

Contact

WINTER 2021



FITCHBURG STATE
UNIVERSITY

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ACTION

With a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, Fitchburg State students, faculty, staff and alumni are stepping up to make opportunities available to all.
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Alexandra Valdez '15 is executive director of Boston Mayor Marty Walsh's Office of Women's Advancement. Learn her story on page 12.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

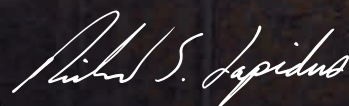
Dear Alumni and Friends,

We continue to live in extraordinary times. As you may be aware, we were forced to switch most of our classes to a remote format late in the fall semester as the region surrounding the campus saw significant spikes in positive cases of COVID-19. After consulting with health experts, we also decided to delay the start of the spring semester by one week, and classes will continue to be a combination of in-person, remote and hybrid offerings. Unfortunately, with our sister schools in the Massachusetts State Collegiate Athletic Conference, we had to cancel the winter 2020 sports season, and large gatherings remain forbidden.

Yet I am optimistic about the future, because I have seen the resilience and character of our campus community come through. The central work of teaching and learning has continued, in-person and online. Our campus community has taken the shared responsibility of our public health seriously, observing safety protocols and doing their parts to stop the spread. They have shown creativity with an array of engaging virtual performances and celebrations, including our recent commencement exercises. Our motto *perseverantia* – perseverance – is very much in evidence.

In short, despite generational challenges, the good work of Fitchburg State continues. We are embarking on our next five-year strategic plan, where issues of equity and education justice are centrally focused. We are renewing our commitment to helping students succeed in their academic goals, while preparing them to be engaged members of their communities. In the pages ahead, I invite you to see how our campus is adapting to serve an increasingly diverse student body, and how our graduates are continuing to make a difference.

I hope you will take the opportunity to visit us, even in virtual form, by going to our newly redesigned website, fitchburgstate.edu. And I look forward to welcoming you back to campus soon.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Richard S. Lapidus".

President



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Printing | Universal Wilde

Design | Michele Italiano Perla

Photography | Professional portraits by Ed Collier

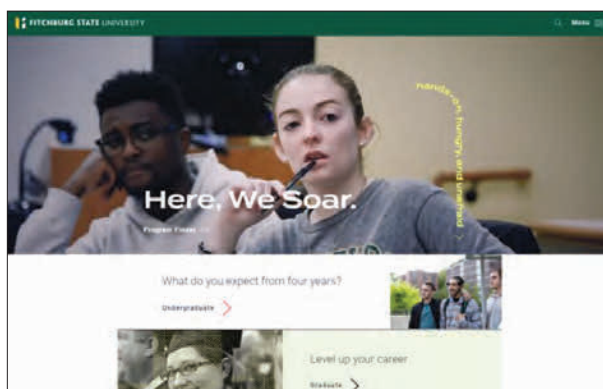


Contact is published by the offices of the president and alumni & development and is mailed to supporters and other select alumni and friends of Fitchburg State University. Please send correspondence to Contact Magazine, Office of Alumni & Development, Fitchburg State University, 160 Pearl St., Fitchburg, MA 01420, or to contact@fitchburgstate.edu. Visit Contact online at fitchburgstate.edu/alumni.

CAMPUS NEWS

A NEW LOOK

Check out www.fitchburgstate.edu to get a look at our transformed website. In the works for nearly two years, the new digital representation of Fitchburg State boasts a more dynamic look and feel, and has been designed to better serve visitors accessing the site through mobile devices. Give it a look, and come back often to find out about the latest news and events, or to explore our ever-expanding list of academic programs.



REMEMBERING JOE MCALOON

Beloved Professor Joseph McAloon, who died in 2019 after a long and storied career in Fitchburg State's Business Administration Department, was memorialized in November with the installation of a bench bearing his name on the main quadrangle. The bench is adjacent to Percival Hall, where the Business Administration Department offices are housed.



Business Administration Department Chair Renee Scapparoni, left, and Dean of Business and Technology Keith Williamson dedicated the McAloon bench on Veterans Day in honor of McAloon's military service.

BRINGING THE PAST TO LIFE

In November 1941, a film crew came to the city of Fitchburg to capture local faces and places for a "slice of life" film designed to be shown in local cinemas.

The footage went unseen for years but has now been digitized and is in the midst of a meticulous restoration under the auspices of Professor Charles Roberts (Communications Media).

Professor Roberts and Fitchburg Historical Society Executive Director Susan Navarre presented excerpts from the film in a virtual event in November as part of the Alumni Association's "Falcon Talks."

Viewers saw how people presented themselves in public spaces like Main Street or at church, the world of men and the world of women, and a glimpse into children's lives at school and at play.



COMMENCEMENT GOES VIRTUAL

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic forced the university to cancel its in-person commencement ceremonies, but the accomplishments of the Class of 2020 could not be ignored. The university created virtual ceremonies recognizing the May and December graduates.

For the May ceremony, there were remarks from undergraduate valedictorian Stanley L. Choruzek and Graduate Student Leadership Award winner Paul A. Thibodeau. For the

December graduates, undergraduate valedictorian Caroline Anderson delivered remarks along with Graduate Student Leadership Award winner Michelle Tilden.

Watch the celebrations online at fitchburgstate.edu/commencement, or visit our YouTube channel at youtube.com/FitchburgState.



Caroline Anderson



Michelle Tilden



Stanley Choruzek



Paul Thibodeau

READY TO SERVE

Twenty new police officers took the oath of honor at Fitchburg State's third recruit officer course (ROC) graduation exercises in September.

Fitchburg State's groundbreaking police program, believed



to be the first of its kind in the nation, graduates officers in five years with bachelor's and master's degrees and certification to serve as municipal police departments in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

The third ROC graduates completed their bachelor's degrees in May and then completed an arduous, 15-week academy including defensive tactics, firearms qualification and emergency vehicle operations. Now they begin their online master's degree program.

Academy Director Lisa Lane saluted the graduates for their ability to thrive during unique challenges.

"The police academy is a grueling course of training which demands a full physical and mental effort by all who go through it," she said. "It is stressful, it is demanding. It is not easy under normal circumstances, and these were far from normal circumstances."

Between the COVID-19 pandemic and national debate surrounding the police profession, Lane said, new police officers are entering the profession at a unique time.

Class Leader Grant Jensen addressed his classmates at the ceremony.

"Policing right now is in a state where most people are questioning us and asking why we think it's still worth being a police officer," Jensen said. "What I've seen from the 3rd ROC is that there is a passion and drive to serve the communities we are going to, that we aren't just your normal 21- and 22-year-old new college graduates most people believe we are. Instead, we are a group of eager, passionate, and resilient men and women who want to make a difference within our communities we are going to serve."

MOOT COURT EARNS NATIONAL MARKS

The American Moot Court Association, whose tournament summons top students from more than 200 colleges and universities across the nation, ranked Fitchburg State's program 14th in the country.

The competition pits teams of students against one another on opposing sides of a legal case, as in an appellate court proceeding. Students must argue both sides of the case in the course of the competition, making timed arguments, fielding questions from a panel of legal experts, as well as submitting written briefs.

Professor Paul Weizer (Economics, History and Political Science) founded Fitchburg State's moot court program in 2000 with four students, and the team advanced to the final round of the national competition in its first year. "We were hooked after that," he said.

The top program scores recognize schools based on performance in the tournament's oral advocacy and written brief competitions.

Four Fitchburg State students were headed to the national tournament after a strong showing at the regional competition in November. Seniors Samantha Beauchamp of

Sutton and Theresa Dzierwinski of Ludlow finished sixth overall out of 54 teams at the regional competition, while senior Madison LaRoche of East Templeton and junior Benjamin Hill of Troy, N.H. finished seventh overall.

"Moot Court has undoubtedly been the best experience of my undergrad career," LaRoche said after the regional tournament. "Through it, I have learned invaluable skills, gained confidence, and made relationships that I know will last a lifetime. I feel incredibly lucky to be part of such an amazing program under the best professor I've had, Dr. Weizer. I truly wish everyone had this opportunity that I have been given and will cherish forever."

ALDEN TRUST GIVES SIMULATION LAB A BOOST

The university's nursing simulation laboratory received \$100,000 worth of improvements thanks to a grant from the George I. Alden Trust.

The funds supported the purchase of essential technical equipment that will assist nursing students in learning critical thinking and clinical judgment skills in preparation for their healthcare careers.

President Lapidus said the Alden Trust funds are enhancing the lab's capacity, including an upgraded audio-visual system and related programming for its "manikins," as the lifelike patient simulators are known. The enhancements will let faculty record student experiences in the lab, which will improve the debriefings that are critical to student learning following simulations.

The investment will allow students to enhance their clinical skills at a time when the ongoing pandemic is making it harder for students to find clinical placements. Fitchburg State's existing simulation lab remains in use, but will be

enhanced and expanded over the next two years.

"In these unprecedented times, the university continues to provide life-transforming educational leadership to the communities in North Central Massachusetts," Lapidus said. "This project will positively impact our students and the thousands of lives that our nurses will care for in the future. We are extremely grateful to the Alden Trust for their ongoing support of the university and their investment in ensuring our students continue to have access to the best training and equipment available."

UNITIL SUPPORTING ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS

Engineering Technology program seniors will receive support in the development of capstone projects thanks to a new Unitil Corporation sponsorship that will also help them to participate in the national Solar Decathlon competition.

The sponsorship program will also support the Engineering Technology efforts to meet Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology standards.

"Applied learning is central to Fitchburg State's philosophy, and this sponsored program will open doors of opportunity for our Engineering Technology students," said President Lapidus. "We are grateful for Unitil's support of our students and their endorsement of our vision for experiential opportunities that transcend the classroom."

SOCIAL MOBILITY SALUTED

For the second consecutive year, Fitchburg State was recognized for upward social mobility in U.S. News & World Report's annual ranking of colleges and universities.

The ranking among regional universities reflects Fitchburg State's success in enrolling and graduating large numbers of economically disadvantaged students.

"Access and affordability are at the very foundation of our mission," President Lapidus said. "We are proud of our track record of creating opportunities for all students, and for helping them complete their studies and move forward with their lives and careers."

The methodology looked at students who qualified for Pell Grants, who typically come from households whose family incomes are less than \$50,000 annually, though most Pell Grant money goes to students with a total family income below \$20,000.

Lapidus said the university's success in creating upward social mobility is tied to the work Fitchburg State is continuing in its newest strategic plan, whose three pillars are educational justice, being a student-ready campus, and inclusive excellence.



A close-up photograph of a person with dark skin, wearing a blue fabric face mask that covers their nose and mouth. They are also wearing a black and grey knit beanie with a red and white American flag patch on the side. The person is looking down at a laptop screen, with their hands visible near the keyboard. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a window with natural light.

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ACTION

The Fitchburg State community—including students, faculty, staff, and alumni—is taking action to create opportunities and close achievement gaps.

A STUDENT READY CAMPUS

THE UNIVERSITY'S DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION EFFORTS SPAN THE CAMPUS

Associate Dean of Student Development Hank Parkinson has seen Fitchburg State evolve in his 14 years on campus, and has seen the push to recognize the importance of identity take center stage. As chair of the university's Student Affairs Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee, Parkinson is working with a number of offices on ways to infuse these topics into the campus culture.

"One of our first objectives is to have a better understanding of our own identities and our own biases," Parkinson said. "I'm a hetero cis male, and I carry every privilege that comes with that. I ask myself every day, 'How can I use my privilege to effect change, and how can I support our students better?'"

The DEI Committee is constantly planning, he said, as well as listening.

"We're learning that students are tired of talk, and they want to see action," Parkinson said. "We have work to do. I always say that. I think we can do better. We need to make sure people of color feel the same sense of belonging that white people do. We need to make sure everyone feels welcomed and safe on campus, and that they are heard."

Vice President for Student Affairs Laura Bayless said the university's efforts to engage its Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) population has illustrated some stark realities. "According to the 2018 Climate Survey, our BIPOC students feel as welcome as our white students, but they don't feel like they belong," she said. "We hear that 'Everyone is really nice, but they don't really get me.' And that's what 'education justice' and creating a student-ready campus is all about."

In the fall semester, the 2020 administration of the campus climate survey was sent to students. The results will help guide the university's efforts to serve its diverse populations and hopefully inspire candid dialogues among all sectors of the campus community, she said.

Bayless also purchased copies of the American Association of Colleges and Universities' book *Becoming a Student-Ready College: A New Culture of Leadership for Student Success* for everyone in the Student Affairs division.

The underlying principle of the book is that colleges and universities must make fundamental changes in how they operate to serve first-generation and underrepresented students. Rather than ask why students aren't ready for college, instead campuses must work to create support systems that will help all students thrive.

"This is a long-term effort that will never end," Bayless said. "It's always a journey, not a destination."



Laura Bayless



Hank Parkinson

CLOSING THE EQUITY GAP

OUR NEXT FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN FOCUSES ON EDUCATION JUSTICE

The Fitchburg State population is changing, and the university is adapting with it. The university began its yearlong strategic planning process in 2019 with a visit by Commissioner of Higher Education Carlos Santiago, who outlined the Department of Higher Education's "Equity Agenda" to close persistent achievement gaps among Massachusetts students, particularly among students of color.

Over months of discussions with constituencies spanning the campus and beyond, a vision for the next five years took shape, one that honors Fitchburg State's history while acknowledging the conditions facing current and future students.

Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs Alberto J.F. Cardelle said Fitchburg State is committed to education justice, providing equity of opportunities to students, especially those who have been historically denied educational access.

By design, the university is recruiting and serving a more diverse student body than ever before. In 2004, the university had 147 students who identified as Hispanic or Latino; by 2019 there were 594. In 2004 there were 123 students who identified as Black or African-American; that grew to 478 by 2019. Including students who identify as multi-racial, the number of "minority" students in all grew from 358 in 2004 to 1,340 in 2019.

Addressing the systemic barriers to student success will

take a campus-wide commitment, Cardelle said. That includes Early College programs with regional high schools, where students can get a head start on their collegiate studies. It also includes training for faculty and staff on serving a more diverse population and understanding their needs, and hosting speakers who can educate the campus and wider communities about issues related to education justice.

This work is also reflected in Fitchburg State's recently adopted 2020-2025 strategic plan, a document that outlines six goals:

- Forge innovative paths to knowledge acquisition, career readiness, social mobility, and lifelong learning
- Become a model student-ready university and narrow the achievement gap
- Be an engine of social, economic, civic, and cultural development in our city and region
- Establish inclusive excellence, innovation, and environmental stewardship as signature strengths
- Assert our distinctive value proposition and institutional learning outcomes boldly and widely
- Steward physical and financial resources responsibly and navigate a path to long-term organizational sustainability

The full plan, including enumerated goals, strategies to achieve them, and the desired outcomes they will create, can be found online at fitchburgstate.edu/strategicplan.

A SHOW OF UNITY

MEMBERS OF THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY SHOWED SUPPORT FOR BLACK LIVES MATTER

Muhammad "Moose" Mahmood '22 was moved to act. The killings of unarmed Black people by police that ignited a nationwide movement and calls for reform led him to think of his own journey.

He found himself imagining if he were in the shoes of those who had been targeted. "What if I were Black? Any one of those encounters would have been the end of me," Mahmood said. "Our Black community is in danger. This isn't breaking news, but it should be breaking hearts."

Mahmood was inspired to organize an on-campus demonstration in support of Black Lives Matter. Dubbed a "Unity Rally," the event took place on the quad, with a diverse array of attendees standing six feet apart and wearing face coverings. It brought together students, faculty, staff, and administrators in a peaceful call for everyone to collectively do better.

"We want to be heard," said Kyle Colon '20, who served as master of ceremonies for the event. "We are tired of not being heard. Every day is another life than can be saved. We only move forward if we come together."

University administrators joined the call for action.

"All lives cannot matter unless Black Lives Matter," said Vice President for Student Affairs Laura Bayless. "All lives cannot matter until trans lives matter. All lives cannot matter until LGBTQ lives matter. All lives cannot matter until Latinx lives matter. All lives cannot matter until people with disabilities' lives matter."

"Fitchburg State is committed to educational justice," said Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Alberto

Cardelle, explaining the university's pledge to help all students succeed. "It takes all of us to get this done."

Athletic Director Matthew Burke saw many student-athletes gathered at the rally in support of Mahmood's vision. "We're all part of the same team," Burke said. "It's what we do next that will make all the difference. Go Falcons – one team forever."

University Police Chief Michael J. Cloutier said the U.S. was founded on the principle that all men were created equal, yet there has been a devaluation of Black lives in our country. He also said it did not devalue others' lives to pronounce that Black Lives Matter, including police officers.

"As the university's Chief of Police, I pledge my support to our Black community, and also to those who took an oath to protect our way of life," Cloutier said. "Our continuously intersecting lives will remain contentious, if we do not stop and take time to talk to one another."

Muhammad "Moose" Mahmood



GIVING VOICE TO THE VOICELESS

THE CENTER FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS IS BEING REIMAGINED FOR CHANGING TIMES

In the heart of the campus center in Hammond Hall, the Center for Diversity and Inclusiveness (CDI) has been a fixture for more than 20 years. As part of the university's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, its role is being reimagined as an even more vital hub of community discourse.

Faustina Cuevas was hired as a consultant in 2020 to shepherd a number of DEI initiatives, including a refocusing at the CDI. "We want to empower students to be the authors of their own stories," she said. "It's really about rethinking what this center can do to amplify voices that are most silenced in this society."

A major step in that process is rethinking the role of student workers at the CDI, who will be trained to be peer educators who can facilitate meaningful discussions on important topics relative to DEI.

"It's about giving voice to the voiceless, telling their stories, and giving space for the community to learn about DEI and think about ways they can disrupt injustice, or ways they may have colluded with injustice," Cuevas said.



Interim Director Jamie Cochran (left) has been part of the CDI staff since its earliest days and welcomes its growth. "The students are thirsting for a higher profile of the center on campus," Cochran said. "It's still our charge to promote a safe space. Now it's a safe space where we are also creating a sense of belonging, and recognizing the social

identities of our population. Not only are we amplifying voices, but the university is listening more closely to those voices."

PEER EDUCATORS

Ammar Alykal '21 enjoys sharing his gripping personal story. He fled with his family from Syria in 2013, as its raging civil war closed in on their city. "It was just a matter of time until we were hit," he said. "What you see on TV, the reality is 10 times worse."

Alykal was 20 years old when his family fled, and they left in a hurry. "I wasn't really acknowledging that I was leaving my home forever," he said, recalling the frenzied

packing of his belongings. "I thought I was going back."

His family went first to Jordan and applied for visas to go to America. A month later they were in Massachusetts, his parents staying with an uncle in Worcester while Alykal was with a fellow Syrian who had settled in Boston.

In 2018 his family moved to Fitchburg, and Alykal joined them to begin his college studies. He started at Mount Wachusett Community College and transferred in fall 2020 to Fitchburg State, where he is completing a bachelor's degree in business administration.

"Here, I've seen compassion, and a very welcoming crowd," said Alykal, who looked forward to sharing his story with the campus community and beyond as a peer educator at CDI.



Manuela Medina Sanchez '21 (left) is also a peer educator and has worked for CDI since her first year at Fitchburg State.

She remembers not wanting to leave home in Boston to go to college. A first-generation student whose family emigrated from Colombia, Sanchez decided to follow a guidance counselor's advice and tour Fitchburg State when she learned it was a more economically viable option.

"I came here for a tour and I loved it," she recalled. "It was a medium-sized school, and I saw a lot more diversity than I'd seen at other schools. So I took myself out of my comfort zone, and I didn't know anybody, but I don't regret it at all."

Sanchez's journey is mirrored by many other first-generation students at Fitchburg State, and she has found herself using her voice to support her peers.

"When people of color or minority students come here, and they don't see anyone who looks like them, it's kind of intimidating," Sanchez said. "I've found my way to maneuver around it."

She's also advocated for more people of color in administration and other student-serving offices. "Some of us don't know whom to reach out to about certain situations," she said. "I would love to be able to make everyone feel comfortable and let them know the different resources available to them on campus."



Faustina Cuevas

FAILURE WAS NOT AN OPTION

GETTING A COLLEGE DEGREE WAS FAR FROM A FOREGONE CONCLUSION FOR ALEXANDRA VALDEZ '15

A first-generation college student whose family emigrated from the Dominican Republic when she was 10 years old, Alexandra Valdez '15 often struggled in school.

"I went through a rough patch, and my family didn't even know if I was going to graduate from high school," Valdez said. "There were so many distractions in my life."

She began her studies at community college in Boston, where the struggles continued. Finally, she realized she had to refocus. "I told myself, 'You've got to get yourself together, Alex.'"

That included embracing opportunities at school, and accompanying a friend who was looking to study away from the city at a place called Fitchburg State. "She literally drove me to Fitchburg," Valdez said.

Valdez liked what she saw and transferred the next semester. She started getting more involved, and was elected to the Student Government Association. She said the supportive atmosphere of the campus and the number of engagement opportunities was critical to her success.

"To be able to have such a close-knit community helped me so much," said Valdez, who was also class president. "As a first-generation Latina going to college, I needed to have that feeling of security."

She said she never saw herself as "the smart student" when she was in high school, and getting over that self-image was an important realization. "I knew that failure wasn't an option," she said. "For once in my life, I wanted to do something for myself. It helped me understand who I am as a person. This wasn't just a path for myself, but to love and respect and to serve others."

In her senior year, Valdez was named one of Massachusetts' public higher education's "29 Who Shine," and recognized at the Statehouse for her leadership efforts at Fitchburg State.

Fitchburg State also helped Valdez land an internship with The Washington Center in the nation's capital, where she interned with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. University scholarships helped defray the costs, opening doors to a life-changing experience. "If the school hadn't helped me, I couldn't have done it," Valdez said. "It was one of the best experiences I ever had."

That experience built on a passion for service that had begun in her community college days, when she worked a part-time job in a Boston City Councilor Matt O'Malley's office.

Valdez became the councilor's Latino liaison, and she later worked in external affairs for the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office, where she helped break down barriers with communities of color.

She continued that work as director of engagement in the city of Boston's Economic Mobility Lab, and in December was picked by Mayor Walsh to serve as executive director of the Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement. That office creates specific programming and opportunities that support economic equity, safety, empowerment, and representation, with recent projects including research on paid parental leave and childcare affordability and creating programming for women entrepreneurs.

Valdez, now pursuing a master's degree in public administration at Suffolk University, has remained engaged with Fitchburg State, coming back to campus to take part in panel discussions with current Latinx students.

"It feels amazing to see more and more students at Fitchburg State who want to get engaged," she said. "Coming back is a very humbling experience, because it's so close and dear to me to see young Latinos and people of color, because I totally know what they're going through. It's great to see."



Alexandra Valdez '15 at Boston City Hall.

EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY

THE CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL STUDIES IS EQUIPPING LOCAL SCHOOLS AND BUSINESSES TO SERVE INCREASINGLY DIVERSE CONSTITUENCIES

The university's social justice education efforts transcend the campus. Through the Center for Professional Studies (CPS), local educators and businesses are also learning about how to discuss these issues and support increasingly diverse students and customers.

One course that has been offered multiple times through CPS focuses on cultural competency for educators, helping them serve their increasingly diverse classrooms, facilitating personal growth and understanding the impact of equity and bias.

"There is always a benefit to improving relations between people," said instructor Angele Goss, who has taught the course with Lynn D'Agostino from the Education Department. "These courses provide a much needed opportunity to engage in dialogue, self-reflection and community building. Doing so replaces misinformation with empathy, compassion and belonging."

Goss has also taught courses on cultural competency for local Realtors, who also serve an increasingly diverse customer base.

North Central Massachusetts Association of Realtors President Kendra Dickinson welcomed the series. "Every day we are looking for opportunities such as this to further expand our knowledge and professionalism so that we can better serve our community and clients," Dickinson said. "I would like to thank Fitchburg State University for all of their hard work putting this program together."

In addition, the CPS has twice offered a course for area educators on supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and gender-diverse (LGBTQIA+) students in the K-12 environment. Taught by CPS Assistant Director of Professional Studies and Extended Campus Programs Dani Langdon, the course helps educators understand the terminology, historical context, and preconceived notions that we carry about the LGBTQIA+ community, thereby helping to create intentional, inclusive, and supportive learning environments.

"Though the introductory course on supporting LGBTQIA students is designed to give educators concrete tools to support students, one of the most impactful outcomes is a deeper understanding of one's self, and the ability to see the world through a new lens," Langdon said.

"When we began, I was expecting to learn something new about the lives of LGBTQIA youth and how I could support and nurture them in my school environment," said

Sizer School teacher Pam Sweeney. "While it's true that I've learned a lot, the biggest 'aha!' moments have been about myself."

CPS also offered free webinars introducing concepts surrounding social justice, led by consultant Faustina Cuevas.

Angele Goss



WE CAN ALWAYS DO BETTER

THE GAY STRAIGHT ALLIANCE PROMOTES VISIBILITY AND ACCEPTANCE

Associate Director of Student Development Shane Franzen '99 anticipated resistance when, in 2005, he first proposed a "drag show" on the Fitchburg State campus. As advisor to the university's Gay Straight Alliance (GSA), Franzen knew students were intrigued by the show, but was concerned it may be a bit too outrageous for the campus. He was grateful that administration supported it.

There were 200 students that first year. Fifteen years later, the Drag Show has become one of Student Development's biggest nights and fundraisers, drawing more than 1,000 attendees.

"For me, this campus has always been a safe environment," Franzen said. "But our students don't understand the history of how we got where we are. They only know the now."

That history has evolved quickly in the span of a comparative few years. Franzen recalls speaking as part of orientation early in his 20-year career at Fitchburg State about declaring his sexual identity. In those days, Franzen said, his "coming out" story yielded applause. But soon students didn't see it as a big deal.

Similarly, when the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage nationally, the news was greeted with a comparative whimper on campus, where students had grown up with that legal right long since enshrined.

Starr Brosseau '21, currently treasurer of the GSA, said



Shane Franzen

she's never observed discrimination or intimidation relative to sexual identity on campus. "However, I have also not experienced much advocacy for creating a safe and inclusive space on campus for the voicing of gender identity and sexuality," said Brosseau. "I think that we as a campus community can do more to ensure that our faculty, staff, and students feel as though their identity is accepted, supported, valued, and protected."

Brosseau, majoring in exercise and sports science, added the COVID-19 pandemic has created a lot more isolation for students. "One of the most important aspects of the LGBTQIA+ community is our connection, which is deeper than any bloodline," she said. "I think that we as an organization are working diligently to overcome the obstacles we are facing, to bring a greater sense of connection and community to our LGBTQIA+ brothers and sisters on campus. We are a family, and we want everyone on campus to know that we constantly harbor a safe space in which all are welcome to find support and comfort."

Jason Henriksen '19 also found Fitchburg State a welcoming community when he arrived. "It instantly felt like home," said Henriksen, a Somerville native who graduated with a degree in psychological science. "I fell in love with CDI (the Center for Diversity and Inclusiveness) and never looked back."

Henriksen said CDI was a safe space where everyone could engage in dialogues about their identities and their concerns, and GSA also provided a sense of community. "All of the students wanted to make a difference, but they didn't want to be alone in making that difference."

Henriksen said he was proud of the organization's efforts to engage administration on topics like an inventory of gender-neutral bathrooms on campus (a project which is now becoming reality). "Being involved in GSA definitely made me think I want to be involved for years to come," Henriksen said. "We can always do better."

GSA began on campus as an organization called "1 in 10 and Friends," in reference to a longstanding statistical estimate of homosexuality in the population. Franzen said the name was sidelined after some students mistook it for a math club.

Today's students have come of age in an era when same-sex marriage is the law of the land, and an ever-lengthening acronym of sexual orientation and gender identity is part of the cultural lexicon. Fitchburg State even has a residential learning community for LGBTQIA students. "It allows them to live, experience, and have allies," Franzen said.

The fight for equity and acceptance is far from over, however. Franzen noted the campus took part in Transgender Day of Remembrance in November with a vigil on the quad in honor of the 37 transgender lives taken by murder in 2020 alone.

Jason Henriksen



HEARING VOICES WE DON'T ALWAYS HEAR

FACULTY AND LIBRARIAN-LED INITIATIVES TO COMBAT RACISM AND BIAS

With funding from the Office of the Provost, the university's academic deans established an Anti-Racism Fund with a goal of supporting initiatives that will counter bias. Its inaugural programs span disciplines but could yield long-lasting positive results for the entire campus.

In the **Behavioral Sciences Department**, Professor Kori Ryan and Professor Zachary Miner will conduct focus groups to identify and examine barriers to student success in their field. An outside consultant will help facilitate candid conversations, and students will also participate as research assistants, giving them valuable first-hand experience.

"We need to do more than 'thoughts and prayers,'" Ryan said. "Our goal is to hear voices we don't always hear. Our students are so smart, and so connected, we want to hear all the solutions they have."

"We don't want this to be a top-down situation," Miner added. "We want this to be a collaborative process where students tell us what they need."

Education Department Chair Denise Sargent and School of Education Dean Nancy Murray are embarking on a year-long faculty professional development program to explore equity and social justice issues related to curriculum, instruction, and advising. Through their work, the School of Education will engage in a supportive and collegial review of Eurocentricity and racial bias in order to support authentically inclusive excellence.

"Our goal is to provide a safe space to enable faculty to be vulnerable and reflective in order to carefully analyze the

curriculum, materials, and teaching techniques used within their courses," Murray said. "This foundation is designed to support the review of how racial bias impacts not only the curriculum and instruction, but each and every interaction with our BIPOC students and colleagues."

"We need more ethnically diverse teachers, and we've put a lot of energy into that," Sargent added. "I'm hoping this project will give faculty members good resources and help us do some self-reflection to strengthen our curriculum and advising."

In the **Biology/Chemistry Department**, along with other STEM fields, Professor Ronald Krieser will help launch a faculty and staff development program that includes a book reading group, and a speaker series focused on inclusive excellence.

"The problem isn't how to fix the students; it's how to fix the faculty," Kreiser said. "What I need is more training on how to be inclusive in my pedagogy. Ever since I started at Fitchburg State 13 years ago, we've been very dedicated to student success. That's my job, to help them succeed."

The work builds on efforts the university has undertaken through its Inclusive Excellence Group, including faculty and administrators from the education and STEM fields.

At the Amelia V. Gallucci-Cirio Library, librarian Lori Steckervetz and the library's anti-racism team plan an online film festival focused on race and the impact of systemic racism, and will solicit reflections that may comprise an exhibit in the fall.



BRINGING CONVERSATION TO THE TABLE

Dimitri Moore '21 arrived at Fitchburg State four years ago coming from a predominantly Black area in Boston, an area where seeing a white person walk down the street was out of the ordinary.

At Fitchburg State, he found himself in the minority for the first time in his life. "It was the first time I was in a large environment with a lot of people who were different from me, and I didn't know anybody," he recalled. "All my fears were washed away very quickly. I was excited I could make new friends who were different from me."

Still, Moore said he sees the importance of having other Black students in his circle of friends. "As a Black community on campus, we definitely stick together," he said.

Moore was one of the speakers at the Unity Rally on campus in September and was proud to see the university engage in its series of Courageous Conversations over the summer. "I think conversation needs to be brought to the table," he said. "People who aren't like you can't always relate to you, but they can understand you."

And getting to know and understand one another is key to progress in creating equitable communities. He would like to see greater interaction between the university's Center for Diversity and Inclusiveness and students in the criminal justice program, for example.

"We see these horrible things in this country because people don't understand Black lives, or Hispanic lives, or trans lives," Moore said. "It's very easy to be a trend, but I want this school to be extremely progressive. I'm a big believer in the idea that you're not looking for perfection; you're looking for progression."

Dimitri Moore



BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

AN INVESTMENT IN STUDENT SUCCESS STRATEGIES IS CLOSING ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

The first year of college is a crucial milestone for all students, as they learn ways to navigate the more self-directed waters of higher education. This is true for many first-generation students, and research is showing the times can be especially challenging for Hispanic males.

Fitchburg State is in the third year of a program designed to help Hispanic males survive and thrive in their studies, closing persistent achievement gaps that are observed at institutions across the country.

Professor Diego Ubiera (English Studies) appreciates his role as a mentor. In addition to advising his own students and serving in the past as an advisor to the Latin American Student Organization, Ubiera has been part of a mentorship program that is central to Fitchburg State's Hispanic males project.

One element of the project is supplemental advising; beyond their assigned faculty advisor, the students are assigned to secondary mentors who can help them manage challenges.

"What I've tried to do in the program is to help students self-advocate and to help them understand how academic settings work," Ubiera said. "I stress the question of familiarity. Students aren't always familiar with the particularities of academic culture."

For example, Ubiera tells students that they ought to reach out to professors, actively attend office hours, and be patient if they feel like they're not learning.

"I tell them to ask questions even if they're nervous to approach a professor, and to understand academic inquiry as a vital, living thing, as opposed to something that feels like irrelevant, arbitrary compliance," he said.

Ubiera also tries to connect students with alumni so they can see the positive return on their investment that awaits them.

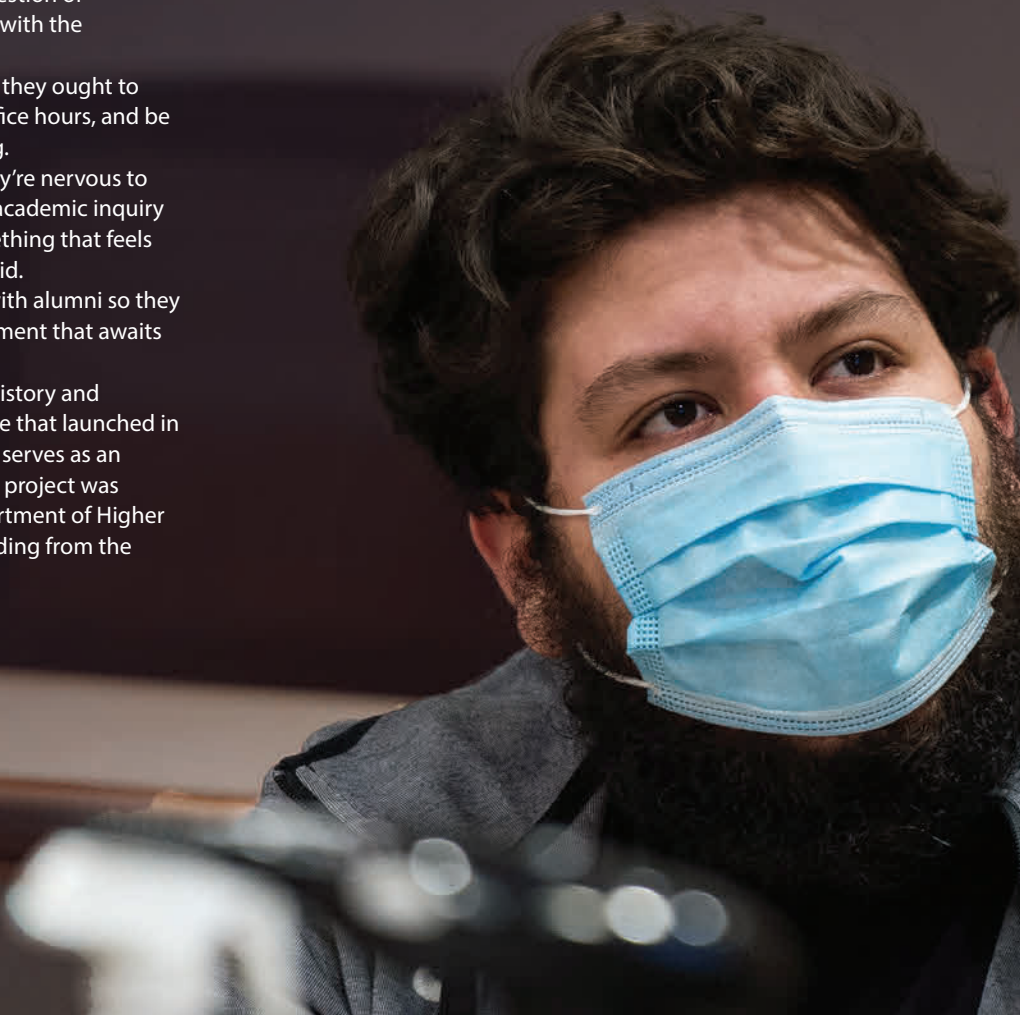
Professor Sean Goodlett (Economics, History and Political Science) helped build the initiative that launched in 2018 supporting Hispanic males, and also serves as an advisor to his own cohort of students. The project was supported by a grant from the state Department of Higher Education and is now supported with funding from the Division of Academic Affairs.

"We've learned a lot about early intervention with students," he said, explaining that the data from the grant showed that those who struggled in the first month of college were far less likely to make it to their next year.

The project is showing promising success, said Goodlett, who has been moved by the stories he hears from his advisees. "Many of the students I've talked to have all said, 'I'm here to make my family proud,'" he said.

The strategies that are helping these students are also serving the campus population at large, Goodlett said. Next fall the university will scale up the first-year experience (FYE), where instructors teach college-level reading, information literacy, and the habits of mind of successful students. The course also emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning.

Professor Danette Day (Education) joined the initiative in 2019, and also led to sessions of the FYE seminar. Her advisees, by design, were also part of her FYE sections. "Much of the help I provided students was related to finding information required to make decisions about classes and



university procedures," she said. "At times, students even sought help for their peers because they knew I would help, and I was happy that I could help. I even provided a reference for one of my mentees when they applied for a summer job."

Day has maintained her connection with her mentees, the vast majority of whom returned to their studies for their second year. This fall she heard from many that they were struggling to adapt to the learning conditions created by the ongoing pandemic, telling her they wished "they could push a button to become smarter because they doubted

their ability to persevere," she said. "My response to these conversations were to provide my mentees a pep talk and words of encouragement."

Being that source of support is key, Day said. "As a faculty mentor and advisor, I know that the additional time and cooperative effort we extend to check in on, not only our most vulnerable underrepresented students, but also our students who without additional support would achieve success is essential for the overall health and well-being of our learning community, especially during this pandemic."

MUSIC CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

SHALAYAH WASHINGTON '14, ALSO KNOWN AS RED SHAYDEZ, MAKES MUSIC THAT MATTERS

By Jordan Costa '21

Shalayah C. Washington '14, who now goes by the name Red Shaydez, was a sophomore at Fitchburg State when 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was shot to death in Florida. Martin's shooting ignited an ongoing cultural conversation about the value of Black lives and systemic racism.

"My friends and I were so outraged," she recalled. "This is around the time that Black people dying became prevalent on social media. It was overt. We were in disbelief at how it all played out and there was an eeriness on campus. Organizations like Black Student Union strived for social justice."

Shaydez has been exploring these themes of social justice since she was an undergraduate at Fitchburg State. Her sociology professor shared these topics and have impacted her career since.

"I minored in Sociology and most of my classes in this concentration were taught by Professor G.L. Mazard Wallace. He shared so many gems in his courses that I still think about and apply today. Due to this fact, I study behavioral interactions and what motivates people to do what they do."

Shaydez, always obsessed with hip-hop, wrote poetry as a teen and produced homemade mixtapes exploring different musical styles. Since graduating in 2014, she has taken her musical ambitions professional, performing and recording under her Red Shaydez alter ego.

"In my earlier years, social justice was a big part of my career," Shaydez said. "Fighting for equality is always at my

core, along with human rights. We should all be able to start with a clean slate."

Beyond her music career, Shaydez is also an entrepreneur and public speaker. "I address aspiring musicians, college students, and the youth," she said.

She said her experience at Fitchburg State helped her hone skills like networking, collaboration, and time management that have all helped her navigate her career.

Shaydez said music has been an outlet to share and bring important themes of social justice to light. For example, her latest album, *Feel the Aura*, includes a song called "Buy All the Land Up" that addresses student loan debt, land ownership, gentrification, and what it's like being a Black woman in modern America.

Shaydez said her career gives her a platform to be a role model in her community.

"Music can change the world," Shaydez continued. "I make music to positively impact others and to spark change. My music is catchy, so oftentimes you have to listen a bit more closely to catch the underlying themes and lessons in them. I'm always dropping hints for ways to make the world a better place."



SILENCE IS COMPLICITY

Crystal Aneke '20 has always been outspoken. Growing up in the diverse community of South Boston and being actively involved in a high school with a majority population of color, Aneke found her voice early.

When she arrived at Fitchburg State to begin her studies in political science (with minors in criminal justice and economics), Aneke quickly realized her adopted community was different.

"Overall the campus was welcoming, but not every individual was welcoming," she said. "There were hiccups along the way. At times I was one of the few people of color in my classes. I wasn't used to that."

She recalls instances where she was called upon to share her perspective as a person of color in the classroom discourse. "I don't always want to be the spokesperson for Black people," she said.

Aneke quickly became active on campus, ultimately being elected the student representative to the university's Board of Trustees and working to improve ways for students' voices to be heard. These included moderating a powerful panel discussion in the spring 2020 semester about Black Lives and Blue Lives that included students, staff, and police officers.

Aneke said she was grateful that university administrators embraced the opportunity to engage in a series of "Courageous Conversations" on topics of race and identity, as well as the Unity Rally this fall where she was among the speakers.

"Those conversations helped," Aneke said. "My peers and I in the Black Student Union were so upset with what was going on (in the country). A lot of people are on the Black Lives Matter train now, but I've been fighting for Black Lives Matter my whole life."

Those conversations, and the institutional introspection it creates, need to continue, Aneke said.

"In a racist society, it's not enough to not be racist; you have to be anti-racist," she said. "Silence is complicity. We have a lot more we could do, but I think Fitchburg State is going in the right direction."

Crystal Aneke

WE ALL COME FROM DIFFERENT PLACES

Jalin Paulino Diaz '22 feels fortunate she was able to make an important and enduring connection from her earliest moments on the Fitchburg State campus.

A first-generation student from Lawrence, Diaz was introduced to Fitchburg State through a friend who had her come along for a tour. "It was a very last-minute decision," said Diaz, who nonetheless felt an obligation to pursue college just as her older sisters had done.

Diaz recalls attending first-year orientation at Weston Auditorium when she heard from a faculty member about the Latin-American Student Organization (LASO). "It felt like a community," she said.

Having a number of Latinx students around her was important to her success, Diaz said, and she found that supportive network through LASO. She is now the organization's president.

"I want LASO to be for others what it was for me," she said. "College was a new experience. Finding other people, and relating to other people, was important to me. We all come from different places."

Diaz and her family came to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic when she was 11 years old. She spoke no English and struggled with language school. Mathematics was a haven, where language was a secondary concern.

She is majoring in middle school education with a concentration in mathematics, and hopes one day she can help other Spanish-speaking students find success in their classrooms.

"I've been through it, I know how it feels," she said. "I see myself in these students."

Melisa Alves, director of the university's Career Counseling and Advising Center, is also LASO's adviser. "I hope the organization represents for Latinx students a safe space where they can bring their Latinidad and not feel they have to check their authenticity at the door," she said, using a term to describe shared attributes among Latinx people.

Alves said she also tries to remind students that they bring valuable skills and assets to prospective employers because of their Latinx identity. "As people of color and Latinx students, they bring skills and experiences to the table that stem from their Latinx identity. I empower them to speak their truth because their experiences matter and help set them apart."

Jalin Paulino Diaz



SOCIAL JUSTICE BY THE NUMBERS

REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES ARE MAKING MATHEMATICS MORE ACCESSIBLE TO STUDENTS

By Jordan Costa '21

Discussions around themes of social justice are everywhere, including Professor Catherine Buell's applied statistics class.

Math can be understood in many different ways and using real-world situations can help students better grip the material at hand. Using social justice situations can put into perspective not only these important issues but also help them put real-world examples to their math terminology, said Buell, who has taught the course - which was developed by faculty members from across disciplines - since 2016.

Buell said students connect better with the math when adding current situations and issues to the material.

"For example, when we study probability we use data from the New York Police Department's 'Stop and Frisk' program," said Buell, referring to the controversial police tactic in which young men of color were disproportionately targeted by police. "While we practice using contingency

tables and finding probabilities, we are looking at the issue of constitutionality and racial profiling in the practice."

The mathematical concepts of the course are similar to other statistics classes on campus, but are illustrated with examples based on social justice topics rather than just random sample data. Some of the math goals that are achieved in this class include understanding statistical communication, creating statistical information, and developing concepts such as common statistical vocabulary, measures of central tendency, measures of variation,

p-values, confidence intervals, regression, t-tests, probability, and pattern description.

Buell's objective for the course is to build students' ability to seek, engage, and be informed by multiple perspectives. These objectives include recognizing the power of math as an essential analytical tool to understand the world and their own power as active citizens in building a democratic, equitable society.

Students are developing the ability to use critical inquiry and quantitative reasoning to identify a problem, research solutions, analyze results, evaluate choices, and make decisions, as well as becoming more motivated to understand and learn math while deepening their understanding of the interplay of social and economic issues like crime, victimization, political access, wealth, education, health, gender, and race.

"I've been able to connect to students through this course in ways I haven't always been able to in the past," Buell said. "Some students have said they prefer studying statistics when it is contextualized in a topic that is meaningful for them. I've had students tell me it finally clicked when they were applying the statistics in these curated situations. I'm sure some students see it as a normal statistics class."

Christi Pike '20 took the course with Professor Buell and said the social justice context was helpful.

"One of the first things I told Professor Buell was how much I despised math," Pike said. "My whole life growing up I've been awful at math. The numbers just twisted my brain and I couldn't seem to do anything with them. When I took her class I was so excited because it was social justice and I was very interested in it, and once I was able to see the connection between social justice and math and statistics, it changed my entire view on math in general."

Not only is this class allowing students to broaden their understanding of math and social justice topics but also opening up a space for discussion about these issues.

"Oddly, I've now taught this class twice in an election year," Buell said. "There are so many statements and polls that offer good talking points to demonstrate what quantitative tools we need to be informed citizens."

Catherine Buell

LOOKING FOR SOMEONE WHO LOOKED LIKE ME

Myrlene Bazile '85 had a life-changing experience when she toured the Fitchburg State campus.

Her mother was a widow raising seven children – Myrlene was the sixth – and college was far from a foregone conclusion. A guidance counselor organized a bus trip for students to check out the campus in person.

"I fell in love with the beautiful campus when my high school visited," said Bazile. "It felt warm and nurturing. It was a game-changer for me."

Also key was the support created by what was then known as the Alternatives for Individual Development (AID) program, which provided tutoring, a speaker series and other supports for first-generation students and students of color. "The AID staff truly wanted you to succeed. It made me want to achieve. Without this program I would not have graduated."

Even with the supports, however, Bazile said she would find herself scanning different offices for other people of color. "I was always looking for someone that looked like me," she said. "I felt like that person of color would understand where I was coming from."

Bazile graduated with a degree in sociology and has spent her career in education. For the past six years she has worked at Bentley University as a senior program assistant in its Office of Diversity and Inclusion, where she can be that source of support for today's – and tomorrow's – students.

"I'm fortunate to work in a department that started as a two and a half day retreat for faculty and staff over 20 years ago," Bazile said. Those retreats have continued annually, drawing about 75% of Bentley's staff and almost half of its faculty members. "I think my work will continue to help Bentley create a more inclusive and diverse place to be."

Bazile hadn't been back to the Fitchburg State campus since her graduation until 2019, when she returned with some friends for Homecoming. Warm memories flooded back, from classes and professors to time working in different offices on campus.

"My years at Fitchburg State were wonderful," she said. "They were truly the best years of my life. I didn't want to leave. I forged lifelong friendships and forever friends."

Myrlene Bazile '85

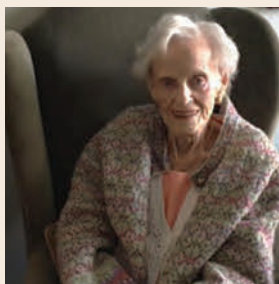


CLASS NOTES

This Class Notes section includes news that was received between June 1, 2020 and November 16, 2020. Because of the nature of a bi-annual publication and the volume of notes we receive, you should expect to see your note about six months after you submit your information.

1930S

MILDRED "GERRY" (LYONS) SCHAPPALS '39 was featured in the *Boston Globe* for having survived both COVID-19 and the 1918 Spanish flu. At 102 years old, Schappals was honored with the key to the city of Worcester where she was born and raised.



1970S

KEVIN M. O'BRIEN '70 retired after 43 years of dedicated service as the longest tenured police officer in the history of the Fitchburg Police Department.

YLA R. EASON '71 received the Women Leaders in Innovation Award from the N.J. Chamber of Commerce for being a woman who embodies the best of outside-the-box thinking. She was recognized for being the founder of Olmec Toys, a multicultural toy company. Her Sun-Man action figure was the first Black superhero toy created to promote positive self-images for her son and other children.



BRIDGET M. HUGHES '78 was appointed assistant principal at Hampton Academy in N.H. this September.

MICHAEL L. RICHARD '79, '06 is the Cape Cod Baseball League's official historian, a position he helped create just last year.

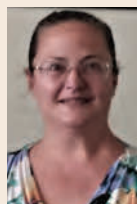
1980S

LEEANN L. LAMSA '81 opened an art showing in Little Art Gallery at Westminster Town Hall this fall.

JEAN M. (SULLIVAN) GOUVEIA '87 was promoted from assistant dean at the Brockton Hospital School of Nursing to dean for the institution.



CATHERINE E. (SHEARER) GAUDET '88 was honored by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women in



the 2020 class of Commonwealth Heroines. Gaudet was recognized for her contributions to the community as a nurse and mental health advocate.

KAREN H. SCHEDIN '88 was named the new vice president for enrollment management at Westminster College in New Wilmington, Pa. Previously, Schedin served as vice president for enrollment management at Rivier University in Nashua, N.H., since 2012.



1990S

ERIC W. GAETZ '91 was appointed vice president, commercial loan officer at Rockland Trust. Prior to joining Rockland Trust, Gaetz was VP of commercial lending at TD Bank.



MARK H. MIDDLEN '91 was recently announced as one of two new partners for Willinger, Willinger & Bucci, a law firm based in Bridgeport, Conn.

JEFFREY D. ALBERT '93 was appointed new director of support services at Shawsheen Valley Technical School in Billerica this summer. Prior to the appointment, Albert was assistant executive direct of the CASE Collaborative in Concord.

KEITH R. GENTILI '93 was named 2019 Columnist of the Year by the New Hampshire Press Association (NHPA). It is the second straight year he has received the honor. His newspaper, *The New Boston Beacon*, captured a total of 20 NHPA awards during the past two NHPA Distinguished Journalism Contests.

DAVID A. ANWAR '98 was named one of the top men's college basketball assistant coaches (WAC conference) by Stadium Basketball Insider. Anwar was an assistant at Arkansas-Fort Smith from 2000-04, the director of basketball operations at the University of Texas at El Paso from 2004-06 and then spent six years at Nebraska (2006-12). He went to North Texas for five seasons (2012-17) before coming to New Mexico State's Las Cruces in 2017.

JESSICA L. (HAGGLUND) HAMMOND '98, '01, principal of the new early childhood center at Preakness School in Wayne, N.J., opened the new site this fall amidst the pandemic.

DALE J. SHADBEGIAN '99 is the new owner and CEO of Cape & Plymouth Business, a popular monthly business magazine serving the business community from Cape Cod, the Islands, Plymouth County and the South Shore of Massachusetts since 2004. Most recently, he served as Chief Technical Officer and Advisor at 118GROUP, a Cape Cod web design/CEO firm which he founded in 2010.



JEFFREY C. TURCOTTE '99, '15 recently joined Jeanne D'Arc Credit Union as VP and commercial loan officer after 5 years in the same role at Workers' Credit Union.

2000S

KRISTEN (NIBERT) RYAN '03 was hired this summer as Hull Public Schools' new director of student services.



GINA D. (MCLEOD) CASH '05, director of the Office of the State Auditor's Bureau of Special Investigations,

received a Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly Top Women of Law award. She was recognized for her work to address public benefits fraud across the state and for shifting the bureau's focus to higher impact violators.

MICHAEL P. KUSHMEREK '08, '13 was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives for the 3rd Worcester District. Kushmerek has served in elected office since 2014, serving the past four years as president of the Fitchburg City Council. He gave up his council seat to assume his state role. Previously, Kushmerek served as director of major gifts at Northeastern University, and director of development at both WPI and Fitchburg State.

ANTHONY C. MARRAMA '09, '10 was appointed chief of the Fitchburg Fire Department. He has served on the department for 10 years and had been deputy chief before his promotion.

NATHAN J. MCGARIGAL '09 presented an exhibit of his photography this fall in the Sanders Administration Building on campus.

2020s

JARED D. CYHOWSKI '12 was recently promoted to loan operations specialist at Greenfield Savings Bank.



MEAGAN R. (TRAINOR) MARTIN '14 recently joined the staff of Fitchburg State University as an instructional technologist.

MATTHEW J. SANTONASTASO '14 won the N.H. House of Representatives seat in Cheshire District 14.

KATHLEEN L. CRAIGEN '15 started a new position as a human services coordinator for the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services.

DAVID J. GINISI '16 joined the team at Montachusett Home Care as the chief marketing officer. For the past four years, Ginisi served the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce.

STACIE R. (HERR) BROWN '93, '18, '00, science teacher at Oakmont Regional High School, received the Oakmont Association Excellence in Education Award this past summer from her colleagues. The award is aimed at recognizing members of the faculty who go above and beyond for the school community both inside and outside of the classroom.

COLIN L. MCSHANE '19 chose Winchester to complete his virtual Boston Marathon this year. He raised \$7,000 for the Mass. Eye and Ear Infirmary.

2020s

SHANNON E. DAWSON '20, ALYSSA L. KING '20, & ALLISON K. MCCANN '20, graduates of the third recruit officer course of the Fitchburg State police program, were appointed as new officers to the Maynard Police Department.

JOSHUA R. FOLMER-LAFLEUR '20 and **COURTNEY A. SOARES '20** joined the Fitchburg State University Police Department after graduating from the university's police program.

NICHOLAS B. GIRARD '20 joined the Bolton Police Department, a day before he graduated from the university's police academy.

TONY WYMAN '20 was appointed human resources director for the Town of Saugus.



ARE YOU A LEADER? JOIN THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION BOARD.

We are looking for passionate, service-oriented alumni willing to commit their time and expertise to serve on the Alumni Association Board! Contact alumni@fitchburgstate.edu for more information or to nominate someone. Nominations may be submitted at any time but the deadline for July 2021 consideration is March 1, 2021.

OFFICERS

Jim Walsh '75, President
Dawn Morton '90, President-Elect
Paula Stefanakos '92, '02, Treasurer
Stephanie Marchetti '07, '10, Secretary

DIRECTORS

Seferine Baez '18
Allison Bunnell '03, '07
Rose Cardarelli '81
Rob Comeau '93
Micaela Crowley '11
Beverly Farias '52
Mark Fearer '93, '99
Mike Fiorentino '71
Raymond Gallagher '15
John Garten '89
Eric Gregoire '11
Stephen Hogue '16
Ian James '09
Debra Joy '09
Francine Meigs '83
Jennifer Melanson '18
Amy Merriam '14
Frank O'Donnell '93 (alumni trustee)
Daniel Seaman '07
Nicholas Smith '11

IN MEMORIAM

In Memoriam honors alumni and current or retired employees who have passed away. Space limitations may compel us to include only career, military, and volunteer activities.

1950s

DOROTHY (VAN DRESSER) O'CONNELL '56, of Marlborough, on August 27, 2020.

ROSE (HARRINGTON) MAGNUSON '59, of Henderson, Nev., on August 9, 2020.

1960s

MICHAEL J. HORGAN '60, '64, of Lunenburg, on December 23, 2019.

JEANNETTE S. (ATTALLAH) HUMENUK '60, of New Bedford, on June 23, 2020.

ALLEN J. SENEY '60, '62, of Tilton, N.H., on August 21, 2020.

CAROL A. (BOUCHARD) TREMBLAY '63, '70, of Leominster, on September 28, 2020.

ROBERT M. CONNORS '65, of Apalachicola, Fla., on October 21, 2020.

WILLIAM G. FARIA '66, of Lynnfield, on May 22, 2020.

BEATRICE OKERMAN '66, '85, of Bradenton, Fla., on August 3, 2020.

RONALD J. JANNINO '67, of Revere, on June 20, 2020.

EDWARD L. THIBEAULT, JR. '67, of Ahwatukee, Ariz., on August 5, 2020.

1970s

RAYMOND L. MELANSON '73, of Bradford, on October 4, 2020.

MICHELLE M. (MASSICOTTE) FITZPATRICK '76, of North Andover, on May 28, 2020.

1980s

IAN W. MACNEIL '80, of Shrewsbury, on August 20, 2020.

MICHAEL J. HANNON '81, of Barre, on September 4, 2020.

SHIRLEY A. (STUCKEY) LUCIER '82, of Gardner, on September 30, 2020.

DEBORAH A. (DUNKLE) CLEMONS '83, of Hanson, on September 18, 2020.

JOHN J. FYFE '84, OF EAST HAMPSTEAD, N.H., on October 11, 2020. He leaves behind his wife **SUSAN (CHAMBERLAND) FYFE '84**.

PATRICIA A. NIGRO-BELAND '84, of Ipswich, on July 24, 2020.

1990s

ROSEMARY (MEDEIROS) PRATER '90, of Hudson, on September 10, 2020.

CHRISTIAN A. HAZARD '93, of Alton N.H., on July 20, 2020.

2010s

MEGGHAN P. DUFFY '19, of Fitchburg, on November 6, 2020.

If you have stuff, you have an estate.

Imagine leaving a legacy.

Imagine creating a gift you've always wanted to make, even if you never thought it was possible. Your gift could be the solution to the economic challenges many of our students face while achieving their degree. You don't have to be a certain age or extremely wealthy to make a big difference. You just need a plan.

We invite you to join **The Saxifrage Society**, an alliance of alumni, family, and friends who have included Fitchburg State in their estate plans or made a life-income enhancing planned gift to the school. Donors who remember Fitchburg State in this manner are supporting the aspirations of talented students and faculty from around the world. Offering you membership in The Saxifrage Society is our way of thanking you for your foresight and generosity.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

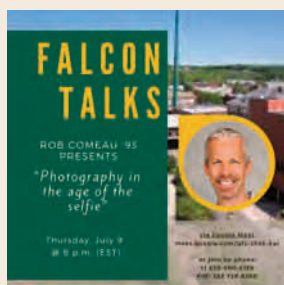
Go to fitchburgstate.edu/PlannedGiving or contact Jeffrey Wolfman, Vice President for Institutional Advancement at 978.665.4933 or jwolfman@fitchburgstate.edu



ALUMNI EVENTS

FALCON TALKS

This summer the Alumni Association launched a series of **FALCON TALKS** to address the need for virtual programming in the time of COVID-19. These presentations have been incredibly popular and have given us the ability to feature alumni (and others) from all over the world. If you have an important story to tell or are an expert in a certain content area, please let us know. We are actively booking presenters for the rest of 2021. Stay tuned for future Falcon Talks by following the Alumni Association on social media or by visiting the new and improved alumni website: fitchburgstate.edu/alumni.



FALCON TALKS

ALUMNI PANEL FEATURING

MARK
FEARER '93, '99
JIM
GEARY '78
JOHN
HONEYCUTT '91

MODERATED BY SHERRY HOREANOPOULOS,
CHIEF INFORMATION SECURITY OFFICER

"Cybersecurity:
perspectives in media,
financial markets &
innovating solutions"

Wednesday, October 28
@ 7 p.m. (EST)

[via Google Meet](https://meet.google.com/dci-rrij-osi)
meet.google.com/dci-rrij-osi

or join by phone
+1 617-675-4444
PIN: 465 918 795 9136#

ALUMNI EVENTS

NATIONAL LATINX HERITAGE MONTH COMMITTEE PRESENTS:

WE ARE HERE:

Latinx/o/a Voices at Fitchburg State

Join us as we kick-off National Latinx Heritage Month. Hear from Latinx/o/a members in our community as they share their experiences at Fitchburg State.

PANELISTS:

			
Dr. Alberto Cardelle Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs	Jonathan Guzman '18 Allstate Insurance Licensed Associate Agent/Lawrence School Committee Member	Manuela Medina Sanchez '21 Psychology/Biology Minor/LASO President Emeritus	Lourdes Ramirez Field Placement, Partnership, and Recruitment Coordinator School of Education

TUES. SEPTEMBER 15th
5:00PM

LINK: meet.google.com/ctw-jfcv-ahk

Jonathan Guzman '18 served on a panel of Latinx voices for "We are Here/Estamos Aqui" during National Latinx Heritage Month.

CAREER SERVICES & ADVISING CENTER

FIRST GENERATION GRADUATE ALUMNI PANEL

Wednesday, November 4th
5:00PM
LINK: http://bit.ly/fsu_1stgenalum

JOIN US AS WE CONNECT WITH RECENT FITCHBURG STATE ALUMNI WHO WERE THE FIRST IN THEIR FAMILY TO ATTEND/GRADUATE FROM COLLEGE.

THIS EVENT WILL FOCUS ON DISMANTLING THE DEFICIT NARRATIVE AROUND BEING A FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT AND WILL HIGHLIGHT THE MANY ASSETS FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE GRADUATES BRING TO THE WORLD OF WORK.

				
ALEXANDRA VALDEZ '15 COMMUNICATIONS/ POLITICAL SCIENCE & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES MINOR	LUIS-MIGUEL CORREA '16 ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGY	KEVIN BERNANDEZ '17 COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA/ FILM & MEDIA CONCENTRATION	IBRAHIM KALLON '17, '19 INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY/ ELECTRONICS ENGINEERING & MBA/BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION & MANAGEMENT	TABITHA KAMAU '18 INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES
CITY OF BOSTON DIRECTOR OF ENGAGEMENT ECONOMIC MOBILITY LAB	SILVIA BUCKENHAM ARCHITECTS ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNER	SELEUDIN SZM MEDIA OWNER/VIDEO DIRECTOR	TRIMBLE TECHNICAL SUPPORT ANALYST	HEBRONACK COLLEGE MULTICULTURAL DEPT. PROJECT MANAGER

Alexandra Valdez '15, Luis-Miguel Correa '16, Kevin Bernandez '17, Ibrahim Kallon '17, '19, and Tabitha Kamau '18 shared their inspiring stories with students during a Career Services & Advising Center panel highlighting first generation graduates, alumni who were first in their family to attend/graduate from college.

 **FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY**
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



**ONCE A FALCON
ALWAYS A FALCON**

October—Members of the Alumni Association Board of Directors participated in an alumni Google Meet and Greet during this year's virtual Admissions Open House in October.

SUBMIT A CLASS NOTE

To place a Class Note, Celebration, Introduction, or In Memoriam in *Contact*, please visit fitchburgstate.edu/alumni and fill out the form online. *Contact* reserves the right to edit for length and clarity. Notes can also be mailed to *Contact* magazine, Fitchburg State University, 160 Pearl Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420.

PHOTO REQUIREMENTS

Photos should be at least 3.5 inches wide and have a resolution of at least 300 dpi. If you mail a glossy print to us, please make sure to include your contact information and the names of any people in the photo.



JOIN THE **ALUMNI COMMUNITY** **online**

Our new and improved website offers alumni a variety of personalized content and many ways to stay connected.

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- JOB BOARD**
- CLASS NOTES**
- CAREER COMMUNITIES**
- REGIONAL ALUMNI CIRCLES**



FitchburgState.edu/Alumni

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

SALVATORE EMMA '81 – SOLVING PROBLEMS



It's been a theme in the successful career of Salvatore Emma '81: solving timely problems.

Emma had long since seen his professional aspirations realized by becoming the CEO of a successful public company – Micron, Inc., based in downtown Fitchburg – when he had an epiphany. "I decided that I wanted to do something outside the corporate environment," he recalled. "I wanted to do something to help with this problem."

"This problem" was the rash of school shootings. The husband of an educator, Emma decided to start a new company to equip teachers with the ability to save lives in the event of an active shooter.

The result was TeacherLock, an ultra-secure deadbolt locking system designed to secure classrooms quickly without a teacher having to fumble for keys that also allows for rapid egress. The system has been installed in thousands of classrooms across the country. "We started with a couple of mammoth sales to large districts out in the Midwest," said Emma. "We came out with a device that satisfies the building code nationwide. It's really the only device in the world that does what it does."

The company crossed a milestone this summer when Massachusetts approved TeacherLock's devices for use in schools in the commonwealth. Two Fitchburg schools became the first in Massachusetts to be outfitted with the locks, and Emma has fielded international inquiries for use

in non-school settings.

When the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the school year nationwide, Emma saw another opportunity to solve a timely problem. He learned of the shortage of personal protective equipment for healthcare workers and first responders. "We found an open source respirator and face shield, and got our 3D printers running."

Emma donated hundreds of masks to hospitals, police and fire departments in New England and beyond. "Generally, anyone who asked for one got one," said Emma.

Emma and his partners, including fellow Fitchburg State graduate Marc Bingham '81, did not seek any stimulus payments from the federal government. "We didn't need it, so we didn't take it," he said.

Instead, the respirator project was a way for Emma and his partners to pass on their good fortune, he said.

In the fall, outgoing State Rep. Stephan Hay (D-Fitchburg) nominated TeacherLock for the 5th Annual Manufacturing Awards Ceremony, hosted by the Commonwealth's Legislative Manufacturing Caucus. Emma collected the award on behalf of the company.

"Fitchburg State gave us a more practical education, and it was a very personal as well," he said. "I wasn't the best student, but I learned. I started out right after school as an accountant. I ended up as a CEO of a public company. How does that happen? My professors taught me all the fundamentals about business, as much as you can from a book. But then they talked how about how to learn, how to work hard. That carried me. We achieved our goal in business. Climb the ladder and get all the way to the top. Once you're there and you realize there are other things, that kind of brings it full circle to me. To be able to help out in the community still is just a blessing."



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