Meet the Student Affairs Team!

The Department of Student Affairs has you covered from beginning (Orientation) to end (Graduation), morning, noon, and night (Residence Life), in sickness and in health (Campus Health Nurse and Counseling Center). We are your first stop when you have needs, when things just aren’t working, when you have great ideas to get off the ground, when you want to get involved and have fun. These are the people that make it all happen:

Dr. Monica Coen Christensen, Dean of Students

Dean Christensen took on the responsibilities of Dean of Students at Manhattan School of Music in January 2015 after having worked in higher education for over 25 years. In the early years of her career, she worked in positions of progressive responsibility in student affairs, including an 8 year period at Manhattan School of Music where she was Director of Student Life and then Associate Dean for Student Life. In the year 2000, she began teaching in the Higher & Postsecondary Education program at Teachers College, Columbia University. As a faculty member at Teachers College, she also eventually served as an academic advisor in the master’s program, advised advanced master’s student culminating papers, and supervised and adjudicated doctoral dissertations. Dean Christensen has Master’s and Doctoral degrees from Teachers College, Columbia University and a bachelor’s degree from Dartmouth College. She lives in Brooklyn, New York with her husband, three teenage children, two cats and a dog. When she is not working hard on behalf of MSM’s students or on behalf of her family, she can be found reading, cooking and gardening.

Melanie Dorsey, Director of Student Engagement

Melanie Dorsey joined MSM in the spring of 2004 as the Assistant Director of Student Life. She came to the position and school with no direct musical experience of her own, but with a strong love and respect for the arts. Having studied interior design and art history at Appalachian State University, in North Carolina, the importance and value of arts in education is certainly not lost on her. Over the course of 11 years Melanie has enjoyed an informal education in what being a performance major means through working closely with so many MSM students. She values greatly the relationships she has built through her work, and more than anything, relishes supporting students as they grow into stronger musicians and inspiring young adults. Melanie lives in Brooklyn, NY with her rescue cat Nima, and spends time volunteering in the community and baking treats for friends and neighbors.
Brooke Quiggins Saulnier, Assistant Director of Student Engagement

Brooke began her journey at MSM as a classical violin major under the instruction of Sylvia Rosenberg and Lucie Robert. After receiving both her BM and MM from MSM, she wanted to remain within the school community by working as a part time administrative assistant in the Student Engagement Office. Brooke has now been working in Student Affairs (both in Student Engagement and for a short while in the Residence Life Office) for the last ten years and absolutely loves her job. She finds great joy in meeting students and being able to relate to them on a musical and educational level. Outside of MSM, Brooke spends her time freelancing throughout the tri-state area playing a variety of genres of music and can be heard on numerous albums, video game soundtracks, and television commercials. Brooke lives in Riverdale with her husband (also an MSM alum!).

Crystal Wilson, Student Engagement Intern

Crystal serves as the Student Engagement Intern in the Office of Student Engagement for the 2015-2016 academic year. She works as an SES Peer Educator, facilitating the practice of conversational English. During the academic year, Crystal will provide support in the expansion of the SES Peer Education Program as well as for the programs and initiatives of the Student Council. Prior to joining the MSM community, Crystal lived and worked abroad in Africa and Asia. She spent one year in South Africa and Tanzania, studying, volunteering, and teaching English. Her last five years were spent in Vietnam, as an English instructor, English-speaking voice talent, and documents editor. She is currently pursuing her Masters of Arts in Higher and Postsecondary Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. A California native, Crystal enjoys spending time outdoors- biking, hiking, and swimming at the beach. An avid traveler, Crystal appreciates trying new foods, learning new languages, and exploring new cultures. She considers herself to be a tea-drinking zealot.

Jim Love, Residence Life Director

Originally from Minnesota, Jim came to MSM in the summer of 2014. He has previously worked in Housing and Residence Life at a number of institutions including the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse where he received his Bachelor’s Degree in Education, the University of Delaware where he received his Master’s Degree in Higher Education Administration, the University of Alberta, the University of St. Thomas, and St. Olaf College. As the Director of Residence Life, Jim works with the other staff members in Residence Life to oversee all aspects of life in Andersen Hall including creating a community of musicians on each floor, ensuring Andersen Hall is a safe and secure place to live, and assisting students to make the most of their time at MSM. In his spare time, Jim loves watching and playing sports, games of all types (card games, word games, dungeons and dragons), and attending MSM performances. You can usually find him around campus with the rest of his family and is easily spotted while walking Bubs!, his large black dog.
Justino Gordon, Coordinator of Residence Life

Alum of MSM (BM 2013) and emerging artist as a young Opera singer, Justino Gordon is also the Coordinator of Residence Life. On top of his very deep passion for cultures, languages, and the arts, he also loves engaging with students; helping them acclimate to the city and to their new lives at the Manhattan School of Music. While an MSM student, friends, teachers, faculty, and administrative staff all contributed to providing Justino with a rich and invaluable education, as well as unforgettable and formative experiences. Justino is very excited to now be in a position to give back that same high quality of formative experiences and aid to all those lucky enough to call MSM “Home”. He welcomes you all to our incredible family!

Joe Liberatore, Residence Life Intern

Joe Liberatore attends Teachers College, Columbia University, where he is studying for a Master's degree in Higher and Postsecondary Education. His concentration is in institutional organization and leadership. He recently graduated from Philadelphia's Temple University where he earned his Bachelor's degree in Art History. Following graduation, he moved to Boston, Massachusetts where he volunteered at a boat house. In this role, Joe assisted inpatient veterans who suffered from non-visible wounds find an athletic and active outlet. Joe's interests include architectural history and design, aviation, young adult fiction, politics, and travel.

Sophia Grigoriou, Campus Health Nurse

Sophia Grigoriou is a Registered Nurse with over 10 years of experience in the field of public health. She received her Baccalaureate of Science Nursing degree and Public Health Nurse Certificate from California State University Long Beach and most recently completed her Master’s degree in Public Health at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. As MSM's Campus Health Nurse she is looking forward to collaborating with the diverse community of MSM students, staff and faculty to help develop and promote relevant health and wellness activities that will improve both the physical and mental wellbeing of the MSM community. When she is not working, you will most likely find her creating something delicious in the kitchen, out with friends at a live event/concert in the city or out on the soccer field.

Dr. Shara Sand, Psy.D.

Dr. Sand is a licensed clinical psychologist in New York State and received her doctorate in clinical psychology from Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology, Yeshiva University, Bronx, NY. Her Postdoctoral Training in Medical Psychology/AIDS was completed at St. Luke's/Roosevelt Hospital Center, NYC. She holds a Bachelor's Degree (Manhattan School of Music) and a Master's Degree in Music (Brooklyn College Conservatory of Music). Dr. Sand specializes in working with issues surrounding gender, sexuality and sexual orientation. She has a wide variety of experience as a clinician, teacher, writer and
speaker and offer services in several specialty areas. Memberships include the American Psychological Association, the New York State Psychological Association, the Performing Arts Medicine Association, Association for the Study of Dreams, and the American Federation of Musicians, Local 802.

Michele Bartnett, Ph.D.

Dr. Michele Bartnett received her Ph.D. from NYU and completed her Post Doctoral Training in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis at NYU. She received her Master's degree from Teacher's College, Columbia University in Special Education. Dr. Bartnett has lived abroad, has conducted workshops with psychologists in India and is fluent in French. Clinical specializations include depression, anxiety, and loss. She is an avid music lover has performed folk music playing guitar, banjo and dulcimer.

Peter J. Haddad, Ph.D.

Dr. Peter Haddad is a Licensed Psychologist with over 25 years of clinical experience. He completed his doctoral training at The University of Detroit Mercy, a private Jesuit University, and interned at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. He has practiced in Michigan and now in New York City with a special emphasis on relationships, most particularly on improving understanding, communication, compassion, and cooperation between intimate partners. He also works with individuals searching for ways to cope with and adapt to the often dispiriting demands and challenges brought on by life changes, big and small, or just by everyday life. In his spare time, Dr. Haddad has been known to lay down a tight bass line to classic rock tunes that some have characterized (mistakenly) as just a bit too loud.

Elizabeth Clark, Psy.D.

Dr. Liz Clark is a recent transplant to NYC from her native Chicago, where she completed her doctoral degree and postdoctoral training. She has experience and expertise in eating and body image issues, gender and sexual orientation issues, and multicultural counseling, and has worked with college students at several different universities over the past 5 years. A former flutist and avid choral singer, music is an integral part of her life, and she is pleased to be able to work with student musicians at MSM.
Julie Ackerman, Counseling Center Extern

Julie Ackerman is an advanced doctoral student in Clinical Psychology at CUNY Graduate Center. She has worked in psychiatric hospital, community outpatient, and counseling settings. Before beginning her clinical training, she played the violin from childhood through college, and wrote a masters thesis on the aesthetics of music. She is interested in the creative process in the arts, and is currently working on a dissertation on dreams.