

Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice



OUR MISSION

The mission of the Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice is to build knowledge about social justice, to develop skills for advancing social justice through individual and collective action, and to serve as a catalyst for actualizing Bridgewater State University's commitment to social justice.

CONTRIBUTORS

Thank you to our BSU partners, advisory board, sponsors and individual donors for their dedication and support of our work. We look forward to continuing this important work as part of the Division of Outreach and Engagement.

BSU Partners

Arnaa Alcon, *Acting Provost and Vice President*
Jill Beckwith, *Executive Director*
Diane Bell, *Vice President*
Frederick W. Clark Jr., *President*
Deborah Drago, *Staff Assistant*
Asa Iacobucci, *Faculty Associate*
Nick Jordan, *Program Assistant*

José Lara, *Academic Director*
Seth Meyer, *Faculty Associate*
Olga Piven, *Staff Assistant*
Celia Pugsley, *Staff Associate*
Sheena Rancher, *Faculty Associate*
Jennifer Thibodeau, *Director*
Courtney Woodman, *Staff Associate*

MRISJ Advisory Board

Robert Antonucci
Peg Campbell
Carolyn Casey
J. Cottle
Christine Goldman
Mary K. Grant
Dana Mohler-Faria

Howard London
Allyce Najimy
Carolyn Petrosino
Bill Richard
Denise Richard
Steve Wilkins
Sharon Wolder

Sponsors and Individual Donors

Bridgewater State University
Bridgewater State University Foundation
Martin Richard Foundation

Santander Bank
Individual Donors



Empower students with the social justice knowledge and skills to create positive social change with a gift to the Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice Fund for Greatest Needs!

Make your gift!





A Message from the Executive Director

Greetings Friends,

I'm pleased to share that the MRISJ had another exciting year engaging the BSU campus and community through a wide variety of programs and events. As we look back, we invite you to learn more about some highlights from academic year 2025-2026.

From hands-on service projects to advocacy workshops and other educational events, and our many student employment opportunities, MRISJ offered something for everyone.

We'd especially like to thank our 26 undergraduate student employees for their commitment to social justice and their dedication to learning about how social change strategies can be used to make an impact in the community. Although some students applied because of our social justice focus, others were diving into social justice for the first time – and every one of them became a part of our MRISJ community. Whether they were returning to MRISJ for another year or stepping into their first ever job, our students gained valuable on-the-job experience and professional development while continuing to engage in other ways on campus and in the classroom.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our work. President Fred Clark and Vice President Diane Bell have been enthusiastic supporters of our work to help students develop into active and engaged citizens, both on and off-campus. Our team is honored to do this important work in memory of Martin Richard, thanks to the leadership and generosity of his parents, Bill and Denise Richard.

There is still much to be done and we look forward to future collaborations as we work toward a more just world, together.

Take good care,

Jill K. Beckwith
Executive Director



Dr. José Lara, Vice President Diane Bell and Executive Director Jill Beckwith with Paola Ramos.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Serving the Community

The MRISJ organizes large-scale service projects in observance of three national days of service: 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance, MLK Day of Service and Earth Day. These annual events encourage BSU students, faculty, staff and alumni to come together in service to our community.

Our annual service projects help build a culture of service across the university and teach students the importance of community engagement using a social justice lens. Through participation in these service events, students learned about important social justice issues such as food insecurity, survivor support, sustainability and housing instability directly from our community partners.

Annual days of service serve as their first touchpoint with MRISJ for many students, helping establish a foundation in volunteerism. Whether a student is a first-time volunteer or a regular participant, our service opportunities provide an outlet for students to build a community, foster new connections with peers from various disciplines and find inspiration to serve their community throughout college and beyond.

In academic year 2025-2026, 262 Bears joined us to serve a total of 922 hours on campus and with community partners in Bridgewater, Dartmouth, East Bridgewater and Pembroke across all service opportunities, including local service trips and annual days of service.



Volunteers shovel mulch at Sharing the Harvest community farm for Earth Day.

Keeping it Local

In partnership with local nonprofit organizations, MRISJ also offers regular service opportunities throughout the year that allow students to learn about different social justice topics and make an impact in their community. These service trips take students off campus and into the community to gain hands-on volunteer experience in small groups and build their network beyond campus.

Through our long-standing partnership, MRISJ offered five local service opportunities with School on Wheels of Massachusetts. Students engaged in hands-on service to support the educational needs of local students experiencing homelessness. With guidance from MRISJ staff and student ambassadors, 36 participants packed approximately 200 backpacks full of age and grade-specific essential school supplies to benefit K-12 students.

Students Take the Lead

This spring MRISJ offered two student-led programs developed by our student ambassadors including an on-campus service project and a community engagement event aimed at bringing awareness to MRISJ's work and several social justice themes. Working alongside MRISJ's program manager, ambassadors supported event planning and development of promotional materials, conducted an accessibility audit with MRISJ's marketing team and served as event co-leads.

Tying it Together revisited a fan-favorite tabletop service project, assembling fleece tie blankets for School on Wheels. Ambassadors prepared materials ahead of the event and guided students through the creation of each blanket. In the second event, *Let's Brick the Status Quo*, ambassadors guided their peers through thoughtful discussion of social justice themes represented in media. Using clips from *The Lego Movie*, participants identified how each clip highlighted the themes of advocacy and community organizing within the context of the film.



Let's Brick the Status Quo event flyer.



ALTERNATIVE BREAK

MRISJ's Alternative Break program offered four social justice-focused experiences for undergraduate students again this year. All four opportunities were designed to be affordable while providing enriching, engaging experiences for students to explore their values and how they connect with their academic and career goals.

Alternative Break provides an immersive experience for BSU undergraduates from all majors to explore social justice themes, work as a team and build skills. This year a total of 27 student participants, eight student team leaders and eight faculty and staff learning partners participated in the Alternative Break program.

The 2026 Experiences

Advocacy, Policy & Storytelling | Southeastern MA

In partnership with Brockton Interfaith Community (BIC), six students and two learning partners spent an immersive week learning about advocacy and policy work across Southeastern Massachusetts. Students learned more about their work, how listening sessions can be a tool for advocacy and met with local elected representatives during a trip to the Massachusetts State House. Participants also supporting hunger relief in Brockton and Stoughton, packing 96 bagged lunches to be distributed at three Father Bill's & MainSpring locations.

Civil Rights & Restorative Justice | Selma, AL

Returning to Selma, Alabama for the third year, eight students began their experience at the turning point of the Civil Rights movement with the Selma Center for Nonviolence, Truth and Reconciliation alongside two BSU learning partners. Participants immersed themselves in the local community through direct service and trainings on nonviolent conflict resolution, racial equity and restorative justice. The experience also included excursions to the National Voting Rights Museum, as well as the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the Legacy Museum in Montgomery.

Community Health & Wellbeing | Williamson, WV

Seven students and two learning partners collaborated with AllPeopleBeHappy to learn about the diverse culture and heritage of Appalachia as we returned to West Virginia. Participants learned about continued relief and recovery efforts and witnessed the lasting impact of last year's floods. The team engaged in hands-on service with local organizations including the Christian Help food pantry and thrift store, the Williamson Health & Wellness Center, Community Cupboard food pantry, a local farm and afterschool program. The team also had excursions to the West Virginia State Museum and Matewan Historical Museum.

Food Justice & Housing Insecurity | Washington, D.C.

Joined by two learning partners, eight students explored the impacts of food injustice and housing instability in our nation's capital. Participants learned about the supports needed for people experiencing homelessness and health challenges to achieve stability as they volunteered for multiple shifts with DC Central Kitchen and N Street Village, sorting food and clothing donations and assisting with vocational planning activities. Participants also explored the Natural History Museum, National Museum of African American History and Culture, the Library of Congress and the U.S. Capitol.



Top to Bottom: (1) The local team visits the State House for a day of advocacy, (2) students and learning partners volunteer at a Selma food bank (3) participants take a team photo exploring Williamson, WV (4) the D.C. group spends an afternoon volunteering.

STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

The Next Generation of Leaders

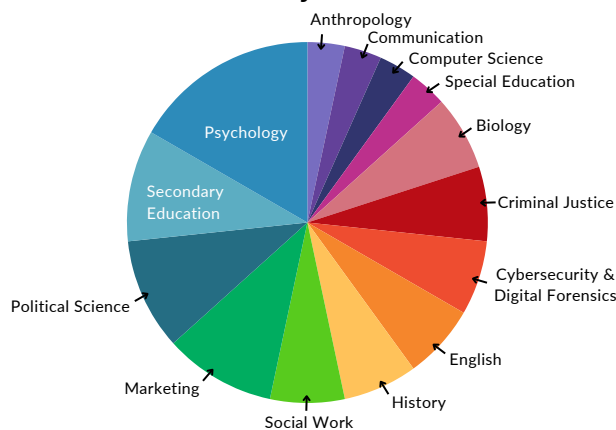
Student employees play an important role in fulfilling the MRISJ's mission while gaining important skills and professional experience. Undergraduate students are paid to work in a variety of roles including Alternative Break team leaders, ambassadors, justice fellows, marketing assistants and voting & civic action ambassadors. Through training and hands-on experiences, they identify the distinct ways that service, community organizing and individual and collective action can create positive social change.

Student employees learn about important social justice issues, explore their personal and professional values and discover the implicit and explicit ways that social justice connects to their disciplines and future career. Each of our student employees is compensated for their time – including trainings, meetings and mileage reimbursement (for those working in the community) – to promote equity and make these opportunities accessible to students from various backgrounds, experience levels and majors. The following charts highlight some key demographics of our 26 student employees during 2025-2026.

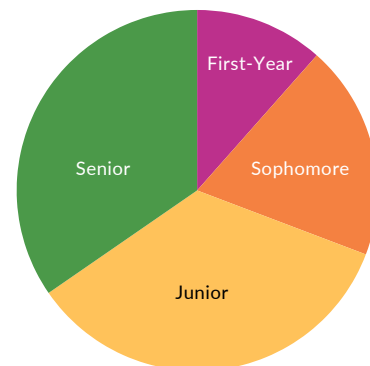
Student Role



Major*



Class Year



*For students with double majors, both majors are represented in the chart above (center)

Alternative Break Team Leaders

Team leaders work in pairs to plan and implement our Alternative Break program with support from MRISJ staff. They work with us throughout the year, attending regular cohort meetings and trainings on topics such as communication and conflict resolution, as they develop the plan for each of their Alternative Break experiences. Team leaders support the recruitment of Alternative Break participants and prepare their teams for direct service and hands-on education during the week of spring break. Following the experience, team leaders reflect on their own experiences, facilitate post-trip reflection for participants and help prepare for the next year's program.

Ambassadors

Our ambassador program provides students with opportunities to develop their leadership skills, implement creative thinking and explore community engagement through a social justice lens. Ambassadors serve as peer leaders who represent the institute, share their experiences, and help connect others to meaningful opportunities by engaging with their peers at various MRISJ events, community service opportunities and programs across campus.

Marketing Assistants

Marketing assistants gain hands-on experience creating digital and print materials to spread the word about MRISJ's many programs, events and initiatives. These students collaborate with MRISJ's marketing coordinator to create peer-to-peer voter education materials, flyers, videos and other digital content, bringing our work to life through social media and across campus.

Justice Fellows

The MRISJ's Justice Fellow program offers a unique cohort-based learning opportunity to undergraduate students, pairing them with a nonprofit organization or campus initiative. Students engage in project-based work to develop skills and knowledge of different positive social change strategies.

Justice fellows are paid by the MRISJ for up to 14 hours of work and training per week. They engage in meaningful work around topics such as educational equity, youth development, voter engagement and education, community organizing and volunteerism. This past year, seven justice fellows worked with:

Campus & Community Partners

- ● Alcohol & Drug Program, *BSU Wellness Center* (2)
- ■ ▲ ● Community Health & Prevention, *BSU Wellness Center* (2)
- ◆ Easterseals MA, *Bridgewater* (1)
- ■ ▲ ◆ ● Old Colony YMCA, *Brockton* (2)

Key: ● Community Engagement ■ Civic Engagement ▲ Racial Justice ◆ Educational Equity ● Advocacy

Voting & Civic Action Ambassadors

Voting & civic action ambassadors (VCAAs) work alongside MRISJ staff and BSU's Newman Civic Fellow to enhance the institute's portfolio of student-led civic action events and activities. These students host voter registration tables, educational events and lead workshops for students to learn about advocacy strategies on campus and in the community.

Finding His Community



Joshua Neff joined MRISJ in fall 2023 as a voting & civic action ambassador (VCAA) after participating in our local Alternative Break the year prior. He recalls the trip's State House visit as a turning point in his time at BSU, pushing him outside of his comfort zone and giving him a first-hand look at advocacy work. The experience helped him find a community of peers who shared the same passion for civic education and develop a deeper understanding and interest in the voting process.

As a VCAA, Joshua worked to build a culture of advocacy on campus at BSU and show other students that their voices count. This year he took that work further as our 2025-2026 Campus Compact Newman Civic Fellow and got a feel for his future career in teaching as he developed and implemented trainings, adapted to evolving goals, and created tools that will be used to have a positive impact on campus for years to come.

"My work with the MRISJ has helped me find a loving and supportive community at BSU...it has given me the leadership experience and civic knowledge I need to succeed as a history educator and to serve as an advocate for my future students."

Accomplishments and Awards

In addition to their work with MRISJ, many of our students are leaders in other areas across campus. Please join us in celebrating a few notable accomplishments from this year.

- One student (Blake) worked with MRISJ while competing as a varsity athlete for BSU.
- Six students received Impact Awards through the Center for Student Engagement including Unsung Hero and Senator of the Year (Joshua), Rookie of the Year (Rhiannon) and the Daniel J. Darcy Impact Award for Student Leadership (Andrea, Gillian, Russell and Sophia P.).
- 9 students served in leadership roles with at least one of BSU's student clubs or organizations.
- 18 MRISJ student employees made the Dean's list at least one semester this academic year.



President Clark poses with MRISJ's student Impact Award recipients.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Building a Culture of Advocacy

MRISJ hosted our third annual advocacy fair on campus in April, inviting community organizations from across the region to share more about their work and the important role advocacy plays in creating sustainable, lasting change. This event connected 72 students with representatives from BSU and local organizations to learn about advocacy efforts. Advocacy topics included accessibility, civic engagement, civil rights, gun violence prevention, immigration, LGBTQIA+ rights, mental health and more.



Students learn more about BSU's Alcohol & Drug program from Justice Fellow Russell and Ann Doyle.



A student connects with community partners from the ACLU of Massachusetts.



MRISJ student employees Caleigh and Antonio greet attendees and share information about MRISJ events.

Empower Hour

This spring, MRISJ introduced Empower Hour, a drop-in event led by our voting and civic action ambassadors. Created to help students connect with resources through peer-to-peer conversation, our VCAs connected with 50 students across seven sessions, helping them find ways to volunteer, use their voice to create change and connect with others taking action in their community.

MRISJ also offered two focused Empower Hour sessions in partnership with the Lewis and Gaines Center for Inclusion and Equity (LGCIE) and the Pride Center's Trans Identity Group (TIG) for students connected to their departments.

Advancing Accessibility

In partnership with the Department of Special Education, Film Studies program and Student Accessibility Services (SAS), MRISJ co-hosted an event this spring featuring curated clips from the PBS Experience documentary, *Change Not Charity: The Americans with Disabilities Act*. The event focused on the importance, complexities and challenges of public policy relating to disability justice and ways that documentaries can highlight social justice issues. Following the film, 43 participants engaged in a moderated discussion and Q&A session.

MRISJ was also excited to participate in SAS's fourth annual Be Seen event. This campuswide visual demonstration honors disability identities, raises awareness of disability rights and inspires accessibility. Our staff, student employees and faculty partners joined the campus community in sporting hot pink to share their message of belonging and inclusion.



MRISJ student employees pose with Bristaco while tabling at Be Seen.

Social Justice in the Classroom



Now in its second full academic year, the interdisciplinary Social Justice Studies minor reached an enrollment of 50 undergraduates by spring 2026, seven of whom were MRISJ student employees. The minor currently has 160 approved, existing electives that fulfill minor requirements for its four elective courses and a total of 94 courses that also fulfill core requirements, making social justice studies even more accessible to BSU students. We extend our congratulations to the 14 students who graduated this year with the minor.

"[Social justice] is something we have to keep working toward...It's not just about big moments in history or major laws; it's also about the small, everyday actions, words and choices that either include people or push them aside. What stood out to me the most is how important it is to challenge unfair systems and ideas—not just to notice them, but to speak up and take action."

Activate the Advocate

Our student-developed Activate the Advocate series returned this spring for the second year. This two-part series offered students the opportunity to build their advocacy knowledge and skills in a hands-on advocacy 101 workshop, followed by an optional trip to the Massachusetts State House. In collaboration with MRISJ staff, BSU's 2025-2026 Newman Civic Fellow Joshua Neff, '27, worked to pilot an extension of the program centered on advocacy at the campus and local levels. MRISJ partnered with selected student groups and organizations including Student Government Association (SGA), Environmental Action Team (EAT), Global Brigades, and our MRISJ student employees cohort to discuss the various ways students can engage in advocacy on campus and in the local community. We look forward to continuing to develop this series as an ongoing MRISJ workshop.

Advocacy 101 Workshop

In part one, Activate the Advocate participants attended an interactive workshop led by our Newman Civic Fellow and supported by voting and civic action ambassadors and MRISJ staff. These sessions helped students identify their social justice interests and provided them with the knowledge and resources to become more civically engaged. The session started with the basics, reviewing the branches of government to identify the many ways their voices can advocate for change at the local, state and national levels. Equipped with this foundational knowledge, students were introduced to the various tools available to identify state legislators and advocacy organizations. Students walked through the process on their own, looking up their elected officials to become familiar with these resources.



Students participate in an exercise at an Activate the Advocate workshop.

Participants also learned about the impact of storytelling as a tool in advocacy work, crafting narratives that convey their thoughts, ideas and experiences and make their voices heard. As a group they used templates to create a script to use when communicating with legislators, using these as a step-by-step plan to put their thoughts into action. In total, 61 students completed our Advocacy 101 workshops, which were offered three times.

State House Visit

Activate the Advocate also offered an optional part two, a trip to the Massachusetts State House, for students who completed an Advocacy 101 workshop. This excursion offered students the opportunity to put their knowledge into action and gain real world experience connecting with their elected officials.

Twelve students traveled with MRISJ and met with Representative Dennis Gallagher (Plymouth County) and legislative aide Evan Francis, '25. Participants also attended meetings at their state representatives' and state senators' offices about issues that were important to them. Topics included affordable higher education, access to physical health and mental health care, opposition to the war in Iran and genocide in Palestine, substance abuse treatment and making Election Day a state holiday.



Twelve BSU students visit the MA State House.



Voter Registration

In alignment with MRISJ's goal of increasing the number of students registered to vote, the MRISJ team hosted a total of 11 nonpartisan voter registration tables, engaging a total of 550 students. Because every year is an election year, our student voting and civic action ambassadors work year-round to promote voter registration, offering opportunities for students to check their voter registration status, register to vote online and ask questions about the voting process.

MRISJ held multiple voter registration tables in the RSU and in University Park with a particular focus on National Voter Education Week in October, and coordinated with other campus offices and events to have BSU Votes tables at the Latine Heritage Month celebration, commuter student events, Homecoming, the Study Abroad Fair, Health Equity Fair and Be Seen.



VCAA Sophia P. talks to Marketing Assistant Blake about voting.

Promoting Voter Education

MRISJ kicked off National Voter Education Week with our annual VoteFest voter resource fair joined by local organizations, campus partners and BSU student groups involved in voter education efforts on campus and in the community. Attendees connected with our partners to learn more about key issues on the ballot, gain a better understanding of the election process, create personalized voting plans and discover where to get information on candidates, ballot questions and more to be informed at the polls.

Overall, 90 students stopped by to engage with partners and initiatives including Alternative Break, American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts (ACLU of MA), Bridgewater Communities for Civil Rights (BCCR), Center for Student Engagement (CSE), Pride Center, Lewis and Gaines Center for Inclusion and Equity (LGCIE), the Social Justice Studies minor, Student Government Association (SGA), Study Abroad Office and the Wellness Center's Vote4Health initiative.



A student stops to get more information on the Social Justice Studies minor.

Campus Compact Newman Civic Fellowship

Each year BSU nominates one student to serve as a student leader on campus through the Campus Compact Newman Civic Fellowship. This program offers leadership opportunities, mentorship and connects the fellow to a network of student leaders from across the nation. BSU hosts a fellow as a member institution of Campus Compact, a higher education association dedicated to civic and community engagement in higher education.

Our 2025-2026 Newman Civic Fellow, Joshua Neff, '27, worked alongside MRISJ staff to pilot an extension of our Activate the Advocate workshop series with selected campus groups focused on advocacy at the campus and local levels. We look forward to welcoming Gillian Misner, '27, as our 2026-2027 Newman Civic Fellow.



Joshua presenting an Activate the Advocate workshop.

CIVIC SPEAKER SERIES

MRISJ's 2025-2026 Civic Speaker Series brought 239 students, staff, faculty, alumni and members of the greater Bridgewater community together to highlight civic leaders from across the world. This signature series features multiple speakers throughout the year and inspires attendees to spark conversation, share ideas, and act for social change, in line with our mission to advance social justice through individual and collective action. This year our Civic Speaker Series featured a range of speakers covering topics including the electoral and organizing power of Latinos, the struggle for Black political rights and women's prison abolition.



Paola Ramos is joined by Academic Director Dr. José Lara in the Dana Mohler-Faria Science and Mathematics Center Auditorium.

The Electoral and Organizing Power of Latinos | September

Emmy award-winning journalist Paola Ramos joined us on campus to discuss the power of Latinos and how far-right perspectives within Latino communities are shaping the future of America. This Civic Speaker Series event was one of the signature events commemorating BSU's 185th anniversary celebration. In a Q&A session moderated by MRISJ's Academic Director Dr. José Lara, we explored the debates around the term "Latinx" and the diversity within Latino identities. Ramos joined us for a reception and book signing ahead of the event.

The Significance of Black History | March

Historian Dr. Keisha Blain joined us for a conversation on Black political rights and the ways Black people have taken action to ensure their full rights as citizens of the U.S. Moderated by MRISJ faculty associate Dr. Sheena Rancher, the discussion explored how the struggle for Black political rights has shaped the U.S. and how activists have called on everyone to play a role in building an inclusive democracy.

What Does Justice Require? A Panel on Women's Prison Abolition in MA | March

MRISJ and the Department of Criminal Justice co-sponsored a panel on women's prison abolition in Massachusetts. MRISJ Faculty Associate Dr. Asa Iacobucci led the discussion among Department Chair Dr. Jennifer Hartsfield, BSU student Jolene Hebert, and Families for Justice as Healing Co-Director Sashi James. They explored the stated purposes of incarceration compared with what it actually accomplishes, weighed in on the plan for a proposed new \$360 million women's prison and stressed the importance of including the lived experiences of incarcerated women into the planning process.

FACULTY ENGAGEMENT

Collaborating with Faculty Associates

As MRISJ Academic Director, Dr. José Lara coordinates BSU's new Social Justice Studies minor and consults with BSU full-time and part-time faculty about how to include social justice concepts and approaches into their courses, scholarship and departmental work. During Dr. Lara's sabbatical during the spring 2026 semester, Dr. Sheena Rancher (Special Education) served as interim academic director. MRISJ's two faculty associates, Dr. Seth Meyer (Political Science) and Dr. Asa Iacobucci (Criminal Justice) also worked with MRISJ staff to ensure that programs and partnerships benefit from faculty expertise and foster connections and collaborations with academic departments and programs.

This year our faculty partners served as leaders in social justice education events and initiatives by:

- Collaborating with MRISJ staff to plan and lead the 2026 MRISJ summer faculty institute on civic learning and media literacy.
- Co-planning and participating in social justice education events such as the women's prison abolition panel and documentary screenings of *UNION* and *Change Not Charity: The Americans with Disabilities Act*.
- Analyzing data alongside our student voting & civic action ambassadors from a student voting survey developed by our 2024-2025 cohort and writing a report on student voting behavior in the fall 2024 election.
- Reviewing the 2026 MRISJ summer faculty mini-grant applications and selecting recipients.
- Serving as civic speaker series conversation partners.

UNION Documentary Screening

In November 2026, MRISJ and the Department of Communication co-sponsored a screening of *UNION*, a documentary chronicling the efforts of Amazon warehouse workers who launched a grassroots campaign to create the Amazon Labor Union. Emmy-winning director, Steve Maing and Amazon worker's union organizer Zara Cadoux joined us for a Q&A session moderated by Professor Timothy Raycroft following the screening. Professor Raycroft planned the event as a summer 2025 MRISJ faculty mini-grant project.

Faculty Institute

MRISJ offers an annual institute for faculty to support their professional development and lifelong learning to incorporate social justice and civic engagement in their multifaceted work at BSU.

Our 2026 faculty institute, *Civic Learning and Media Literacy*, featured Dr. Nicholas Longo, the inaugural director of the Democracy Lab at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University - New Brunswick and Dr. Eyal Hanfling, director of the Democracy Lab's Technology and Democracy Research Hub. Participants discussed civic education, with a particular focus on media literacy.

We welcomed a total of 40 participants from BSU, with 20 full-time faculty, 15 part-time faculty, four administrators and one librarian from 19 different academic departments including anthropology, communication, computer science, criminal justice, English, geography, mathematics, philosophy, political science, social work and more.



Dr. Nicholas Longo (left) and Dr. Eyal Hanfling (right).

"The faculty institute was a valuable and engaging experience that provided practical resources and meaningful opportunities for reflection and collaboration...The discussions with colleagues from different disciplines offered new perspectives and generated ideas that I can adapt to my own teaching and curriculum development efforts. I also appreciated the supportive and inclusive environment that encouraged open dialogue and the sharing of experiences."

Faculty Mini-Grants

The MRISJ awards small monetary grants ranging from \$500-\$1,750 to part-time and full-time faculty members at BSU. Grants are awarded to faculty for their original research, teaching projects such as creating a new course or updating an existing course, community-engaged projects, purchasing educational resources and departmental learning projects for multiple faculty members within a department.

All projects must be related to social justice. Those that address civic engagement and racial justice, focus on BSU's connection to Bridgewater and gateway cities, or are interdisciplinary and collaborative are given priority ratings.

We awarded funding to 14 BSU full- and part-time faculty members to support a total of 15 projects including eight teaching projects, four community-engaged projects and three research projects during summer 2026.

Faculty Mini-Grant Highlights

- Dr. Ashley Hansen-Brown (Psychology) explored racially marginalized college students' perceptions of core curriculum courses. She analyzed quantitative and qualitative data from three studies (including a dataset of BSU students), disaggregated by race/ethnicity, to explore the beliefs held by college students of color about these classes. This project will inform new research questions focused on how students of color experience core courses, and what interventions BSU might implement to better retain our students of color.
- Dr. Brooke Merritt (Communication Sciences & Disorders) worked to build a Gender-Affirming Communication Services (GACS) program at BSU. Dr. Merritt purchased professional textbooks for use by graduate student clinicians and supervising faculty, technology for in-house voice-training apps, higher-quality microphones for clinic computers to improve audio quality for assessment and tele-practice, and other tools, including the exploration of a quality-of-life assessment tool to measure communication-gender congruence.
- Professor Jill Fagerberg (Criminal Justice) offered a workshop series, *Restoring Your Story: A Restorative Justice/Transformative Justice (RJTJ)* for incarcerated people inside Plymouth County Correctional Facility. The discussion-based series utilized the RJTJ circle model to facilitate meaningful conversations via experiential learning. Three BSU undergraduate students also received additional support and mentorship so that they can facilitate circles and new RJTJ workshops in the future.
- Dr. Karen Hamilton (Accounting & Finance) explored how Total Cost of Risk (TCOR) analysis can incorporate risks associated with socioeconomic, racial and environmental justice. She conducted a literature review, interviewed local municipality representatives about the extent to which they consider these risks in municipal decisions and sought guidance from professionals working on these issues. She defined and modeled a set of justice factors and incorporated them into TCOR analysis, with the goal of introducing the analysis to municipalities so they can use it to inform their resource allocation and long-term capital investment decisions.
- Dr. Maurice Williams Jr. (Secondary Education & Educational Leadership) conducted an asset-based exploration of the cultural wealth that incoming BSU first-year students (particularly students of color, first-generation students, and students from low-income backgrounds) bring with them to college. The findings will be translated into actionable strategies that will be shared with faculty, staff and student support professionals to promote belonging, persistence and success among BSU students.



Filmmaking for Social Justice

In spring 2026, students from Dr. Colleen Kelly Poplin's new upper-level Filmmaking for Social Justice course partnered with campus social justice departments and initiatives to create advocacy media that supports their mission. Students navigated the realities of working with external clients. They managed the ups and downs of collaboration, scheduling and production setbacks and feedback that pushed them beyond typical classroom expectations.

Student teams worked with MRISJ, Student Accessibility Services (SAS), the Racial Equity and Justice Institute (REJI), Pride Center, Lewis and Gaines Center for Inclusion and Equity (LGCIE), EXCEL, and the Wellness Center's Alcohol and Drug Program. This course was supported by a 2025 MRISJ summer teaching mini-grant.

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

Career Readiness

In alignment with BSU's commitment to provide students with access to professional development, skill-building and thriving career pathways, we were excited to offer several opportunities focused on career exploration and readiness for MRISJ-affiliated students.

Collaborating with our colleagues in Career Services and Internships, MRISJ offered multiple career exploration activities. In the fall, we offered a 16 Personalities workshop, followed by a Life Design studio in the spring tailored to our student employees. These opportunities helped students identify their strengths and values, explore the skills gained through MRISJ and other experiences and develop an action plan with next steps to help achieve their goals.

MRISJ also invited recent BSU alumni back to campus for our annual alumni panel. Our four panelists, who had been previously involved in a variety of MRISJ programs as undergraduates, shared how their experiences in college shaped their values, skills and career trajectories and answered questions from current students.

Martin Richard Fellow Scholarship

Established in 2022 by BSU alumni Bill and Denise Richard, both members of the class of '93, the Martin Richard Fellow Scholarship provides a pathway for students to earn their bachelor's degree debt-free in memory of their son Martin Richard.

Each year one student is selected and awarded \$25,000 per year for up to four years (\$100,000 total) at Bridgewater State University, which includes the cost of tuition, fees, housing, a meal plan, technology and supplies. The scholarship was awarded to four students as they graduated from Dorchester's Neighborhood House Charter School and enrolled at BSU.

In fall 2025, we welcomed Analisa Hector as the fourth scholarship recipient.



Additional Partnerships

Community Partners

- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Massachusetts
- Bridgewater Communities for Civil Rights (BCCR)
- Brockton Interfaith Community
- Easterseals of Massachusetts
- Father Bill's & MainSpring
- Juneteenth Celebration Committee (BCCR)
- Neighborhood House Charter School
- Old Colony YMCA
- Outreach Program
- Project PACK
- Rhode Island Blood Center
- School on Wheels of Massachusetts
- Sharing the Harvest Community Farm

Campus Partners

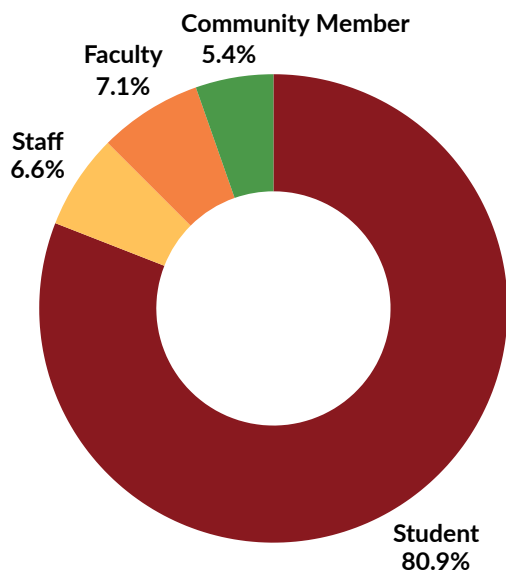
- Academic Achievement Center
- Admissions
- Alumni and Development
- BSU Food Pantry
- Career Services and Internships
- Center for Student Engagement (CSE)
- Community Health and Prevention
- EXCEL Program
- Honors Program
- Lewis and Gaines Center for Inclusion and Equity (LGCIE)
- Pride Center
- Residence Life and Housing
- Student Accessibility Services (SAS)
- Student Professional Development
- Study Abroad
- University Events
- Wellness Center

FACTS & FIGURES

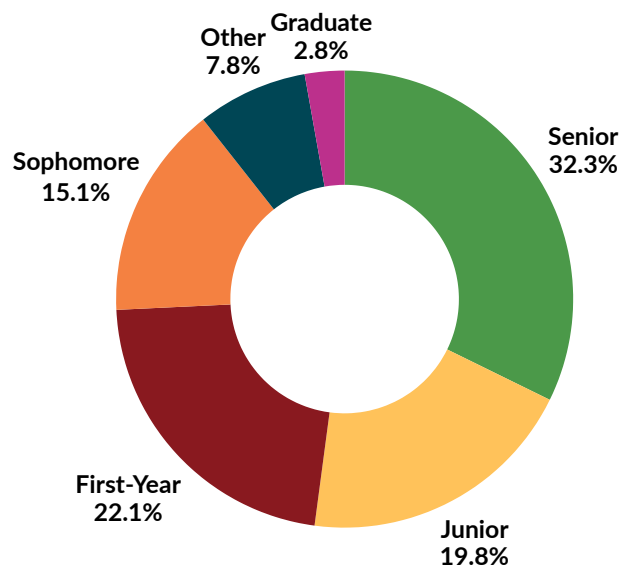
During academic year 2025-2026, the Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice welcomed 2,103 students, faculty, staff and community participants across all of our events and other engagement opportunities. Many folks joined us for multiple events throughout the year, with a total of 893 unique participants connecting with the MRISJ. We offered 67 engagement opportunities including service projects, educational events, voter education and registration tables and cohort-based programs.

Faculty and students from across the university joined MRISJ, highlighting the interdisciplinary interest in and commitment to social justice within the BSU community. We look forward to continuing our work to advance social justice and empower individuals to take action in their communities.

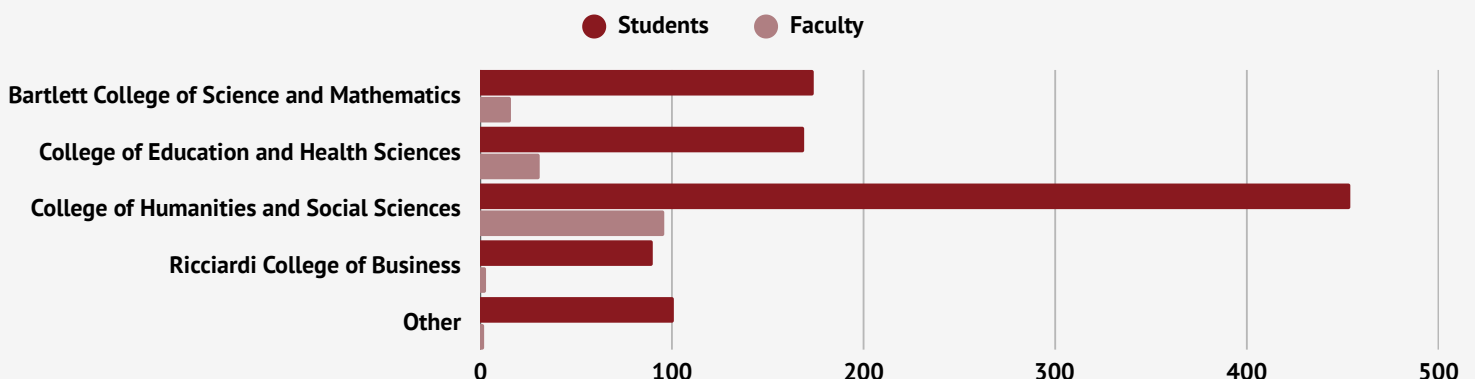
Participation by Affiliation



Student Participation by Class Year



Participation by College Affiliation





**MARTIN RICHARD
INSTITUTE FOR
SOCIAL JUSTICE**

STAY

Connected

Visit our website!



bit.ly/bsumrisj



508-531-2199



MRISJ@bridgew.edu



@bsumrisj



BSU Institute for Social Justice



161 Summer Street
Bridgewater, MA 02325