

Neuro diversity like Morgan-Johnson have learned that neurodistinct people are not getting the services they need in real-time. Therapy once a week often does not cut it for the daily challenges of an autistic, dyslexic or dysgraphic woman—at the very least, they just need someone that will listen without an ableist or solutions-based ear. Being heard has been Morgan-Johnson's top feedback from check-in participants.

"I have heard some of the most interesting perspectives, insights and explanations of neurodistinction that, at this point, I fully believe the DSM-5 has it all wrong," said Morgan-Johnson, "With that in mind, people should know neurodiversity is not just about Autism—EVERYONE is neurodiverse, but not everyone is neurodistinct. Everyone has a unique sensory and cognitive experience, but not all of us are disabled by that experience."

Neurodiversity accounts for the infinitude of human cognition and sensory processing—it is the acknowledgement that no two brains are alike. Neurodistinction acknowledges those that are disabled by their social, communicative or emotional environment.

In the immediate future, Morgan-Johnson is continuing to connect with neurodistinct researchers and build the "Black Neurodiversity" club on Clubhouse—which currently has more than 400 members and over 500 followers. They are currently hosting a "NeuroDISTINCT Women" Check-in" Clubhouse Tour through the month of April—making stops in disability-focused and inclusive Clubhouse clubs such as Specially Centered, the 15% Club and Empowering Lives.

"Black Neurodiversity" will look to host its first event—an International Black Neurodiversity Research Symposium, held in partnership with Eastern Michigan University in August of this year.

✓ You can learn more information about Black Neurodiversity on their Instagram page: [instagram.com/blackneurodiversity](https://www.instagram.com/blackneurodiversity).

## SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

### Dean Michael Saylor to Retire After Winter 2021 Semester

After six great years with the EMU College of Education, Dean Michael Saylor has announced his retirement. His time at Eastern was well spent, and his work has helped the college grow, reestablish its long-term viability, improve relationships with schools and communities and—along with the wonderful work of the faculty—set the college on a defined path of continuing to prepare and grow Michigan's teachers, administrators and clinicians.

Dean Saylor came to EMU in June 2015, after 25 years at the University of North Texas (UNT). There, he was both faculty, a qualified researcher and Senior Associate Dean of the College of Education. While at UNT, he built his portfolio of skills and accomplishments, ultimately making him a perfect fit for the EMU community's needs.

When he moved to Eastern Michigan, Dean Saylor brought with him his leadership and understanding of academics, research development and support, strategic planning, student intervention and support, faculty development, problem solving and data-driven decision making. He was a pioneer in online learning and gifted education, of which his expertise and insights in the latter led him to connect with professors around the world.

Dean Saylor's manuscript on the social and emotional impact of academic acceleration was named the National Association of Gifted Children's paper of the year. He was on the editorial board of multiple journals and named the editor for the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented for several years. He also built one of the world's largest online gifted certifications and, although he was the only faculty, enrolled over 250 students from around the world each semester.

Drawn to EMU because of its strong reputation, Dean Saylor helped guide the COE to develop smaller, more concentrated and heavier field-experience-based teacher preparation programs, starting with a re-envisioned elementary education degree. Under his leadership, the college's enrollment stabilized, allowing it to contribute the largest amount of revenue-per-dollar-expended of any college at Eastern.

Not only will Dean Saylor miss seeing his faculty, staff and alumni, he will also miss interacting with the students. Ending his time as Dean during a global pandemic was a novel and unexpected experience. Like most educators, he wishes he had more time to meet with students as Dean. As he wraps up his final months, he thanks everyone for their kindness and graciousness throughout his tenure.

Dean Saylor and his wife will continue to live in Michigan after he retires. The couple has started a garden on a small acreage near the university where they plan to enjoy their free time planting vegetables, flowers, fruit and nuts.

We are grateful for Dean Saylor's impact on the COE community and hope he will enjoy the well-deserved next phase of his life.



DEAN MICHAEL SAYLER

EMU College of Education | 2015-2021

- *Pioneer in Online Learning*
- *Authored National Association of Gifted Childrens Paper of the Year*
- *Enrolled over 250 Students from Around the World Each Semester*
- *Stabilized Enrollment and Maximized Revenue*

## STUDENT SUPPORT

### Despite Medical Emergency, EMU COE Student Remains Determined to Become a Teacher



ARICA JENKS

After years of working toward her degree, Arica Jenks was abruptly stopped when hospitalized for kidney failure. With the help of the COE Student Emergency Fund, she was able to make her dream happen.

From a young age, Jenks knew she wanted to go into education. She had long felt the desire to help others who are struggling and often goes out of her way to do so. Naturally, she gravitated toward the teaching profession and, specifically, special education—believing that every human is entitled to an equal and fair opportunity to become successful and happy in life.

The journey toward earning her degree has taught Jenks several important lessons over the years. During challenging semesters, she learned to push herself and trust the process, and became proud of her ability to work through hardships—finding support along the way from EMU faculty and staff.

In the fall of 2019, Jenks encountered a challenge not as easy to overcome—while student teaching, she was admitted to the hospital for kidney failure. Her health emergency meant she would have to miss multiple school days. Despite going through this traumatic and avoidable situation, Jenks was unfortunately released from her student teaching position.

Losing out on this semester so close to graduation was devastating. The lapse in Jenks' timeline meant more time in school and her dream of becoming a teacher felt like it was slipping through her fingers. But determination prevailed.

Jenks applied for a second chance at student teaching and found a job as a paraprofessional in a developmental kindergarten classroom, teaching children with severely delayed and cognitive impairments. While working to save up for another semester, EMU placed her with a new supervisor who she says changed her life forever—giving her the opportunity to continue her education, expand her skills and believe in herself again, after years of being beaten down.

Jenks also reached out to faculty in the COE for financial assistance. Her student teaching supervisor, Barbara Stafford, and the director of student teaching, David DeVries, were able to get her in contact with the Dean and the COE Student Emergency Fund. Looking back, Jenks believes she would not have been able to complete student teaching and work to pay her bills without the support of this fund and the generous donors who contribute.

Leading up to this semester, Jenks says she has already undergone her academic career at EMU for over 4,000 days—first attending in fall 2009 and taking classes while working, sometimes multiple jobs at once, ever since. She describes the road to completion as a tremendous adventure, and that it has made her into who she is today as an educator and individual.

"If I didn't go through any of the hardships, I wouldn't have become the awesome teacher that I am today," said Jenks, "Struggle creates greatness with the help of appropriate and genuine support. If I had to describe myself in one word, it would be resilient."

Jenks' dream of becoming a teacher will finally come to fruition this spring when she graduates with a double major Bachelors in Special Education - Cognitive Impairment, K-12 with an elementary endorsement from Eastern Michigan University's College of Education. She is currently completing her second round of student teaching in an ASD classroom in the South Redford District of Michigan.

Jenks proved what persistence and resilience looks like after a health scare that could have deterred her from finishing her degree. She saw how the Student Emergency Fund positively impacted her when life's challenges became too heavy, and now encourages others to reach out for help whenever necessary.

✓ Together, we can guide each other to mentors and resources to help students, like Arica Jenks, accomplish their dreams. To donate to the COE Student Emergency Fund, visit [emich.edu/give](http://emich.edu/give).

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## GIVE RISE

CAMPAIGN GOAL

\$100 MILLION

We must rise to every occasion for students from abroad, for students in need and for students who will lead the way to our future. Give Rise asks that we open doors to success, well beyond the boundaries of campus.

To give and learn more about Give Rise: The Campaign for Eastern Michigan University, visit [emugiverise.com](http://emugiverise.com).

## Give Rise: The Campaign for Eastern Michigan University is Officially Here.

With a goal of \$100 million, it is, in fact, our largest with to date. The bold vision we have for our largest demands that we give our students everything they need to succeed, and requires that we continue building our programs of distinction.



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