

## DEPARTMENT OF

## SOCIOLOGY

**THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY** has wrapped up another successful semester and is pleased to share some of the exciting things that have been happening with our alumni, students, and friends. Following a few brief highlights are some stories about the great things being done by our faculty, students, and alumni.

### Professor Cynthia Buckley and colleagues recommended for full funding by the U.S. Government's Minerva Initiative

Directed by Professor Buckley and colleagues at West Virginia University and Florida International University, a five-year collaborative project, "The Central Eurasian State Capacity Initiative: Assessing Threats to Geopolitical Stability and Conflict along Russia's Periphery," has been recommended for full funding by the U.S. Government's Minerva Initiative. Pending the end of the government shutdown, this interdisciplinary \$1.15 million project will be shared between West Virginia University and the University of Illinois. In collaboration with colleagues in Georgia, Estonia, and Ukraine, these researchers seek to expand current approaches to state capacity to include subjective and objective assessments of elections, educational opportunities, and health care access in contentious border regions in order to better identify triggers of socio-political conflict.



### Professor Ruby Mendenhall named assistant dean

Professor Mendenhall has been named the Assistant Dean for Diversity and Democratization of Health Innovation at the Carle Illinois College of Medicine. In her role as assistant dean, which began in summer 2018, Professor Mendenhall will work on health and well-being research, curriculum development, diversity initiatives, translational activities, and public engagement/citizen scientists initiatives. The Carle Illinois College of Medicine is gearing up to launch their inaugural Health Maker Lab Competition this spring. Everyone at U of I, as well as every member of our community throughout Champaign County, will be eligible to submit an idea. Community members/citizen scientists will be empowered to participate in Health Maker Lab competitions around ideas to improve health and wellness. Ten winners will receive a Health Maker Lab coin backed by \$10,000 that can be spent over the course of one year at any of the participating maker/design labs to transform the winning idea into a prototype. Look for more announcements about the competition in February 2019. More information about Professor Mendenhall's position in the College of Medicine can be found here: [go.las.illinois.edu/mendenhall-ad19](https://go.las.illinois.edu/mendenhall-ad19).





## **Professors McDermott and Sandefur to be visiting scholars at the Russell Sage Foundation next year**

Russell Sage Foundation is the principal American foundation devoted exclusively to research in the social sciences. The Foundation annually awards about 17 residential fellowships to social scientists to pursue their research and writing on the complex and shifting nature of social and economic life in the United States. Congratulations to Professors McDermott and Sandefur!

## **Criminology, Law, and Society Minor**

Launched three semesters ago, our new minor in Criminology, Law, and Society (CLS) has attracted considerable student attention. We now have 146 declared CLS minors!

## **Alumna Jennifer Carrera (PhD 2014) received NIEHS Career Award**

Jennifer Carrera is an assistant professor of sociology at Michigan State University. In 2018, she was awarded a Transition to Independent Environmental Health Research Career Award (K01) from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) within the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to work with community partners in Flint, Michigan, to develop low-cost technologies for understanding environmental risks and protecting public health.





# Sandefur wins MacArthur Fellowship

*by Craig Chamberlain, social sciences editor, Illinois News Bureau*

**Rebecca Sandefur**, a professor of sociology and of law at the University of Illinois, has been awarded a 2018 MacArthur Fellowship, commonly known as a “genius grant,” from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

The fellowship carries an unrestricted \$625,000 stipend to be used as the fellow sees best. Sandefur said her plan is to use the award “to help bring new attention and new energy to solving what has been so far an intractable problem, the critical issue of access to civil justice.”

Sandefur’s research has focused on how legal services are delivered and consumed, especially in low-income communities, and has sought to promote a new, evidence-based approach to increasing access to civil justice for those communities.

According to the MacArthur Foundation’s description of the program, fellows are chosen according to three criteria: “Exceptional creativity, promise for important future advances based on a track record of significant

accomplishments, and potential for the fellowship to facilitate subsequent creative work.”

Sandefur is the eighth U of I faculty member to receive the fellowship since 1981 and the first since 2014.

In announcing the fellowship, the MacArthur Foundation noted that “although the outcomes of civil cases are potentially life-changing — including eviction, loss of custody of a child, wage garnishment or loss of government or insurance benefits — one or more parties lack legal representation in more than three-quarters of cases filed in state civil courts today. Sandefur’s investigations of the civil justice needs of low-income populations are shedding light on the availability of civil legal aid services, the help-seeking behavior of individuals facing civil legal issues, and the impact of lawyers in civil cases.”

*(continued on page 4)*



*(Sandefur continued)*

The foundation cited several key Sandefur studies in its announcement: the first systematic national mapping of civil legal-aid providers, revealing significant disparities between states; a study showing that cost is just one of many factors that inhibit the use of lawyers by low-income individuals; an analysis of pro bono services revealing that the quantity and quality are highly dependent on market forces, and become less available when most needed; and a meta-analysis of research showing that, in most cases, the advantage of a lawyer relative to a lay person resides mostly in the ability to navigate procedures and rules rather than in deep knowledge of the law.



In current work, Sandefur is advising and evaluating pilot projects in New York, Washington, and Montana that use nonlawyer alternatives.

She also is a Faculty Fellow of the American Bar Foundation and a central contributor to the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development's new global program on access to justice.

The original Illinois News Bureau story can be found here: [go.las.illinois.edu/sandefur-fellowship19](http://go.las.illinois.edu/sandefur-fellowship19).





# Alumnus at DePauw — Matthew Oware

by Dawn McNulty, undergraduate advisor, sociology

Alumnus **Matthew Oware** (1995) recently published, “I Got Something to Say: Race, Gender, and Consciousness in Rap Music,” (Palgrave Macmillan 2018). In a conversation with undergraduate advisor Dawn McNulty, he shared his Illinois experience.

Oware entered Illinois in 1990 intent on majoring in engineering and computer science following the guidance of his parents who encouraged him to “study something that would make money.” Though this was over 25 years ago, many current students can relate to this same line of thought. He found himself uninspired by the courses for these majors, but really enjoyed a sociology course he took with Professor William Martin. He shared thoughts from that time that resonate with many of our current students: “this really interests me, but I can’t figure out what I could do with it,” he said. A second sociology course, Race and Ethnicity, with Professor Shirley Hatchett further solidified his desire to pursue a sociology major: “This speaks to what I talk about with my friends about, the issues I think about, what is pertinent in my world,” he said. Mentored by Professor Martin, Matthew pursued his passion and ultimately received his master’s degree and PhD from Indiana University in Bloomington.

When asked about the topic of his book, Oware explained that he grew up in Chicago listening to rap music. He started to contemplate the academic relevance of themes such as gender and race within rap lyrics. He questioned: “what can we learn from this genre that helps inform our discussions about particular sociological theories?” While rap is not a normative topic in sociology, DePauw University allowed Matthew the opportunity to explore this area without fear or judgement. One of the most poignant comments from Oware was: “This is the ‘power’ of what sociology can do.”

Oware shared words of advice for current Illinois students. “College is a time for exploration. Take a wide variety of classes to see what you are interested in,” he said. Oware believes sociology creates critical thinkers and provides a valuable skill set for students. For example, sociologists are trained to make sense of statistical data. “Illinois has rigorous methods and



statistics courses, and topical areas that are immensely important to understanding current issues related to gender, race, and class,” he said. Oware is the Lester Martin Jones Professor of Sociology and the current director of Africana Studies at DePauw University. Oware served two terms as chair of the sociology and anthropology department. He is the recipient of the George and Virginia Crane Distinguished Teaching Award and the Edwin L. Minar Jr. Scholarship Award. Oware teaches a variety of courses including Contemporary Society, Methods of Social Research, Senior Seminar, Sociology of Popular Culture, Sociology of Hip Hop, Race and Ethnic Relations in the United States, and Masculinities, among others.

A description of Oware’s new book can be found here: [go.las.illinois.edu/oware-book19](https://go.las.illinois.edu/oware-book19).



# Flavianus Magayane Fieldwork Grant

**Flavianus Magayane** was an alumnus of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Originally from Mwanza, Tanzania, he went on to become a professor of rural sociology at Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA). Having also participated in the CRISP program that provided training to emerging scholars in agriculture for international participants, Magayane was a key mentor for undergraduate and graduate students alike. He was also a bridge between Tanzanian and American culture and between the worlds of academia and community development. **The Flavianus Magayane Fieldwork Grant** aims to contribute toward the cost of fieldwork in sub-Saharan Africa for one graduate student from his alma mater who is completing a degree in sociology or a related field. Preference is given to those students who have not traveled to sub-Saharan Africa previously and who would not otherwise be able to complete their fieldwork without additional support. The grant is made in the spirit of Flavianus Magayane to promote cross-cultural

exchange between the U.S. and sub-Saharan Africa. The aim of the grant is also to improve the understanding and promote the study and advancement of rural communities in sub-Saharan African as well as African history, culture, and Swahili. The grant was founded in 2019 in memory of Professor Flavianus Magayane in continuation of his work in rural sociology and student development.



## Alpha Kappa Delta

In December 2018, the Department of Sociology and the Gamma Chapter (University of Illinois) of Alpha Kappa Delta International Honors Society for Sociology (AKD) inducted new members. The fall inductees were Emily Etzkorn and Alicia Roughton (juniors), Haley Kennedy, Naoto Kubota, Sanskriti Khurana, Bianca Lopez, Ryan Ludwig, Meegan Mayer, and Ziding Shen (seniors), and Patrick Levine and Ajay Singh (graduate students).

The department's AKD advisor is Professor Jane VanHeuvelen. This is Jane's second year as advisor, and she notes that she enjoys serving in this capacity "because it has allowed me to work with and get to know students outside of the regular classroom environment." Jane received her PhD from Indiana University. Her research interests are primarily in the areas of medical sociology and social organizations.

This year's keynote speaker was Professor Tom VanHeuvelen. Tom is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology, joining the faculty fall semester 2016 after completing his PhD at the Indiana

University. His research interests are in the areas of social stratification, political sociology, comparative and historical sociology, the sociology of culture, and quantitative methodology. In Tom's remarks to this year's AKD inductees, he talked about why he believes that sociology is important, and why it is important to have excellent students taking themselves seriously and thinking deeply about big social problems.



*Pictured from left to right: Patrick Levine, Ajay Singh, Sanskriti Khurana, Alicia Roughton, Emily Etzkorn, and Haley Kennedy.*



# Stay in Touch

**Do you have internship opportunities for Sociology undergraduates?**



Sociology students possess several skills your organization may be looking for in an intern: written and oral communication skills, computer/technical skills, leadership, teamwork, global competency, diversity awareness, and research/statistics. If your business or organization has potential internship opportunities, please let us know. If you cannot attend our Internship Fair, we can promote your opportunity on our website. Please email: **soc-advising@illinois.edu** with your opportunity or any questions you may have about the program.

## **We want to hear from you!**

Mail us your contact information, or enter it online at **bit.ly/RzNPGA**

Please mail to: Department of Sociology, 3120 Lincoln Hall MC454, 702 S. Wright St, MC 454, Urbana, IL 61801

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Year graduated \_\_\_\_\_ Degree granted \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Physical address \_\_\_\_\_

Current position \_\_\_\_\_ Organization/institution \_\_\_\_\_

Milestones/accomplishments \_\_\_\_\_

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