

EMPOWERING

SPECIAL POPULATIONS FOR TOMORROW



MICHIGAN OCCUPATIONAL SPECIAL POPULATIONS ASSOCIATION

2026 CONFERENCE

April 30 & May 1, 2026

Wayne County Community College District

Downriver Campus

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

On Behalf of the Conference Planning Committee



Ariel Maturine



Megan Downey-Gates

Dear MOSPA Conference Attendees,

As co-chairs of the MOSPA Conference, we are honored to have you join us once again—this year at Wayne County Community College District’s Downriver Campus. Building on last year’s milestone celebration, this year’s conference continues our shared commitment to advancing equity, access, and excellence for special populations in Career and Technical Education (CTE).

For more than five decades, MOSPA has brought together dedicated educators and professionals who are passionate about making a difference in the lives of students across Michigan. This year, we look ahead—focusing on new opportunities, evolving challenges, and innovative strategies to better serve our students and communities.

You can expect engaging sessions, important state updates, and meaningful opportunities to connect and collaborate with colleagues from across the state. Your participation and perspective are what make this conference so impactful.

We encourage you to take full advantage of your time here—share ideas, build relationships, and explore new approaches that will strengthen your work. As the needs of special populations continue to evolve, our collective efforts remain critical in shaping a stronger, more inclusive future for Michigan’s CTE programs.

Thank you for being part of this continued journey. We are excited to learn, grow, and move forward together.

With gratitude,

Ariel Maturine
MOSPA 2026 Conference Chair

Megan Downey-Gates
MOSPA 2026 Conference Co-Chair

Welcome to the 2026 MOSPA Conference



Megan Downey-Gates

Dear MOSPA Conference Attendees,

On behalf of the MOSPA Executive Council and our dedicated organizing committee, it is my distinct honor to welcome you to the MOSPA 2026 Conference! This year, we gather under a forward-looking theme: Empowering Special Populations For Tomorrow. My name is Megan Downey-Gates, and I am honored to serve as your MOSPA President. In my role at Grand Rapids Community College, I see firsthand the resilience of our CTE students. That same resilience and adaptability are what bring us together today.

A New Chapter in a New Setting

This year marks a significant transition for our organization. After many years at our previous venue, we are excited to host you at a new location: Wayne County Community College District Downriver. This move was a strategic decision made with you in mind. By addressing budget constraints and selecting this new venue, we have been able to make this conference more affordable for all attendees. Our goal is to ensure that the vital professional development and networking MOSPA provides remains accessible to the dedicated educators and advocates who need it most.

Focusing on the Future

Our theme, Empowering Special Populations For Tomorrow, serves as our North Star. In a rapidly evolving workforce, our role in Career and Technical Education has never been more critical. We are not just providing support for today; we are building the scaffolding for the careers and communities of the future.

Over the next few days, I encourage you to:

- Engage with workshops designed to tackle the unique challenges of CTE
- Connect and build bridges with colleagues from across the state
- Innovate by learning new strategies back to your school to spark real change.

The MOSPA conference remains a vital space for us to exchange best practices and strengthen the partnerships that drive equity and access throughout Michigan. Your unwavering dedication is the reason CTE continues to be a transformative force in our students' lives.

Thank you for your passion, your expertise, and your commitment to excellence. Let's make this conference impactful, forward-thinking, and, above all, a celebrated success!

Warm regards,

Megan Downey-Gates
MOSPA President

General Information



Awards

We invite nominations for the 2026 outstanding individual, program, or community partner who has gone above and beyond to support Special Population students and/or Occupational Programs/Career Technical Education. Five award categories are available for nomination, One secondary and one post-secondary winner will be selected for each category. The nomination form and criteria can be found by scanning the QR code in this section.

Door Prizes

Door prizes will be awarded at the conference wrap-up on Date at 9:15-9:45am. It is not guaranteed that all attendees will receive a door prize. For all attendees to receive a door prize, everyone must bring one to donate. You may drop off your door prize donation at conference registration. Remember to hold on to the ticket you received from registration when you dropped off your door prize to be eligible to win prizes on Friday's giveaway. Must be present to win.



Conference Breakout Sessions Evaluations

You will receive an evaluation link at the end of each session to share your feedback. We request that you fill out a breakout session evaluation online by scanning the QR code in this section, to open the form in an internet browser. Please assist in the continuation of the MOSPA Conference by providing your valued feedback after each session. This feedback assists with planning future conferences.

Name Badges

Your badge is your ticket to entry and must be worn at all times during the scheduled conference hours. Badges recognize you as a participant of the MOSPA conference. Name badge ribbons will also indicate the Conference Committee members, Executive Council members and Conference Presenters.

SCECHs

For conference participants who are interested in receiving SCECHs, please see the conference committee member at Registration.

MOSPA Board of Directors

Executive Council

Megan Downey-Gates – President

Amanda Koch – President Elect/Treasurer

Peter Gonzalez – Past President

Jennifer Crabtree – Secretary

Brigitte June – At-Large Representative

Ariel Maturine – Conference Chair

State Liasons

Secondary State Liason – Open

Post-Secondary State Liason – Virginia Zimmerman*

2026 Conference Committee Members

Ariel Maturine – Conference Co-Chair

Brigitte June – Conference Liaison

Megan Downey-Gates – Conference Co-Chair

Rhonda Donovan – Conference Support

Tiffany Hall – Edge Event Manager

GET SOCIAL WITH US!

Share your photos and tips you have learned throughout the conference.

Use **#MOSPA26** to share.



Regional Representatives			
Region 1	Tim Zimmerman	Region 1	Jennifer Marley
Region 2	Tammy Kelley	Region 2	Shawn Kadwell
Region 3	Peter Gonzales	Region 3	Erik Dedenbach
Region 3	Marina Pakhomova	Region 4	Amanda Koch
Region 5	Terri West	Region 6	Dorothy Getty-Gerlica
Region 7	Katrina Ware-Burchfield	Region 7	Josie Smith
Region 10	Rhonda Donovan	Region 10	Sue Tarrow
Region 11	Maria Schmidt	Region 8 and 9	Your Name Here (Vacant)

Tentative Conference Agenda

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29TH

4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Registration
WCCCD Downriver

6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

MOSPA Board Meeting
WCCCD Downriver
Dinner on your own (for attendees arriving early)

THURSDAY, APRIL 30TH

7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Help Desk

7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Registration

8:30 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

Light Breakfast

9:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Keynote Speaker
Donald Walker
Building Pathways through Equity, Opportunity and Purpose

10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Concurrent Breakout Sessions I

12:15 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

MOSPA State Awards Banquet & Lunch

1:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Concurrent Breakout Sessions II

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Networking Break

3:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.

Concurrent Breakout Sessions III

5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Dinner on your own

7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

MOSAP Social Hour at Home2Suites Courtyard

FRIDAY, MAY 1ST

7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Help Desk

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

Coffee & Networking

8:30 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

Concurrent Breakout Session IV

10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Brunch Keynote & Door Prizes
Sarah Rose
Hold the Mission, Hold You: Clear Sustainability for Perkins Professionals

Keynote Speakers



Donald Walker

Donald Walker is a leader, scholar, and advocate working at the intersection of career and technical education, workforce development, and inclusive learning design. He serves as Region 2 Director for the Michigan STEM Network, building partnerships across education, industry, and community organizations to expand access to high-quality STEM and career-connected learning.

He also serves as Vice President and Trustee of the Farmington Public Schools Board of Education, where he leads community engagement and policy efforts to ensure inclusive and equitable decision-making.

Previously, Donald held leadership roles with Detroit Public Schools Community District and Specs Howard School of Media Arts, developing career-focused programs that connect education to workforce opportunities.

A doctoral candidate at Wayne State University, his research focuses on expanding equitable access to CTE, particularly for underrepresented students. He has presented nationally and serves as a Postsecondary Leadership Fellow with Advance CTE.

Across his work, Donald is committed to creating pathways that connect education to purpose and opportunity for all learners.



Sarah Rose

Perkins professionals carry the critical responsibility of translating complex systems into access, stability, and opportunity for the students they serve. This work often involves supporting individuals facing a wide range of challenges, including disability, language barriers, parenting responsibilities, foster care experiences, and financial instability. While the mission is deeply meaningful and impactful, the pace, complexity of systems, and emotional weight of the work can quietly lead to ongoing stress, constant urgency, and the risk of burnout.

This interactive keynote is designed to help participants step back and rethink how they approach their work in order to create a more sustainable path forward. Through a practical five-step CLEAR framework, participants will explore strategies to slow down the relentless pace, strengthen autonomy and decision-making, and implement realistic approaches to personal and team wellbeing. The session will guide attendees in identifying common signs of burnout, recognizing the hidden friction points that drain time and energy, and understanding how these challenges show up in their day-to-day responsibilities.

Most importantly, attendees will leave with tangible, actionable steps they can implement immediately—tools and strategies that will help improve their clarity, restore energy, and strengthen their capacity to continue supporting students in meaningful and sustainable ways.

Breakout Sessions

CLASSROOM 5206

10:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Breakout Session #1

Helping student find their fit in CTE: Retention thru Success Coaching, Presented by Joyce Hovermale | Audience: Post-Secondary

1:45 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Breakout Session #2

An Unexpected Leader, Presented by Rhonda Donvoan | Audience: Post-Secondary & Secondary

3:30 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.

Breakout Session #3

Post-Secondary Special Pops Brainstorming & Best Practices Roundtable, Presented by Megan Downey-Gates | Audience: Post-Secondary

8:30 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.

Breakout Session #4

Perkins Postsecondary Update, Presented by Virginia Zimmerman & Neco Jackson | Audience: Post-Secondary

CLASSROOM 5208

10:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Breakout Session #1

Designing for Equity in CTE: UDL, Identity, and Systems for Better Outcomes, Presented by Donald Walker | Audience: Secondary

3:30 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.

Breakout Session #3

CTE SOS: Supporting Our Students, One Resource at a Time, Presented by Ariel Maturine | Audience: Secondary

8:30 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.

Breakout Session #4

Design for the ADHD Brain: Classroom Strategies To Unlock Ability & Lower Resistance, Presented by Sarah Rose | Audience: Secondary

MOSPA Award Winners



Outstanding Student Award – Secondary

Jeremiah Queen

Lapeer Education and Technology Center

Nominated by Becki Bushong-Weller Teacher

Jeremiah is a senior at Lapeer Education and Technology Center in the Architecture and Engineering program. This year his work included working with the Construction Trades Teacher and Paraprofessional to complete the blueprints for the house that Construction Trades built. He has overcome many challenges but has persevered and shown tremendous personal growth. He plans to attend community college and transfer to Lawrence Technological University to pursue Architecture.

Outstanding Student Award – Secondary

Riley Coulter

Lapeer Education and Technology Center

Nominated by Teresa Hill

Riley is in Nursing Careers at Lapeer Education and Technology Center to become a nurse to care for people. She has mastered many skills in which she received a silver medal in HOSA (Heath Occupation Students of America) for Personal Care in competition. Riley is one of the first students to get up and practice skills, does her share in group projects, and takes great pride in doing well in her schoolwork. She has been involved with Mission 22 (for Veterans), food collection for our local food bank, and a hat and mitten tree for local elementary school children.



Outstanding Support Staff Secondary Award

Shae (Shannon) Fournier

Calhoun Area Career Center

Nominated by Suzann Berlien

Shae continuously shows a strong dedication to helping students from special populations by making sure they get the direction, inspiration and tailored support they require to thrive. She works in three classrooms to provide crucial support to educators and learners. Shae also extends her influence to kids to gain structure, academic supervision, and mentoring by teaching at the Michigan Youth Challenge Academy in the evenings in addition to her daytime position. Shae's sincere compassion and dedication to prioritizing kids are among her most noteworthy traits. She is dependable, flexible, and has a supportive demeanor that is a vital part of the educational community.

MOSPA Award Winners



Outstanding Professional Secondary Award

Chris Throne

Shiawassee RESD

Nominated by Nicholas Prestly and Brian Kiesling

Chris Throne plays a key role in supporting special populations students within the Agriscience Career and Technical Education (CTE) program at Corunna High School. He works directly with students to ensure they are able to safely and successfully participate in all aspects of instruction. Chris regularly collaborates with teachers to understand lesson objectives, safety procedures, and technical skill requirements so he can better assist students during instruction and lab activities. Chris also consistently goes above and beyond to ensure that special population students feel valued, capable, and included in every aspect of the program.

Outstanding Student – Post Secondary

Jap Daxson G. De Torres

Wayne County Community College District

Nominated by Mattie Porter



Outstanding Program – Post-Secondary

Bay Mills Community College

Early Childhood Education Program

Nominated by Sheryl Hammock

Bay Mills Community College (BMCC), a tribally controlled community college located in Michigan's Eastern Upper Peninsula, has provided high-quality and accessible early childhood educational programming since 1999. The Early Childhood Education Program is the highest enrollment program offered by BMCC, demonstrating the need for such a program. The HOPE (Honoring Our People through Education) program, initially funded through the ACF/OHS, has exceeded all expectations in terms of new student enrollment, persistence, and academic success. The ECE program has an 84% retention rate (full and part-time) for all levels of ECE students.

MOSPA Award Winners



Michelle Glenn Award for Excellence in Education

Brigitte June

**Wayne County Community College District – Downriver Campus
Nominated by Megan Downey-Gates and Peter Gonzalez**

The Michelle Glenn award recognizes individuals who provide exemplary service and demonstrate a level of dedication to Special Population and Career Technical Education that mirrors the commitment of Michelle Glenn herself. Brigitte serves as the very core of what MOSPA represents, acting as a student advocate who specializes in supporting students with disabilities in higher education. Her unique contributions have significantly impacted our profession by fostering a culture of profound inclusion and belonging. She has served as a MOSPA Representative at Large for a few years and often refers to the annual MOSPA conference as the “MOSPA Reunion.” Brigitte’s leadership has fostered a more equitable environment across the district, ensuring that every student, regardless of their background, has an equal shot at a professional career alive with passion and purpose.

Outstanding Support Staff – Post-Secondary

Lynn Shemwell

Wayne County Community College District – Downriver Campus

Lynn Shemwell has played a key role in advancing inclusive outreach and community partnerships within the Technical Careers Division at Lansing Community College – West Campus. Through her work, the division has created accessible pathways into high-demand technical careers for special populations, including students with disabilities, neurodiverse learners, and underserved communities. She has supported initiatives such as Tech Forward events, which promote mentorship, representation, and career exploration through hands-on experiences and industry engagement. Lynn has also contributed to the development of the Sensory-Friendly Open House, providing a welcoming, low-stimulation environment for students with sensory sensitivities. Her efforts have helped reach hundreds of students annually, expanding access, fostering belonging, and strengthening equity in Career and Technical Education.



BE PART OF MOSPA



**Statewide
Network**



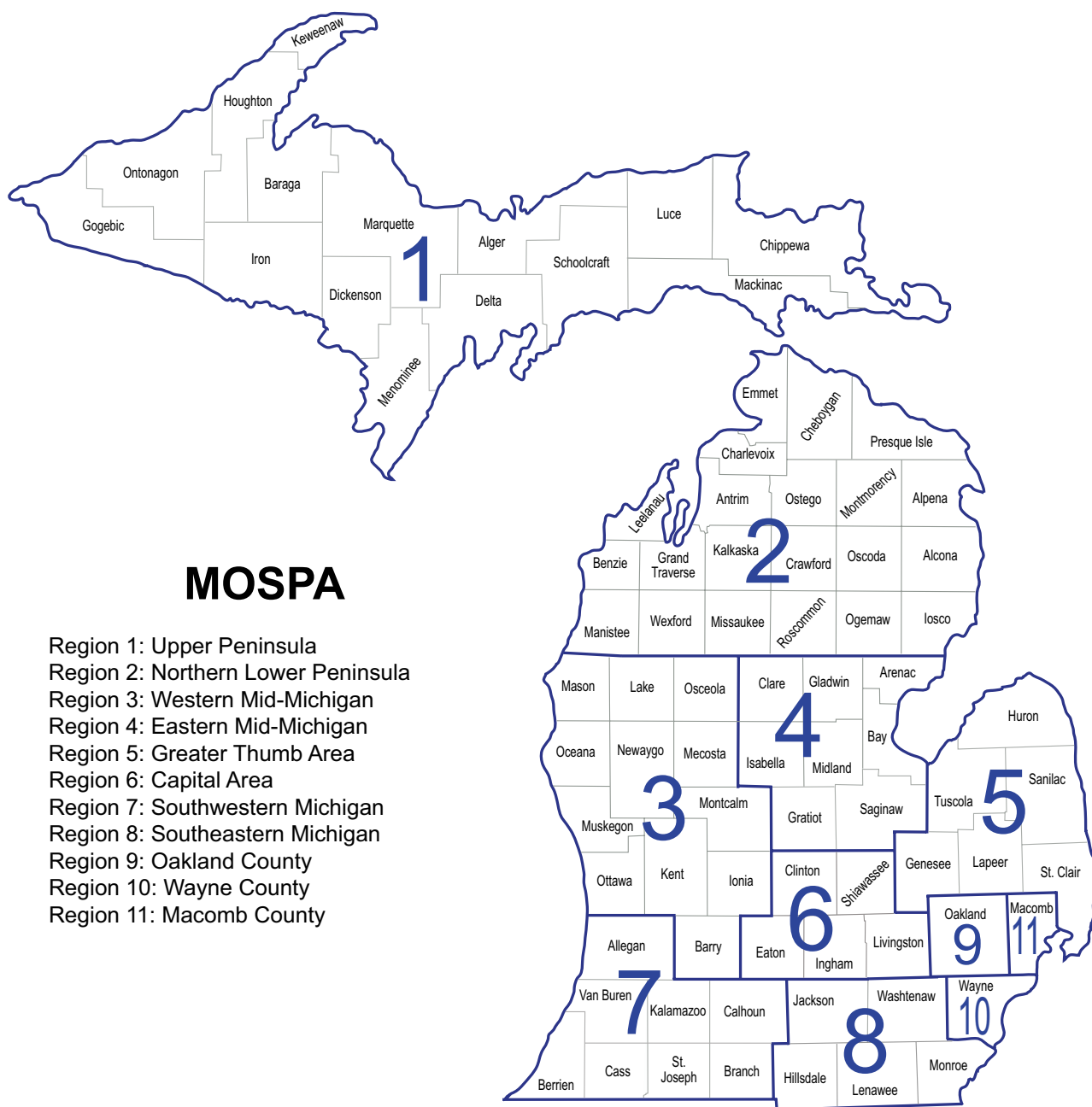
**Professional
Development**



**Advocacy &
Inclusion**



MOSPA REGIONS



The Michigan Occupational Special Populations Association is committed to providing equal access to all persons in admission, access, or operation of programs and services at secondary and post-secondary level.

Thank You

**Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity,
Workforce Development Agency,
Jackson College, Edge,
Wayne County Community College District
for the generous and continued
support of MOSPA and this conference!**



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR & ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY



WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT

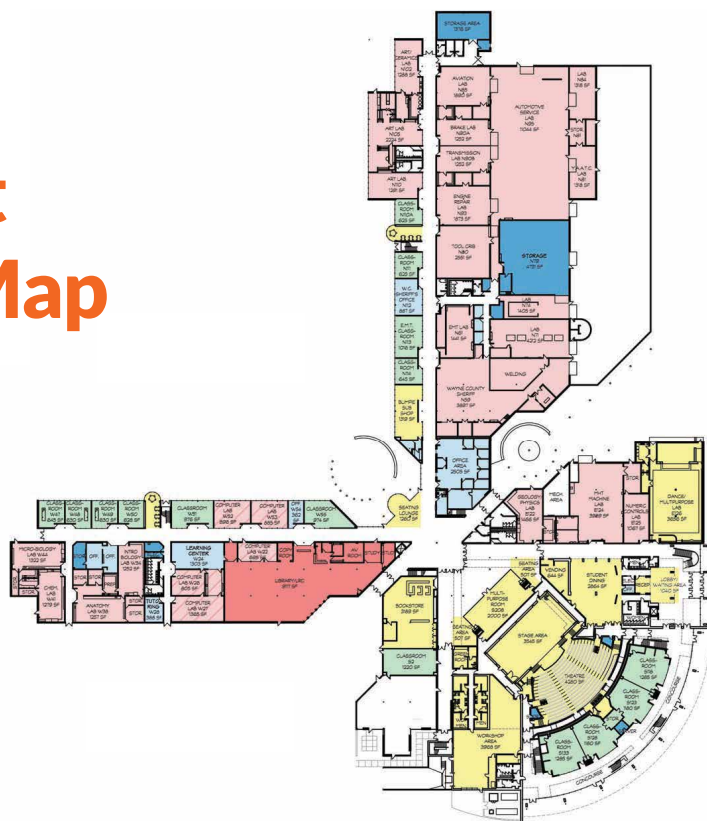


EDGE

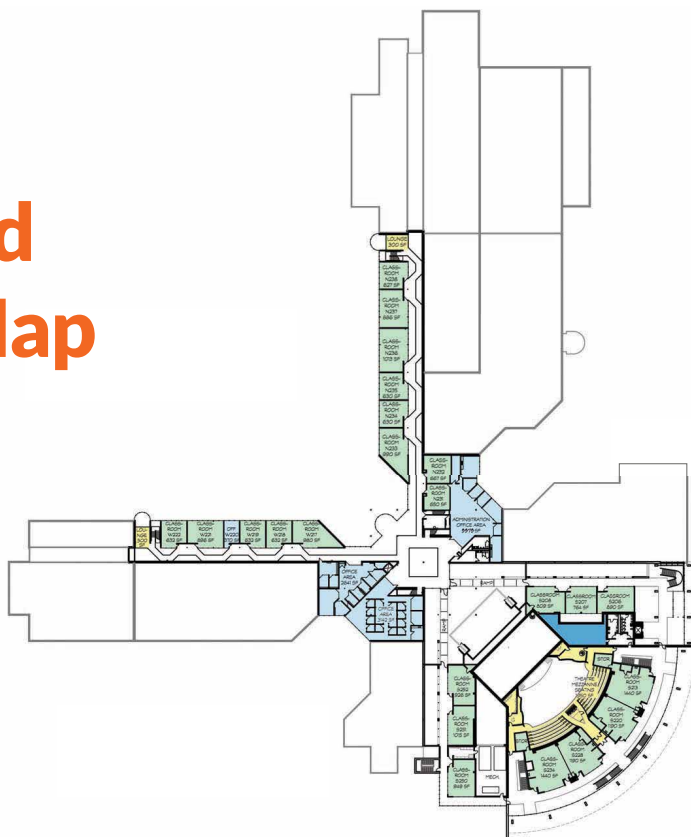


Wayne
County
Community
College
District

First Floor Map



Second Floor Map



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MICHIGAN OCCUPATIONAL SPECIAL POPULATIONS ASSOCIATION

As we celebrate the 51st Annual MOSPA Conference, we extend our deepest thanks to each of you — educators, advocates, and champions of special populations in Career and Technical Education. Your unwavering commitment over the past five decades has transformed countless lives and communities across Michigan. This milestone is a testament to the collective efforts of our dedicated members, past and present. Your passion and perseverance have shaped MOSPA's legacy, and we are honored to continue this journey together. Thank you for being an integral part of our history and our future.

The Michigan Occupational Special Populations Association is committed to providing equal access to all persons in admission, access, or operation of programs and services at secondary and post-secondary level.