Announcer: The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Emily Yeap: After a one year hiatus, the Missouri Fine Arts Academy, MFAA, made its return to Missouri State University this summer. The residential program for Missouri high school student artists took place June 2nd to 15th. Eighty-nine students from across the state participated. I'm Emily Yeap.

 Joining me today are Dr. Christopher Collins, MFAA director and assistant professor in the Department of Communication at MSU; Kenny Kabak, MFAA resident assistant and graduate student in choral conducting at MSU; and Richard Scales, MFAA participant. They're here to share the value of such a program and some highlights from this year's academy.

 Collins.

Christopher C.: The MFAA is specifically for high school students that are juniors and sophomores. We focus on interdisciplinary work in the arts. We give students a chance to work across different art areas to see how they speak together.

Emily Yeap: He explains why it was important to bring MFAA back to campus.

Christopher C.: Bringing it back for me is being able to tap into this idea of legacy. I feel like the MFAA has so many people who've gone through the program, has impacted so many lives, and so this was an opportunity for us to go ahead and continue to impact those lives in new ways.

Emily Yeap: The academy comprises classes, special events and guest artist presentations.

Christopher C.: Guest artists are able to show the students new ways to think about ideas and new ways to think about art forms or creativity or even think about their process. Some of the people, such as Megan Rosen's street art class I think has been an absolutely phenomenal experience for students. We had also Sarah Williams come in and she gave this beautiful lecture about her artwork and some of the things that she's done. Matt Scott came in and did this beautiful work using theater to dialogue about difference and to deal with difficult social issues.

Emily Yeap: In addition to the academic aspects of the academy, participants got to enjoy a variety of workshops planned by MFAA resident assistants, such as Kabak.

Kenny Kabak: Our team developed these courses and these workshops for the kids and we bring people in that have these skill sets that are really invaluable to the students. For example, we've had somebody come in that taught a Brazilian Jujitsu class. We've had some of our RAs teach a sustainability course. We had a student who taught a sign language class and she was having the students sign to a song. We're very excited about the diversity that we're able to bring to the students outside of their academic schedule.

Emily Yeap: Kabak was impressed by the students' enthusiasm and their work.

Kenny Kabak: What these students are able to produce is literally changing lives. The academy is investing into our society and it's investing into our community. The students are getting together and they're building this community, they're bridging this gap that our community and that our world is just so hungry for.

Emily Yeap: Scales, a student at Lynn High School, found the connections he made at MFAA priceless.

Richard Scales: The striking fluidity that has come with me being able to connect with different people, that natural ability to have that connection with like-minded people, it's so majestic.

Emily Yeap: His favorite part of the academy?

Richard Scales: The faculty showcase was absolutely phenomenal. Seeing such rich amounts of talent is so heartwarming to me. It makes me dream. I see visions of future within that. If I work hard, down the line, that's where I'll be, or somewhere like that. It gives me great amounts of hope.

Emily Yeap: The experience has challenged him to maximize his passion for the arts.

Richard Scales: I now realize more than anything that I was kind of squandering my artistic ability back at home. I was not really exploring the different avenues that this academy has really brought to light. I was just very stagnant in my mind and in my practice. This place has been such a humbling experience for me. I already knew that was nowhere near what I wanted to be. But just now, getting a grander scope of the artistic road that I'm walking down, is so amazing.

Emily Yeap: For Scales, the positive atmosphere at the academy was life-changing.

Richard Scales: This place has changed me and a lot of people. There's not one day that I haven't seen a person smile, or laugh, or give another person a hug. Everyone is so open and is so willing to feel and to be vulnerable. That's so mind-boggling to me because people are so scared to do that nowadays.

Emily Yeap: To find out more about MFAA, visit missouristate.edu/mfaa. I'm Emily Yeap for the Missouri State Journal.

Announcer: For more information, contact the Office of University Communications at 417-836-6397. The Missouri State Journal is available online at KSMU.org.