



the best path forward.

The committee has already begun working on the virtual ceremony, with plans being developed to include in-person elements. Details on those plans will be widely shared as they take shape.

[Learn more](#)

Open Education Resources saving students money

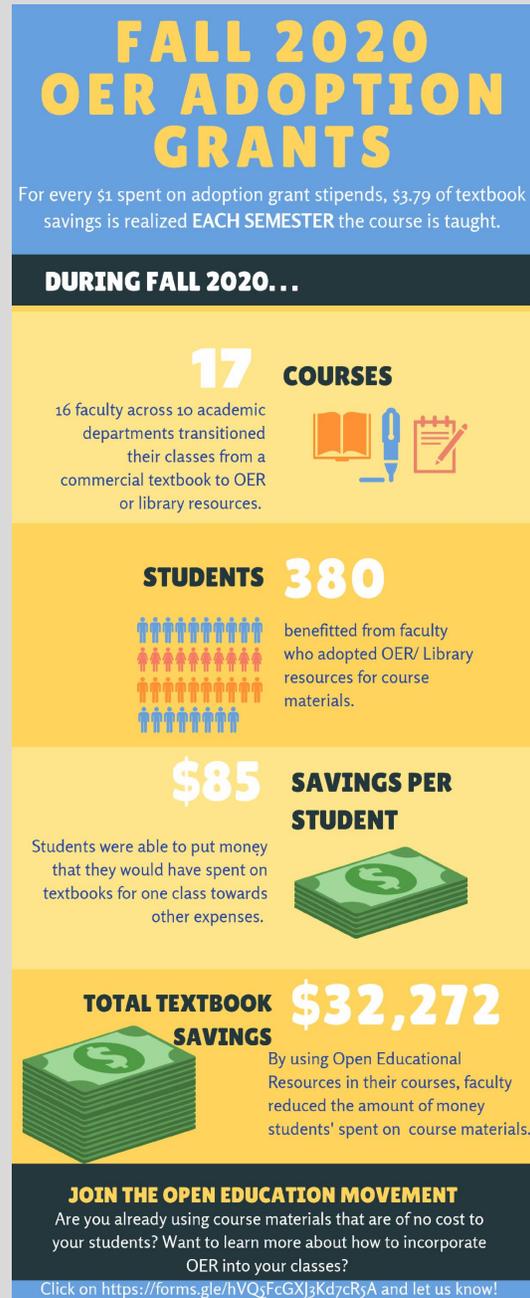
Fitchburg State joined institutions across the world last week for Open Education Week, which seeks to raise awareness around efforts to adopt freely accessible resources to support students.

The university's own efforts have saved students more than \$32,000 to date.

Our Open and Affordable Education Committee last year invited faculty to submit applications for \$500 grants to adopt high-quality open resources for upcoming courses. Through the generous funding by the Davis Foundation Presidential Grant, the Academic Affairs Office, the School of Graduate, Online and Continuing Education, and the Library, the committee was able to fund all 22 proposals (see the Library's guide to open education resources [here](#)).

During the Fall 2020, semester, 17 courses across 10 disciplines transitioned from commercial course materials to open and low cost materials. These 17 courses realized a savings for students of \$32,272 in the fall 2020 semester and we anticipate those savings will continue.

[Learn more](#)



University sees improvement in retention rates

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many challenges for college-aged students, but recent data shows Fitchburg State is having success keeping students on track. The number of students who started in fall 2019 and returned the



following year actually rose, despite the pandemic.

That statistic, referred to as the retention rate, rose by 3% from fall 2019 to fall 2020.

Students who remain at the university from their first to their second year are more likely to graduate than students who take a break in their studies after their first year.

“We want to graduate as many students as possible, because a college degree will change the lives of our students in many ways, including social mobility,” President Lapidus said.

[Learn more](#)

Intro to Health Professions seminars continue today

The pre-health [seminar series](#) for students continues today at 3:30 p.m. with Sarah Leonard, D.O., who will discuss her journey from Fitchburg State to her primary care practice in Athol. Dr. Leonard completed a Bachelor of Science at Fitchburg State in 2001. Her presentation can be viewed at <https://meet.google.com/wsc-yypc-kao>.

Upcoming speakers include:

- Ann Claude (BS '17) and Victoria Caruso (BS '15) will discuss the accelerated nursing program at Northeastern University and Mass General Hospital at **3:30 p.m. Monday, March 15**
- Deanna Follit, PhD, a senior scientist at the biomedical firm AbbVie, who will present “There and Back Again: A PhD Journey from Fitchburg State to Biomedical Research” at **3:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 17**.

Learn more about the pre-health professions program [here](#), and [click here](#) for details on other upcoming talks. The series is open to all students.

Community Read events continue Wednesday

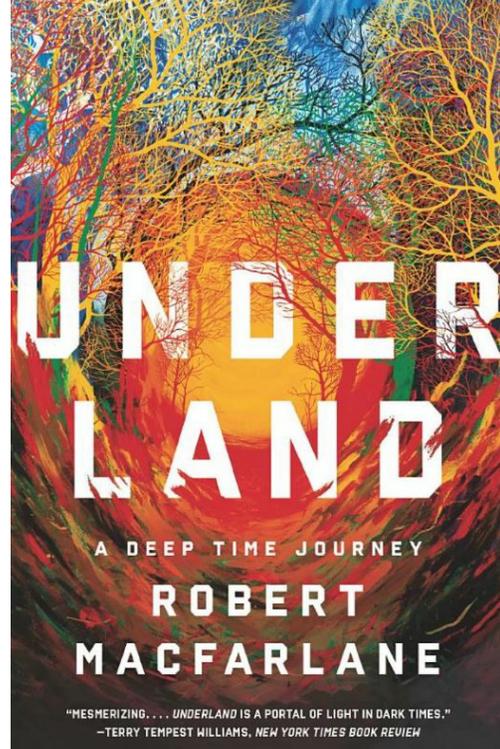
Our [Community Read](#) of *Underland: A Deep Time Journey* by Robert MacFarlane continues with a virtual talk at **3:30 p.m. Wednesday** that will look at the mythological and geological elements explored in the book’s sixth chapter.

This presentation is sponsored by the [Center for Italian Culture](#).

Professor Daniel Sarefield (Economics, History and Political Science) will guide a discussion about the mythology represented in *Underland*’s chapter six, while speleologist Rosario Di Pietro will join the call from Italy to share his knowledge of Italian caves.

To join the discussion, go to meet.google.com/qmv-bugb-uut or join by phone at (US) +1 401-542-2060 PIN: 146 842 979# or, if joining from Italy, (IT)+39 02 8734 8723 PIN:954 395 691 5784#.

[Learn more](#)



Center for Faculty Scholarship programming continues this week

The [Center for Faculty Scholarship](#) continues its spring programming this week with a talk at **12:30 p.m. Thursday** with a talk by Professor Laura Kurdziel of Merrimack College entitled "Sleep: The Great Emotional Regulator." Join the discussion at <https://meet.google.com/pgw-zagb-fcj?authuser=0>.

Also, faculty members are reminded that the deadline to submit abstracts to present their work at this year's Faculty Symposium in May is **Monday, March 29**. Abstracts should be submitted to centerforfacultyscholarship@fitchburgstate.edu.

Free webinar on Thursday focuses on Master of Arts in English Studies

The School of Graduate, Online and Continuing Education hosts a free [webinar](#) at **4 p.m. Thursday** highlighting its new [Master of Arts in English Studies](#) program, now offered in a hybrid format. Those interested in attending the free webinar can register [online](#).

The program introduces graduate students to literature, culture, and teaching, connecting students to a diverse and impressive community of teachers, scholars, and writers.

Students can pick from two possible emphases: literature and teaching. Students in each emphasis may take courses in both tracks, exploring major literary theories and the history of English as a discipline, as well as bridging the gap between cutting-edge scholarship and classroom practice. The program also enables practicing teachers to expand strategies for teaching literature through the application of current modes of criticism.

Save the Date: CIC Virtual Book Club continues March 25

The Center for Italian Culture's virtual book club continues at **3 p.m. Thursday, March 25** with **Professor Rala Diakite** (Humanities) leading a discussion of Clash of Civilizations over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio by Amara Lakhous.

To join the discussion, go

AMARA LAKHOUS
CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS OVER AN
ELEVATOR IN PIAZZA VITTORIO
a novel



to meet.google.com/ahy-bkiq-rgk or join by phone at (US) +1 413-298-2638 PIN: 803 215 450#.

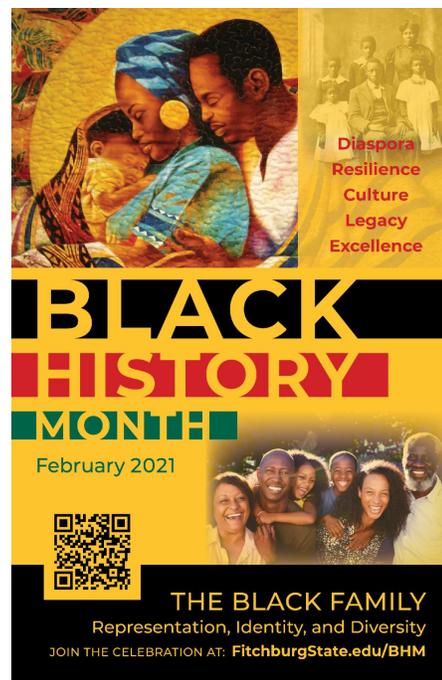
[Learn more](#)

Watch highlights from Black History Month on YouTube

The university's celebration of Black History Month in February featured an array of powerful and inspiring programs.

In case you missed any of the events, or want to rewatch the programming, check out the university's YouTube page.

[Watch the Black History Month Playlist](#)



Faculty Notes

Professor Katharine Covino (English Studies) continued to make the media rounds with an [appearance](#) on GBH's "Greater Boston" to discuss the book she co-authored, *The Insanely Awesome Pandemic Playbook*.

Professor Jared Vanasse (Earth and Geographic Sciences) was published in the February 2021 issue of Physical Review A. His paper, "Effective-field-theory analysis of boson-trimer bond lengths to next-to-leading order" can be viewed [here](#).

Professor Mary Vreeland (Communications Media) received the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival's Cathy Hurst Award in Directing in connection with last fall's virtual production, *Our Reckoning*. The award is presented annually in the festival's Region 1, recognizing an early career faculty director whose work has resonated

during the festival season. It honors a director who has embraced the theatricality of a given piece of theater, exploiting the medium's special properties.

Professor Daniel Welsh (Biology/Chemistry) authored an article, "Spawning substrate shift associated with the evolution of a female sexual characteristic in a family of fishes," that has been accepted for publication in the *Biological Journal of the Linnean Society*.

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