

MIZZOU GPC

THIRD ANNUAL INTERDISCIPLINARY
CASE COMPETITION



Strategic Residential Capacity and Experience Planning Initiative

2026

GPC EXECUTIVE BOARD 25/26

The Graduate Professional Council (GPC) warmly welcomes you to the third annual Mizzou GPC Interdisciplinary Case Competition! This event challenges students to tackle real-world issues and develop innovative solutions to enhance the University of Missouri campus experience. We are excited to see how your creativity and collaboration will make a meaningful impact.



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Message from the President of the Graduate Professional Council

On behalf of the Graduate Professional Council (GPC), it is my pleasure to welcome our judges, partners, and student teams to the Third Annual Mizzou Interdisciplinary Case Competition.

This competition reflects GPC's continued commitment to fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, innovation, and real-world problem solving among graduate and professional students at the University of Missouri. Each year, the Case Competition has grown in both vision and impact, providing students with a platform to apply their knowledge across disciplines while engaging in challenges that matter to our campus and community.

I would like to extend special congratulations to Živilė Raškauskaitė, Director of Professional Development for GPC, for chairing this year's competition. Her leadership, dedication, and thoughtful coordination have been central to advancing this initiative and delivering a meaningful experience for participants and judges alike.

To our judges, thank you for your time, expertise, and commitment to student development. Your insights and perspectives play a vital role in shaping the professional growth of our students and strengthening the connection between academic ideas and practical application.

We are grateful for your participation and hope you enjoy this year's competition.

Oguche Felix
President, Graduate Professional Council
University of Missouri

Case scenario

2026



MU must determine the most viable strategy to add 500 to 700 beds by fall 2029 to support ongoing undergraduate enrollment growth and Student Affairs priorities. The university is weighing a new MU owned residence hall against a P3 model. The proposed solution must meet student housing preferences, affordability expectations, and long-term institutional needs.

Schedule

Feb. 3, 2026

4-4:10 p.m. — *Welcome and introduction*

4:10-4:25 p.m. — **Royal Bengal Tigers: Presentation**

4:25-4:30 p.m. — *Royal Bengal Tigers: Q&A*

4:30-4:35 p.m. — *Transition*

4:35-4:50 p.m. — **Masterminds: Presentation**

4:50-4:55 p.m. — *Masterminds: Q&A*

4:55-5 p.m. — *Transition*

5-5:15 p.m. — **YYRP: Presentation**

5:15-5:20 p.m. — *YYRP: Q&A*

5:20-5:30 p.m. — *Judges' deliberation*

5:30-6 p.m. — *Award ceremony*



JUDGES

PRELIMINARY JUDGES

Dr. Clark Peters

Associate Professor at the University of Missouri School of Social Work



Dr. Caroline Waldbuesser

Assistant Teaching Professor, Course Director for Public Speaking at the College of Arts and Science Communication



Dr. Kathleen Rose

Assistant Professor, Science Communication, Strategic Communication



Felix Oguche

GPC President



Sophia Rivera Hassemer

Interim director of operations for the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business



Tyler Page

MU Housing, Senior Director, Student Affairs



Laura Salerno

Associate Director, Student Affairs, Facilities & Capital Assets, MU Housing



Dr. Erin Morrison

Interim Associate Director, MU Housing, Residential Life



FINAL JUDGES

Tyler Page

MU Housing, Senior Director, Student Affairs



Laura Salerno

Associate Director, Student Affairs, Facilities & Capital Assets, MU Housing



Dr. Erin Morrison

Interim Associate Director, MU Housing, Residential Life



Dr. Sue Boren

Professor Master of Health Administration (MHA) Program Director Department of Health Sciences



Dr. Laura Roesch

Career Coach, Graduate Student Career Services



Packages

Each team has submitted a complete set of materials to support their final presentation. The binder includes the following components:

1-page executive summary

A concise overview of the team’s strategy, including the key problem addressed, core insights, proposed solution, and primary recommendations. This document is designed to give judges a quick understanding of the team’s overall approach.

Marketing materials (1-3 items)

Sample creative assets developed by the team (e.g., ads, visuals, messaging concepts) to illustrate how their strategy would be executed in practice.

“Leave Behind” handout

A one-page reference document summarizing the team’s final recommendations and key takeaways, intended for judges to review after the presentation.

Team:

Royal Bengal Tigers



Upasana Roy

I am **Upasana Roy** from West Bengal, India. I did my undergrad at St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata, India. I am doing a PhD in Computer Science focused on human-machine interaction. My core research involves working with different fields of science, such as Chemistry and Material Science, and building AI-agents to assist scientists in conducting experiments. I look forward to engaging with different domains of science and expanding the collaboration of AI into scientific domains to assist researchers.

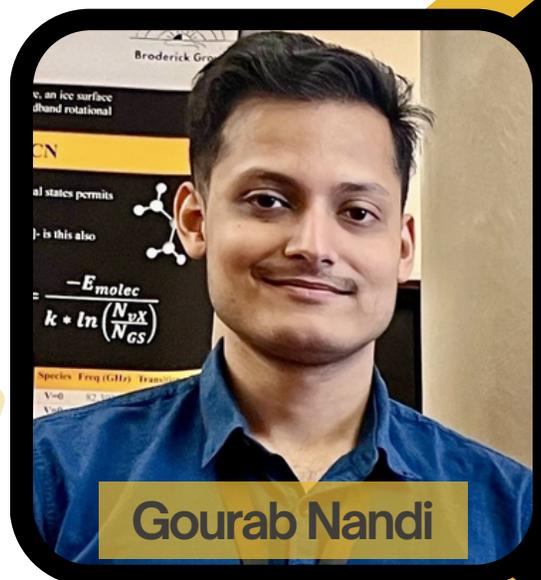
What I love about Mizzou:

Mizzou encourages me to pursue different directions of research without being caged in a box. I can exercise a lot of freedom in researching new methods and finding the optimal solution to trivial and sometimes novel problems. Also, I love chilling at the columns with my friends over pizza!

I am **Gourab Nandi**, a PhD candidate in Physics and Astronomy at the University of Missouri. My research focuses on understanding how galaxies grow and evolve over cosmic time. My work combines advanced data analysis, statistical modeling, and machine learning techniques applied to large astronomical surveys from space-based telescopes. I have presented my research at national and international conferences and have received multiple awards for scientific contributions and presentations.

What I love about Mizzou:

I love Mizzou for its strong sense of academic community, collaborative culture, and commitment to interdisciplinary research. The university provides an environment where students from diverse fields can work together to solve complex problems with real-world impact.



Gourab Nandi

Team:

Mavericks



Meet Parikh

I am **Meet Parikh**, a PhD candidate in Neuroscience at the University of Missouri. My research integrates sleep physiology, circadian biology, and stress-related brain disorders. My work bridges molecular neuroscience, systems-level EEG/EMG analysis, and computational transcriptomics to understand how trauma and neurodegenerative processes disrupt brain function. I have extensive experience in gene expression analysis, bioinformatics meta-analysis, and translational neuroscience approaches relevant to brain health. I'm deeply committed to teaching and pedagogical scholarship, with a strong focus on inclusive, evidence-based instruction and student mentorship. My long-term goal is to become a teaching-focused faculty member or translational neuroscientist who advances both education and data-driven discovery.

What I love about Mizzou:

What I value most about Mizzou is its strong sense of academic community and its commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration. The university fosters an environment where research excellence, teaching, and mentorship are equally prioritized. I have benefited greatly from opportunities to work across disciplines, mentor students from diverse backgrounds, and contribute to a supportive and collegial academic culture. Mizzou's emphasis on public service and translational impact aligns closely with my own goals of improving human health through neuroscience research and education. The combination of intellectual freedom, mentorship, and community makes Mizzou an exceptional place to grow as both a scientist and educator.



Md Yekra Rahman

I am **Md Yekra Rahman**, a first-year PhD student in Electrical Engineering, with a focus on circuit design and high-efficiency DC-DC power conversion. My research is driven by the power and energy challenges of AI data centers with an emphasis on practical and scalable converter architectures. I work on power electronic circuits that bridge theoretical analysis with real-world hardware constraints. My interests include efficient power delivery, integrated circuits, and system-level optimization. I enjoy exploring engineering problems that have clear and meaningful real-life impact.

What I love about Mizzou:

I love Mizzou for its football culture and strong school spirit in the community. Homecoming is always fun and full of energy. The iconic Columns make the campus feel historic and special. I enjoy the calm, serene campus and the slow-paced life in Columbia. Overall, it's a great place to live, think, and grow.

I am **Medinat Oyedele**, a Master's student and Graduate Teaching Assistant in French Language and Literature at the University of Missouri. My research interests span Second Language Studies, Sociolinguistics, and female Francophone literature, with a focus on bilingualism, multilingual identity, gender, and representation. I am a bilingual, award-winning podcaster and seven time published author, best known for hosting *Easy French with Medinat* alongside other education and faith based podcasts. I serve as Assistant Director of Publicity with the Graduate Students Council, Public Relations Officer of the African Graduate and Professional Students Association, and a member of the Arts and Science Students Council. My honors include the Outstanding Graduate Research Award, the Carrie Wilkins Graduate Fellowship, and being the inaugural recipient of the Elizabeth Modupe Adetunji Award.



Medinat Oyedele

What I love about Mizzou:

University of Missouri offers a strong sense of community, rich academic tradition, and supportive learning environment. I value how Mizzou balances rigorous scholarship with collaboration and meaningful student engagement.

Team:

Problem Solvers



Krishieka Jegatheesan

I am **Krishieka Jegatheesan**, a second-year PhD student in Biological Engineering at the University of Missouri. My research focuses on hydro climatology, with an emphasis on environmental instrumentation and hydrologic modeling. I am particularly interested in land and water management in agricultural systems under climate variability. My work integrates in situ measurements and remote sensing data to support data-driven natural resource management. Outside of research, I enjoy traveling and exploring new places. I also enjoy playing sports and drawing, which help me maintain creativity and balance alongside my academic work.

What I love about Mizzou:

Its friendly and welcoming environment, along with the plenty of opportunities it offers for academic, professional, and personal growth. The supportive community and collaborative culture make it a great place to learn, explore new ideas, and work on meaningful projects.

I am **Umanda Abeysinghe**, a fourth-year PhD student in Biological Engineering, originally from Sri Lanka. My research focuses on flood inundation mapping using machine learning and deep learning models in the context of climate and water resources. I work on integrating data-driven methods with hydrological modeling to improve flood prediction and risk assessment. My goal is to develop practical and scalable tools to support better decision-making in water resource management.

What I love about Mizzou:

What I love most about Mizzou is the many opportunities the university provides for students to collaborate across disciplines and grow in their strengths, along with the supportive and inspiring people who make the community special.



Umanda Abeysinghe



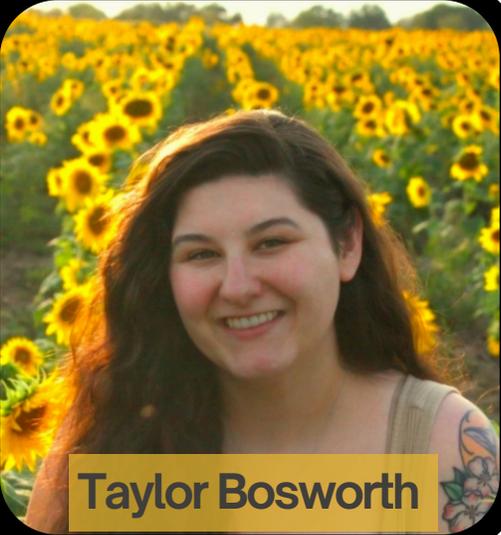
Moussa Theodore Yatta

I am **Moussa Theodore Yatta**, a PhD student in Biological Engineering with a research focus on the sustainability of agricultural systems. My work examines the impacts of climate variability on agriculture and evaluates the potential of conservation practices to improve water quality in the Midwestern United States' rivers. I am particularly interested in understanding how climate-management interactions influence long-term agroecosystem resilience. Beyond my research, I enjoy traveling and staying active through sports such as soccer and volleyball. I also value collaboration and actively seek opportunities to engage in joint efforts both on and off campus.

What I love about Mizzou:

I love the strong sense of community and the many opportunities for student engagement and personal and professional development. I appreciate how supportive and welcoming the campus environment is, which makes it easy to connect with people from diverse backgrounds. I also value the emphasis on safety on campus, as it creates a comfortable and secure space for learning and growth.

Team:



I am **Taylor Bosworth**, a 4th-year MD/PhD student with interests in substance use disorders, end-of-life care, and health technology aimed at improving patient-centered care. My research uses qualitative and mixed methods to better understand the experiences of people with substance use disorders, caregivers, and other underserved communities. I am involved in primary care and translational research and have contributed to multiple publications and national conference presentations. Alongside my research, I take on leadership roles in various organizations. I also enjoy mentoring students from rural, low-income, first-generation, or other under-supported backgrounds. My work is driven by a commitment to making healthcare more equitable, compassionate, and responsive to real-world needs.

What I love about Mizzou:

Everyone's eagerness to help graduate students learn, grow across disciplines, and push themselves to be their best.

I am **MaCee Boyle**, a third-year medical student at the University of Missouri with a strong interest in medical education and student advocacy. My academic interests include curriculum development, early surgical exposure, and integrating sex and gender into medical education. I value mentorship, collaboration, and bring prior experience leading diverse teams into my work. I aim to build a career rooted in patient care, education, and advocacy, centered on patients, families, and learners, with a long-term commitment to Missouri and its communities.

What I love about Mizzou:

What I love most about Mizzou is the supportive and collaborative environment it provides for medical students. Faculty at both the university and hospital are genuinely invested in student success, offering guidance and mentorship tailored to individual goals. I've especially appreciated their flexibility and willingness to accommodate my needs, connecting me with mentors who inspire growth both academically and professionally. This culture makes Mizzou a place where I feel empowered to learn, grow and contribute.

Team:

Masterminds



Ben McKane

I am **Ben McKane**, a second year PhD student studying mathematics. I grew up in Ashland, Missouri, a small town just 10 minutes south of Columbia. I entered my undergrad at WashU in the fall of 2020, taking some time to explore my studies before settling on a major in Mathematics with a double minor in Computer Science and Spanish. During my time there, I served as an academic mentor through the Learning Center; TA'd through the computer science department; volunteered with local senior centers and retirement communities through Adopt a Grandparent; and participated in a number of extracurricular activities. I graduated summa cum laude in May 2024 and began my PhD that same fall at Mizzou.

What I love about Mizzou:

Growing up in the Columbia area, Mizzou has always held a special place in my heart. Both of my parents went here, and I've seen the incredible sense of community and belonging this university provides. The campus is gorgeous, and it's made all the better by the rich culture and social opportunities available. I've met plenty of bright, talented people who inspire me to push myself harder, and I see a lot of avenues for success.

I am **Fatemeh Pourdehghan**, a PhD student in the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering. My research interests includes operations research, supply chain management, and scheduling. I earned my bachelor's and master's degrees in Iran and before pursuing my PhD, I worked as a supply chain planning expert in the FMCG industry for six years. Outside of academia, I enjoy cooking, playing musical instruments, and exploring nature.

What I love about Mizzou:

What I love about Mizzou is the variety of departments- it gives us great opportunities to collaborate across disciplines and work on interdisciplinary projects.



Fatemeh Pourdehghan



Namaz Karimov

I have been working in social projects and community development for over decade. I have held various positions with The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), UNICEF and German Cooperation Organizations. I am a graduate of Theodor Heuss Kollege School of Facilitators in Germany. In the last 10 years I have implemented more than 20 projects and worked as a facilitator on youth social initiative programs. I am a member of the Mitost Association, The Robert Bosch alumni network, the Eu4youth alumni network. I am currently pursuing a master's degree in government and public affairs at The Truman School of Government and Public Affairs.

What I love about Mizzou:

I love teaching and Mizzou T-shirts.

I am **Negar Jahanbakhsh Javid**, a PhD student in the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering. I earned my Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Industrial Engineering in Iran, where my thesis focused on pricing policy in a two-echelon inventory model for deteriorating items. Currently, I am working as a Research Assistant focused on last-mile delivery optimization. My research interests lie in applied operations research within supply chain management, inventory control, and logistics. I enjoy working on interdisciplinary projects that connect engineering, analytics, and management perspectives to address real-world logistics challenges using advanced optimization techniques.



Negar Jahanbakhsh Javid

What I love about Mizzou:

I love the beautiful campus environment, especially the historic Columns and the greenery around the university. One of my favorite aspects of campus life is the Plaza dining and the variety of fun events and activities organized by different cultural groups. Columbia itself offers a perfect balance with its many parks and trails, which allows me to enjoy nature and outdoor activities in my free time. It is a peaceful yet lively place to live.

Team:

TigerPave



Fatemeh Kazembabaei

I am **Fatemeh Kazembabaei**, a PhD student in Civil Engineering (Transportation) at the University of Missouri, with graduate-level training in Transportation Engineering and a focus on pavement materials, asphalt research, and pavement innovation. My work applies data-driven and machine learning approaches to improve pavement performance evaluation and infrastructure decision-making. I have international startup experience and have co-founded and collaborated with education and technology platforms across multiple countries. I speak five languages and work comfortably in global academic and entrepreneurial environments.

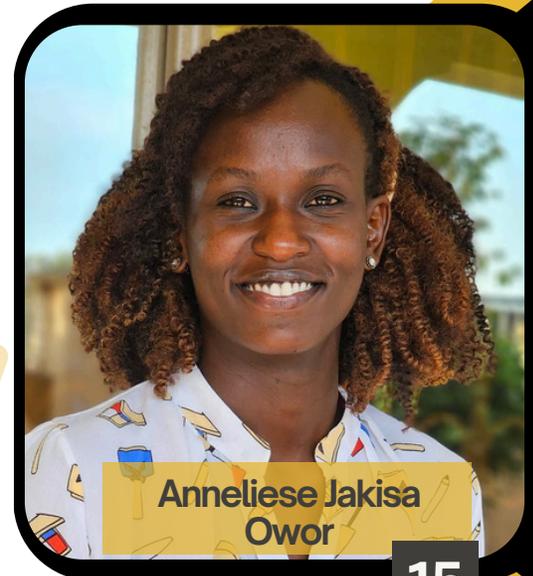
What I love about Mizzou:

What I love most about Mizzou is the strong support it provides for both academic and personal growth. Through its collaborative culture, access to research facilities, and connection to real-world projects, Mizzou has given me valuable opportunities to grow as a researcher and as a global professional.

I am **Anneliese Jakisa Owor**, a second-year graduate student in Civil and Environmental Engineering. I am passionate about sustainable infrastructure and currently, my research is driven towards optimization of asphalt pavement performance using recyclable materials. I serve on the speakers committee of ACES (Alternative Career Exploration in the Sciences) and I am a proud member of the Mizzou Institute of Transportation Engineering. I'm also passionate about helping communities thrive and grow in all sectors of life.

What I love about Mizzou:

I love the Mizzou spirit and the traditions including the Tiger Walk and Homecoming that foster a sense of pride and connection. The historic columns, botanical garden, and Francis Quadrangle are iconic and make the campus a serene place to study.



Anneliese Jakisa
Owor



Tanner Wambui Muturi

I am **Tanner Wambui Muturi**, a PhD student from Kenya currently pursuing Civil Engineering with a focus on artificial intelligence in transportation. I am passionate about technology, and my research explores how AI and robotics can revolutionize civil engineering tasks. My ultimate dream is to establish a research company that not only develops innovative solutions but also deploys the cutting-edge ideas cultivated in my lab. It's an ambitious vision, but as St. Catherine of Siena once said, "Nothing great is ever achieved without much enduring." Outside academia, I enjoy immersing myself in biographies and Russian literature. I'm also an avid fan of anime, manhwa, and manga, which provide a creative escape and inspiration.

What I love about Mizzou:

I love walking between the buildings on campus; their old and regal designs serve as a daily reminder that I am part of something historic. I often imagine the brave and revolutionary individuals who walked in these halls before me, and their legacy inspires me to keep striving. I also deeply appreciate my department and professors, who are always willing to lend their support and guidance when challenges arise

Words of encouragement



Dr. Clark Peters

Without data, you're just another person with an opinion. Kudos for making the world a little smarter!



Dr. Caroline Waldbuesser

I am excited to come hear everyone's presentations and see all the hard work you've been doing over the past few months!



Dr. Laura Roesch

Best of luck to all of the participants! Your commitment to your professional development is admirable, and I look forward to hearing the innovative solutions you propose.

Words of encouragement



Dr. Sue Boren

Best of luck to all participants in the Mizzou GPC Third Annual Interdisciplinary Case Competition! Your creativity and collaboration in tackling real-world challenges inspire us all, and I am excited to witness the innovative ideas you bring.

This year's case challenges teams to shape the future of housing at Mizzou. Participants will evaluate real enrollment pressures and propose student centered, financially responsible strategies that could inform future university decisions. What is most exciting about this competition is the opportunity to see students apply analytical, financial, and strategic thinking to a real institutional challenge where their ideas can meaningfully influence how housing is planned and delivered. Student involvement matters because today's students experience housing systems firsthand, and this process helps participants develop skills in data-driven decision making, stakeholder analysis, and professional communication that will carry forward into any career.



Tyler Page

Message from the Director of Professional development, GPC

Dear Participants and Judges,

On behalf of the Graduate Professional Council (GPC) and the GPC's Professional Development Committee, we extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of the 2026 Mizzou GPC Interdisciplinary Case Competition. This year's case challenged teams to develop the most viable strategy for the University of Missouri to add 500–700 student beds by fall 2029, weighing an MU-owned residence hall against a P3 model while meeting student housing preferences, affordability expectations, and long-term institutional needs.

We offer special recognition to MU Housing, whose partnership made this competition possible from the very beginning. From day one, MU Housing helped shape the challenge scenario, shared ideas and institutional context, and worked closely with GPC to ensure the case was realistic, timely, and meaningful for students. Their sustained involvement throughout planning and implementation strengthened the competition and elevated the learning experience for every team.

We also want to recognize and celebrate the students who participated. Your creativity, exceptional research, and strong presentation skills were evident at every stage of the competition. Teams brought thoughtful analysis, realistic recommendations, and professional-level communication to a complex institutional challenge, demonstrating the talent and leadership of Mizzou's graduate and professional student community.

We are deeply thankful to our trainers—Chuck Burgess, PhD, Taylor Milner, Erandika de Silva, and Dr. Caroline Waldbuesser—for equipping participants with practical tools, confidence, and support throughout the preparation process.

We also gratefully acknowledge our preliminary judges—Dr. Kathleen Rose, Dr. Caroline Waldbuesser, Dr. Sabrina Michael, Sophia Rivera Hassemer, Dr. Clark Peters, Laura Salerno, Dr. Erin Morrison, Tyler Page, and Felix Michael Oguche—for their time, expertise, and thoughtful feedback that strengthened teams' work.



Our sincere thanks to our final judges—Dr. Sue Boren, Dr. Laura Roesch, Laura Salerno, Dr. Erin Morrison, and Tyler Page—for their careful evaluations and meaningful insights that recognized the quality, feasibility, and creativity of the finalists’ recommendations. We are especially grateful to Jessica Osaze, whose work in building the very first case competition created the foundation for this initiative. A special thank you to Dr. Jeni Hart for consistently championing graduate and professional students, and to Assistant Dean Dr. Heather Hoffman for exceptional guidance and leadership.

We also recognize the dedication of the GPC Executive Team and Professional Development Committee members, whose behind-the-scenes work made this competition possible. Finally, we extend our appreciation to MU Housing for sponsoring the prize money and supporting innovation and excellence in graduate and professional student leadership.

Thank you all for your commitment to fostering collaboration, learning, and leadership across our graduate and professional student community.

Živilė Raškauskaitė
Director of Professional Development, Graduate Professional Council
University of Missouri

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WE EXTEND OUR GRATITUDE TO ALL SPONSORS, MENTORS, AND PARTICIPANTS WHO MADE THIS EVENT POSSIBLE. YOUR SUPPORT IS INVALUABLE IN FOSTERING COLLABORATION, INNOVATION, AND EXCELLENCE.