



FITCHBURG STATE  
UNIVERSITY

# Contact

SUMMER 2021

## FOUNDATION EXPLORATION INTEGRATION

Our new general education  
curriculum will prepare lifelong  
learners. pp. 5–25

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State Rep. Michael Kushmerek '08, '13,  
reports for duty in the Statehouse, equipped  
with a strong liberal arts foundation.



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Alumni and Friends,

This spring we celebrated our 125th Commencement Exercises, a milestone in the life of our university that, like so much else, was fundamentally altered by the COVID-19 pandemic. We held our ceremonies for graduate and undergraduate students in the virtual space, complemented by an in-person Falcon Graduation Walk where graduates and guests could gather in small groups for professional photos celebrating their accomplishments. It was an honor to share in the spirit of joy and accomplishment at all of these events.

It was also an occasion for us to consider our university motto of *perseverantia* (perseverance), which has defined so many of our graduates, not least the Class of 2021. These graduates have thrived in the face of countless adversities, supported by the talent and dedication of our faculty, librarians and staff. I have no doubt they will do great things in the future.

Looking ahead, we are hopeful that Fitchburg State will return to a more traditional in-person experience this fall. We will be requiring on-campus students to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and we are encouraging staff and faculty to follow suit (as of this writing, many have already been inoculated). Together we will turn the corner and get back to the shared, face-to-face environment that we have all missed for the past year and a half.

When our new students arrive this fall, they will engage in our new general education curriculum. Years in the making, this revised academic program is designed to prepare students with the skills to thrive in an ever-changing world, contributing as scholars and citizens to our global community. In the pages ahead you will read about the new curriculum and learn about some of our accomplished alumni who have put their liberal arts degrees to work. I hope their stories inspire you to think about your own paths, and the journeys of students to come.

I also hope you will take advantage of the opportunity to return to campus, whether it's part of Homecoming or just to visit.

We will always be here for you.

A portrait of Richard S. Lapidus, the President of Fitchburg State University. He is a middle-aged man with thinning grey hair, smiling warmly at the camera. He is wearing a dark grey pinstriped suit jacket over a light blue dress shirt and a patterned tie with orange, blue, and green geometric designs. A small circular Fitchburg State University pin is visible on his left lapel. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with green trees and a clear blue sky.  
*Richard S. Lapidus*  
President



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# CAMPUS NEWS

## CELEBRATING THE CLASS OF 2021

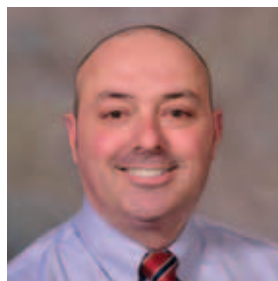
Our 125th Commencement Exercises were virtual events again this spring, but still joyous celebrations of the graduates who embody the university motto of *perseverantia* (perseverance).

At the graduate ceremony, Graduate Student Leadership Award recipient **Christopher Brooks** talked about his journey from serving in the U.S. Navy to becoming a physician assistant, and the decision to continue his education with an MBA from Fitchburg State. He said he was encouraged to go back to school by a patient who was recovering from a stroke, who was also a teacher.

"To make a long story short, for every excuse that I had on why I could not go back to school, the teacher had given me a positive answer on how and why I should," Brooks said, encouraging others to follow the teacher's example. "Help guide or teach someone that may be feeling stuck. Lead others to help them achieve their goals. Lastly, do not be afraid to take a chance on yourself, whether it is continuing your education further, or possibly applying for that job that you saw, but did not think you'd get."

Undergraduate valedictorian **Joseph Bourgeois** recounted the challenges all of the members of the Class of 2021 had faced in pursuit of their degrees. "As the brilliant Albert Einstein once said, 'In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity,'" Bourgeois said. "This past year has been filled with challenges brought on by COVID. Our lives have been changed drastically, especially in terms of our academics. The transition from in-person classes to online was not easy by any means but we were able to push forward and cross the finish line. When we face difficulty in life, we must adapt to the changes and make the best out of a bad situation."

Hundreds of graduating students took part in our Falcon Graduation Walk preceding commencement, an in-person, by-appointment celebration wherein graduates were able to cross the stage and hear their names called while their families and guests cheered them on. The university received a lot of positive feedback on the event.



Christopher Brooks



Joseph Bourgeois





## RENEWING TIES

This spring, Fitchburg State and the Fitchburg Art Museum (FAM) reauthorized a memorandum of agreement that will deepen the collaboration between two of the city's most important and enduring institutions, enriching opportunities for programming and professional development for both organizations that are designed to enhance the quality of life for all city residents.

President Lapidus and FAM Director Nicholas Capasso signed the pact that calls for both institutions "to engage in activities that are mutually beneficial, as well as activities that help support the economy, livability, and quality of life in the city of Fitchburg and North Central Massachusetts."

"Fitchburg State University and the Fitchburg Art Museum have enjoyed a long and significant history of mutually beneficial collaboration, and this new agreement further formalizes opportunities for us to work together on projects that will have meaningful impacts on students, faculty, and the broader community," President Lapidus said.

"Our strengthened agreement will help to more firmly embed the Fitchburg Art Museum within the Fitchburg State community," Capasso said. "We want to make FAM part of the overall campus experience for students, faculty, and staff alike. The possibilities are endless."

Among other facets, the pact will make FAM the de facto art museum for Fitchburg State, with free admission for all university students, faculty and staff, along with FAM's participation in class and curriculum planning for a variety of university disciplines from art, art history and communications media to business administration, education, history, and the humanities.

FAM will also provide university students with additional high-quality internship opportunities in fields including management, curation, conservation, and exhibition planning.



## ANEKE ONE OF 29 WHO SHINE

Crystal Aneke '20 of Quincy, who graduated in December, represented Fitchburg State at Department of Higher Education's virtual 29 Who Shine celebration in May. The program, which was canceled in 2020 because of the pandemic, honors a graduate from each of its public institutions of higher education.

Aneke graduated with a major in political science and minors in economics and criminal justice. She was the elected student representative to the university's Board of Trustees and helped organize campus discussions on themes related to diversity, equity and inclusion that brought members of the campus community together in virtual space. Aneke also stood out as a member of Fitchburg State's successful Moot Court team, earning national honors competing against elite peers from across the country.

Aneke will continue practicing those skills in her next venture, when she enrolls at Boston College Law School with plans to practice public interest law as a career. She also cited Professor Paul I. Weizer from the Economics, History and Political Science Department as her faculty mentor.

"At times all one needs is a person to believe in them, a figure who despite the odds, still provides encouragement and support unconditionally," Aneke said. "For me, this person is Dr. Paul Weizer. When I couldn't see the light, he made sure to steer me away from darkness."



## CELEBRATING FACULTY AND LIBRARIAN EXCELLENCE

Our annual Celebration of Faculty and Librarian Excellence was held as a virtual program in May, where milestones including the attainment of tenure and promotion were highlighted, along with the presentation of our highest faculty awards.

Dr. Meledath Govindan of the Biology/Chemistry Department received the Faculty Award for Service, while Dr. Michael Hove of the Psychological Science Department was presented the Faculty Award for Research and Scholarship. Dr. Elizabeth Gordon of the Earth and Geographic Sciences Department was presented the Dr. Vincent J. Mara Award for Excellence in Teaching, while Dr. James Alicata of the Engineering Technology Department received the Contributions to the Graduate Program Award. Video interviews with each of the honorees were shown during the ceremony, and are available to view on the university's YouTube page at [youtube.com/FitchburgState](https://youtube.com/FitchburgState).



James Alicata



Elizabeth Gordon

## BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE CAMPUS

The Commonwealth recognized Fitchburg State at its 14th Leading by Example Awards for outstanding public sector energy and environmental efforts.

The university was among eight Massachusetts state agencies, public higher education institutions, municipalities, and public sector individuals recognized by the Baker-Polito Administration for their leadership in promoting initiatives that reduce energy costs and environmental impacts.

Fitchburg State was recognized for a host of sustainability efforts across campus, including completion of an extensive energy project with DCAMM resulting in elimination of #6 oil combustion on campus and an expected \$9 million in lifetime energy cost savings, achieving LEED Silver Certification for three buildings, comprehensive recycling and waste diversion programs resulting in over 40% of food waste being diverted, installing their first EV charging station in 2019, and more.

"Our efforts at Fitchburg State span several campus buildings and operations, including replacing dirty fuels with renewable or cleaner alternatives; green construction and renovation projects; reducing electricity use across buildings; diverting food waste; and communicating with members of our community the importance of the work we are all doing," said President Lapidus. "Most of the work we have done may not be readily visible to the campus community, as it has taken place behind walls, underground, and within building systems. But all of it is having an impact on moving us forward toward reaching our sustainability goals. That work is shared across departments and represents a truly comprehensive commitment to sustainability."

Lapidus singled out Vice President for Finance and Administration Jay Bry, Director of Environmental Health and Safety & Risk Management Leah Fernandes, and Associate Vice President for Finance and Administration Mary Beth McKenzie for their leadership in the university's sustainability efforts.



Michael Hove



Meledath Govindan



FOUNDATION, EXPLORATION, INTEGRATION

# FOUNDATION EXPLORATION INTEGRATION

A look at our new general education curriculum  
and alumni who put their liberal arts and science  
foundation to work.



# SUPPORTING LIFELONG LEARNING

## BUILDING ON A LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES FOUNDATION

BECOMING A LIFELONG LEARNER IS A PROCESS, AND WE HOPE TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS NOT ONLY IN THE CLASSROOM BUT ALSO IN THEIR EXTRA- AND CO-CURRICULAR EXPERIENCES TO EXPLORE THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN WHAT THEY STUDY AND THEIR EVERYDAY LIVES.

—Associate Professor Kisha Tracy

This fall, students starting at Fitchburg State will not only begin their college careers but also be the first to experience our new General Education curriculum. This program is grounded in the values of a liberal arts and sciences education and will introduce students to skills and ways of thinking they can apply in a wide range of contexts. Becoming a lifelong learner is a process, and we hope to encourage students not only in the classroom but also in their extra- and co-curricular experiences to explore the connections between what they study and their everyday lives – and perhaps help them imagine a future that will change the world for all of us.

The new program is organized into three tiers. While the manner in which students will be able to make their way through these tiers is flexible, the design of the program will give them a cohesive learning experience as they build upon learning from previous tiers and courses while discovering how their general education and their major programs of study complement each other.

Foundations for Lifelong Learning (Foundation) courses are taken in the first year and are intended to help students develop the skills necessary to succeed academically, personally, and professionally as well as increase their familiarity with campus resources. In these five courses, students will focus on college-level reading, writing, information literacy, quantitative reasoning, and speaking and listening, including world languages. This first year is intended to be a cohesive experience, guiding students to gain the foundations for lifelong learning.

Critical and Creative Thinking across the Disciplines (Exploration) courses allow students to experience a

breadth of learning from different viewpoints and demonstrate a variety of methods, disciplinary and interdisciplinary, to think about our world - past, present, and future - as well as build upon the skills developed in the Foundation. In Exploration courses, students will be exposed to a number of artistic, civic, diverse, ethical, historical, literary, and scientific perspectives while expanding their approaches to thinking and wellness.

Advancing and Applying Liberal Arts and Sciences Learning (Integration) courses provide the opportunity to combine what students learn in the General Education program and their majors to think about more advanced ideas and problems. In these courses, students will learn how to take knowledge and skills from different perspectives and apply them in new ways. They will also participate in a high-impact, experiential learning experience, ranging from community engagement, internships, and study abroad to independent research and creative projects. Students will have the opportunity to choose their focus, including the option to take a minor.

As we move forward, we hope to share with students how general education courses are more than just a set of requirements. We are excited to help them on their journeys as they become educated, informed, and empathetic individuals and citizens.

*Associate Professor Kisha Tracy is a member of the English Studies Department and chair of the General Education Program Area*



## GETTING STARTED

### LIBERAL ARTS COURSES GET STUDENTS OFF ON THE RIGHT PATH

Christine Nibitanga '23 recalls sitting in the audience at her high school graduation in Worcester and wondering about her future plans. She decided she would give college a try, and enrolled at Fitchburg State.

"When I got to Fitchburg I was all over the place," she recalled. "I spent my whole first month weighing different majors, and seeing my options."

She was always drawn to the notion of a career helping others, so a medical field appealed to her. She decided to declare a major in exercise and sports science.

"When I was thinking about all of this, I was taking Writing I with Dr. (Kisha) Tracy, where we did a disability seminar," Nibitanga said. "It was a great environment. It was both Dr. Tracy's teaching and the subject matter. She was very engaging and I could tell she was very passionate about the subject. I ended up learning so much, and I declared disability studies as my minor."

Nibitanga, who has an outgoing personality but said she can be shy in class, found the Writing I course meaningful. The course offered a strong academic foundation that also yielded dividends for her longer-term plans. She said she hopes that future students will also be open to new ideas through their first-year studies.

"Some people come to college like, 'I want to be a nursing student,' and they're just lost when they find out that it's not for them," Nibitanga said. "They should try to experience other things."



Christine Nibitanga '23



Associate Professor Kisha Tracy

## THE LEARNING TRANSFORMATION

### INCOMING STUDENTS WILL BE EQUIPPED WITH STRATEGIES TO HELP THEM LEARN THROUGH THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE

A core component of the university's new general education curriculum will be the implementation of a first-year experience (FYE) for all incoming freshman students. The FYE is designed to equip students with the tools that will help them succeed throughout their collegiate careers.

Developing strong reading strategies, promoting information literacy, and forging strong "habits of mind" are among the FYE mechanisms that are intended to give students the best possible start.

Professor Laura Garofoli of the Psychological Science Department is a believer in the "reading apprenticeship" approach that encourages students to consider learning as a shared activity rather than a solitary pursuit. Through techniques including talking about content as it's being read in a shared environment, students can hone their ability to process a text.

"It's not the volume of information that you have, it's what you do with it," said Garofoli, explaining that students may be able to read individual words in a document while not comprehending its content. "It's the same with reading, with math, all of those thought processes. We have to break them down so we can apprentice them with us as experts."

Garofoli said many students struggle to transfer knowledge from one context to another, and rethinking the fundamentals of how students read and learn can help with that. Even with advanced classes, Garofoli said, the tactics have shown success. "It's finally giving students permission to focus on small amounts of text," she said. "You're still trying to build capacity to analyze large amounts of text, but helping them with small amounts at least builds those muscles."

She compares the acquisition of learning skills to artisanal training. "We would never expect a silversmith to say to one of their apprentices, 'This is silver, you melt it and you make it into stuff.' But with lectures, that's a lot of what

we do," she said. "We would never expect a silversmith to develop those higher-level skills without a lot of practice. So much of college is text-based and independent learning. Most of the time, we have our students twice a week, and for so many of us as faculty that time is spent lecturing. For years, I've been saying the content is the vehicle for teaching students how to learn. When we make that shift, that's when the true learning transformation takes place."

Garofoli, who noted that faculty teaching FYE seminars benefit from additional training and the experience of being part of a community of practice, said that work should transcend disciplinary boundaries.

"We have to be able to demonstrate that these outcomes permeate the rest of the curriculum," Garofoli said. "Once you have these strategies under your belt, you can utilize them in your other classes. You tie the knot in that first year, but you really need to pull it through the rest of the curriculum."





## INQUIRY AND ANALYSIS

### THE NEW CURRICULUM TAKES A BROAD VIEW OF SKILL-BUILDING

WHAT DO YOU WANT STUDENTS TO BE ABLE TO DO,  
AND WHAT DO YOU WANT THEM TO BE ABLE TO  
KNOW? START THERE AND THEN WORK BACKWARDS.

WE WANT OUR STUDENTS TO BECOME LIFELONG  
LEARNERS, TO BECOME GLOBAL CITIZENS.

—Professor Erin Rehrig

Professor Erin Rehrig of the Biology/Chemistry Department said where course offerings may not be radically altered under the new curriculum, the implementation has meant taking long, hard looks at syllabi for faculty to see where their courses fit. For faculty teaching laboratory courses, for example, the focus was put on procedural and logical thinking, and scientific inquiry and analysis.

"You would hope you're doing all of those things in a lab, but you may not be," Rehrig said. "This process has reinforced where we do these things in our classes, and where our classes should include them."

She said an important element to this exercise has been focusing on the larger educational objectives rather than specific course content. "What do you want your students to be able to do, and what do you want them to be able to know? Start there and then work backwards," Rehrig said. "We want our students to become lifelong learners, to become global citizens. Rather than focus on a course in a specific department, it focuses on which course can fill that objective, regardless of the content."

The sciences can cover a lot of this territory, Rehrig said, where students are developing and testing hypotheses, obtaining results and drawing conclusions, all of which support the skills of scientific inquiry and analysis. "I like that this curriculum is not content-driven, but objectives and skills driven," she said. "It takes advantage of what we do both in lectures and in the lab."





## APPLIED LEARNING

### THE UNDERGRADUATE CONFERENCE ON RESEARCH AND CREATIVE PRACTICE SPOTLIGHTS STUDENT WORK

Madelyn Covino '22 didn't expect to discover that poetry was a therapeutic means of self-expression. A nursing major, Covino said she took a literature course because she needed to fill an elective.

"I ended up really liking it," she said. The English Studies course was taught by Professor Katharine Covino (no relation). "One of her assignments was to write two poems at the end of our semester. I was sitting here thinking, 'I don't know what to write.'"

Inspiration came from real life. When not in class, Covino works as a nursing assistant at Winchester Hospital. Working in healthcare during a pandemic, Covino has seen a lot, from shifts in pediatrics to seeing patients die. There were stressful times, but they have confirmed for her that she is on the right path. "My mom is a nurse, and I've always loved taking care of people," she said.

When it came time for her own writing assignment, Covino was encouraged to look at her experience at the hospital. The result was "Night Shift," a briskly-paced and candid account of life on a COVID ward (see sidebar).

"I wanted to open up people's eyes to what health care workers are really going through," Covino said. "It was right before the second wave, and I wanted to write to explain what we were going through. I work on a 23-bed unit, and for weeks we had 23 patients. For all of winter break, I was at work for almost 40 hours a week. We were so run down."

The finished poem resonated with Covino's peers, and she was encouraged to submit it for consideration to the Undergraduate Conference on Research and Creative Practice, which was being conducted virtually this year after being canceled outright in 2020 because of the pandemic.

"I didn't think I would get chosen," Covino said. "I got supportive emails from my nursing professors, saying it's a great representation of what we have to go through as nurses taking care of patients in the hospital. After Professor Covino's class, I started reading books and enjoying them a little bit more, even poetry."

Professor Covino and Assistant Librarian for Instruction and Research Services Renee Fratantonio co-chaired the research conference. They were pleased they could pivot to a virtual conference this year, which meant students would still get the valuable experience of sharing their high-level scholarly and creative work.

One advantage of the virtual conference is the work will remain visible online, Covino said. "For the students, they can put it on their resume and it's live," she said. The site housing this year's projects can be found at [fitchburgstate.edu/ug-conference](https://fitchburgstate.edu/ug-conference).

"The skills that they learned for developing and producing a video presentation are highly transferable," Fratantonio added. "These are skills they can use across any of the disciplines, and beyond college as well. This entire situation has been difficult for all of us, but imagine the level of technology literacy that our students have had to develop on the fly. Those are skills that are highly desirable in the workforce. These are things you don't typically learn within a college program."





## NIGHT SHIFT

by Madelyn Covino '22

Waking up at 5:30pm

Eating dinner, getting ready for work

It became the rhythm

Off to work, coffee ready to go

Stop! Mask!

Did you get cleared to work today?

No symptoms, right?

Good, have a nice shift

On the floor, assignment ready to go

Stop! Scrub Cap!

What patients do we have today?

Same as yesterday no doubt

Off to the vitals

Stop! N95! Surgical mask too!

Ready? Nope!

Goggles!

Sanitize... Gown... gloves... supplies

Ready!... in room one, out of room one

Gloves off... gown off... sanitize... document...

Room two... sanitize... gown... gloves

And 100x times to go

2 hours later vitals done

Water? Nope!

Call bells need answering

Around, around we go

Vitals again

Sanitize... Gown... gloves... supplies

Ready!... in room one, out of room one

Gloves off... gown off... sanitize... document...

Room two... sanitize... gown... gloves

Break? No time to eat

Patients, they need us

3am here we go again

Sanitize... Gown... gloves... supplies

Ready!... in room one, out of room one

Gloves off... gown off... sanitize... document...

Room two... sanitize... gown... gloves

5am almost there

Just a few more things to do

But first call bells

On call bells

Every time in someone's room

Sanitize... Gown... gloves... supplies

Ready!

7am is here

N95 off, goggles off,

regular mask back on

time to leave

Sanitize!





## Our New CURRICULUM



Mohamed Elsayyad '22



# JUSTICE, TRUTH, AND KNOWLEDGE

## CREATIVE AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS FOSTERED IN NEW CURRICULUM

Mohamed Elsayyad '22 has a passion for helping others. He is majoring in nursing, and already works as a personal care attendant at UMass Memorial Medical Center in Worcester. On campus, the honors student also works as a resident assistant.

"It's a passion for taking care of people," Elsayyad said. "Making people smile and relieving their pain is something I feel passionate about."

Through the honors program, Elsayyad enrolled in Professor David Svolba's course on comparative ethics.

"It was a very heavy class, but very applicable to real life," Elsayyad said. "We were applying an objective, philosophical lens to observe a current issue, rather than just using our own opinions."

He found the discussions stimulating, particularly when they waded into ethical waters around the medical response to the COVID-19 pandemic. "Who deserves the ventilator, the 90-year-old who's lived their whole life, or the 19-year-old who has their whole life ahead of them? There's no right answer. For us, it was about how you make the decision. It's about logic in the form of argument."

Ethical reasoning is one of the creative and critical thinking skills embedded in the new general education curriculum.

For Professor Svolba, a member of the Humanities Department faculty, discovering a love of philosophy was unexpected. "It was at a time in my life when I needed to find something I was good at," Svolba said. "I was an 18-year-old kid who was insecure, who was trying to find out what life was all about. When I found out I was good at philosophy, the skies just opened up. I loved the questions, and I loved how you could think seriously and rigorously about really important questions – like justice, or truth, or knowledge, or the good. It sounded really foundational, in a way that other things didn't."

The study of philosophy imparts important skills, he said, like how to make an argument, or unpack and evaluate another's argument.

The new curriculum is furthered by this study, Svolba said. "Curricular turnover is a good thing," he said. "I think it sends a good message that Fitchburg State includes ethical reasoning as a core objective. It's very common for first-year students at a university or college to have no sense of what philosophy is. I hope this exposure leads them to fall in love with the subject, and the critical examination of important ideas."

Svolba likes that philosophy and ethics discussions are relevant and robust.

"Some students assume that ethics are handed down as complete, and others will think it's a personal thing and rooted in one's gut feelings," he said. "When you get students to see there are better and worse ways of answering ethical questions, we can start to think about how rationally defensible those answers are. Why should I accept that claim? Why should I agree with you? Once you get them to accept that, it opens up a new intellectual reality to them."

The study of philosophy is a way to awaken students to the excitement of serious thinking, Svolba said. "At the end of the day, whether you're talking about widgets or truth and beauty, thinking is thinking, and logic is logic. The target may change, but the skills and the abilities you hone and develop in a philosophy class do not."

Elsayyad agreed. "Studying philosophy definitely helped me in terms of analyzing the different dimensions of a problem," he said. "The biggest thing I took from the class was how to look at an issue from a 360-degree angle instead of 180 degrees. My 6 could be a 9 to you. Philosophy is a concept that can be applied to real-life issues. It's not a book sitting on a shelf collecting dust."



Associate Professor David Svolba



## Our New CURRICULUM



Support from the Center for Italian Culture has created countless opportunities for students and faculty to study abroad. Emily Fortin '19 went to Venice in the summer of 2019 as part of her photography studies, where she made this image, *Venice, Life on the Water*. "That was my first time leaving the country," said Fortin, now a freelance photographer. Visiting another country was a life-changing experience. "Venice was my favorite," she said. "I hope to go back someday."



## BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

### THE CENTER FOR ITALIAN CULTURE TURNS 20 THIS YEAR, AND CELEBRATES A HISTORY OF SUPPORTING STUDENTS

Anna M. Clementi recalls the founding of the Center for Italian Culture (CIC) at Fitchburg State with a transformative gift from Amelia V. Gallucci-Cirio '38. "It was not designed to be a social club," Clementi said. "It was to have an educational foundation."

And that it has. In its 20 years, the CIC has helped build and support world language programs, created opportunities for students and faculty to study abroad, and sustained a rich series of programs to entertain and enlighten residents of North Central Massachusetts.

For Clementi, one of the center's founding members and its current president, the CIC has been a tool to support the liberal arts and sciences and the critical thinking skills such study fosters. "You need the liberal arts," said Clementi, who also served on the university's Board of Trustees. "The liberal arts teach you how to think critically and support the formation of your soul, and contribute to the humanity in a person. I feel strongly that the CIC has been instrumental in keeping that going."

CIC scholarships have brought study abroad opportunities within reach of dozens of students over the years, exposing them not only to world languages, but supporting other curricular areas. Courses on Roman history and the biology of the Mediterranean diet are among the many offerings that have been made possible thanks to its funding.

Professor Daniel Sarefield of the Economics, History and Political Science Department teaches ancient history and Latin, and has served on the CIC's board since 2007. He has seen firsthand the transformative power of the CIC's support.

"Through its scholarships directly to the students, the Center for Italian Culture has enabled many students who would otherwise be unable to do so to fly to Italy and live there for enough time to really get to know Verona in an intimate way and to develop a connection to its past and present," he said. "In this way, the CIC supports the goal of

our students becoming global citizens who are able to foster understanding across peoples and cultures."

Sarefield has led students on four university-sponsored trips to Verona, Italy, where he has taught courses on life in the Roman city and reading Latin inscriptions. The voyages have animated the subject matter in powerful ways.

"The objective of my Verona courses has always been to provide my students with opportunities to probe beneath the surface of Roman life," Sarefield said. "This is definitely the case with my history course. Over our four weeks in Verona, we locate, identify and explore the city's numerous Roman remains, many of which are still visible across the modern city today. We connect what we find in the field with the historical texts that we read and discuss in our classroom at the University of Verona. In this way, we develop an understanding of ancient Roman life that integrates evidence of a variety of sources."

The Latin courses are similarly enriched by the in-person experience of Verona, Sarefield said.

Dean of Arts and Sciences Franca Barricelli said the CIC has enabled study across a variety of disciplines, from history and photography to exercise science and chemistry.

"As an academic resource, the CIC is a unique distinction of Fitchburg State," said Barricelli, who also serves on the CIC board. "It makes an important contribution to the academic mission of the university by enabling faculty, students, outside national and international scholars and community members to interact in ways that enhance learning and provide opportunities for research, outreach and collaboration. By encouraging global engagement through study abroad and the study of Italian and Latin language, history and culture at home, the CIC has advanced our foundational liberal arts objectives, which equip students for academic success and purposeful lives beyond college."

The CIC will hold its 20th anniversary celebration on Saturday, Oct. 16 at the Fitchburg Art Museum. Additional information will be posted online at [fitchburgstate.edu/cic](http://fitchburgstate.edu/cic).



## CITIZENS OF THE WORLD

### WORLD LANGUAGES EXPAND CULTURAL APPRECIATION

Studying a language that is not your own is nothing less than a world-changing experience.

"When you learn a new language, you engage with a new culture on its own terms, and not on your terms," said Professor Rala Diakite of the Humanities Department. "That allows a really different viewpoint. This type of learning, especially in the first year of university, is really foundational not only for a student's academic and professional success, but as a human being and citizen of the world."

Diakite, who teaches beginning and intermediate Italian as well as French, said she was gratified to see world languages embedded in the university's new general education curriculum. "We're really hoping this will allow many more students to experience language learning, draw them in and help them continue."

Professor Karina Bautista of the Humanities Department teaches a variety of Spanish courses, for beginning and intermediate speakers. She said the exposure is critical to giving students skills to thrive in their lives and careers.

"It makes a huge difference in communication and the message students receive about their responsibilities as citizens of the world," Bautista said. "There's a huge difference between not knowing a second language and processing information about the world, and knowing a second language and processing information about the world."

There are also practical, career-minded benefits to studying world languages, the professors said, beyond the other principles involved.

"In the past 10 years or so, the number of jobs available with being bilingual as one of the qualifications has doubled," Diakite said. "This is true for any number of jobs at any number of levels, even in the service industry. There's also a whole other more advanced level in political science, finance, world health, journalism, travel and hospitality. There's just a range of options where those skill levels will help students."

This includes students who already speak a second language. Through the university's new heritage language program, students can build on their existing skills and forge deeper connections to their families and cultures.

Krismelly Grullon Rojas '22 has found her own horizons broadened, even as a native Spanish speaker. She came to the U.S. with her family from the Dominican Republic and settled in the city of Lawrence seven years ago, and had to learn English as a freshman in high school. It was a challenging time.

Rojas, now majoring in early childhood education, said learning the more formal aspects of her first language has been enriching. While she knows many of the conventions of spoken Spanish as a native speaker, she has gleaned a better understanding of its grammatical rules and construction.

She hopes to take her training and experience back to Lawrence to teach. "There's a high percentage of people of color, and I want them to see a teacher that looks like them, that knows their experiences," she said. "I went through that personally. It's in my heart, I want to help those kids. I completely understand what they're going through."

Rojas is active on campus, serving as vice president of the Latin American Student Organization, part of the Latinx Heritage Month planning committee, and working in the Center for Diversity and Inclusion. She said all students benefit from studying another language.

"You can communicate more with people, you can communicate across cultures, and you can understand more," Rojas said. "The more you learn, the better."

Katie McLaughlin '21 agrees. McLaughlin said an 8th grade Spanish class in her home town of Reading was a pivotal moment in her life. "It was the first class I ever enjoyed," she said. "I always doubted myself, but this was clearly something I was good at."

She studied Spanish throughout high school, and took it on as a minor at Fitchburg State. Through her language study and professors, McLaughlin said she was able to get a deeper understanding of the world. "I never thought I'd be writing my graduation thesis on immigration policy," she said. "It was a whole learning experience. I've never immigrated anywhere, I've never been oppressed. But when you understand language you understand culture."

Krismelly Grullon Rojas '22



## EDUCATION AS EXPLORATION

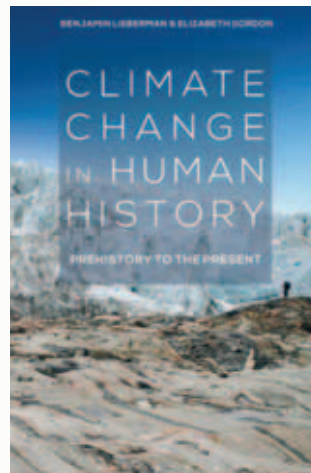
### THINKING ACROSS DISCIPLINES IS KEY TO THE NEW CURRICULUM

Applied learning beyond disciplinary boundaries is a key element of the new general education curriculum, and there are already examples of its effectiveness at Fitchburg State. Professor Elizabeth Gordon of the Earth and Geographic Sciences Department and Professor Benjamin Lieberman of the Economics, History and Political Science Department have co-taught a course on climate change and human history for several years.

The course looks at climate change from the perspective of earth science as well as its effect on human societies. The professors co-authored a textbook in 2017 that explains how climate change has created opportunities for human societies as well as risks and challenges over the centuries. It concludes by outlining the key human role in bringing about accelerating climate change.

"It's great to see students learn how to integrate methods and evidence from two disciplines and put together final projects that draw deeply on both science and on research on history and human societies," Lieberman said.

"It was a really interesting experience to me, because I had co-taught before, but always in the sciences," said Gordon, who has also co-taught courses on environmental ethics with Professor David Svolba of the Humanities Department. "I think it's valuable for students to see that the methodologies may be different, but there are similarities in making an argument. No matter what discipline you're in, we highlight the importance of using evidence to support your position."





## Our New CURRICULUM



ALFA President Art Norman



## LIFELONG LEARNING

### THE ALFA PROGRAM EMBODIES PRINCIPLES THE UNIVERSITY IS WORKING TO CULTIVATE IN ALL ITS STUDENTS

FOR MOST OF HUMAN HISTORY, LEARNING HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH MENTORSHIP. THE MECHANISM FOR DOING THAT IS ALFA.

—Joyce Hinckley, ALFA Past President

For nearly 20 years, the university's Adult Learning in the Fitchburg Area (ALFA) program has offered low-cost, non-credit-bearing courses for local residents. With instructors including university faculty members, the program has played an important role in bringing the campus and the community together.

ALFA began with two classes and just over 50 students and has evolved to a comprehensive slate of more than 60 courses serving hundreds of students each term. ALFA offers fitness classes and courses on history and film, along with cultural offerings and cooking classes.

"Over the years ALFA has really raised the bar and offers a wide range of courses," said Art Norman, who this spring was elected ALFA's president. The retired educator got involved with another institution's adult learning program before he learned about ALFA, and has been pleased with its evolution. Norman said he looks forward to building more connections between ALFA students and university undergraduates.

"You want to talk about the civil rights movement? We lived through the civil rights movement," said Norman. "That's why we want to get more involved with the undergraduate students and be mentors."

Joyce Hinckley, who this spring completed her term as president of ALFA, agreed that mentorship is a crucial role in education that ALFA's population could help play.

"We have a number of people in ALFA who were the first college students in their families, or for whom English was their second language," Hinckley said. "Let's promote more intergenerational conversation. For most of human history, learning has been accomplished through mentorship. The mechanism for doing that is ALFA."

ALFA's embodiment of lifelong learning can also serve as an example for undergraduates. "Today's students are going to have to be lifelong learners," Hinckley said. "They're not going to have just one career in their lifetimes."

Hinckley cites her own professional history as proof. "I ended up being a clinical psychologist, but I started as an English major," she said. "I taught at Northeastern University, I practiced, and I consulted. Because I had a liberal arts education, it made me flexible."

And she has continued to cultivate that flexibility as a retiree, in part thanks to ALFA. "I've taken classes that were outside my comfort zone, but because I had the liberal arts and sciences background, I could do it," she said.

Some of the classes Hinckley took were just for fun, but still had lasting value, such as an ALFA class on flower arranging. "I am a klutz," she said. "I don't have good hand-eye coordination, but it was eye-opening. Now, on Christmas, on Thanksgiving, and on birthdays, I still use that skill."

During the pandemic, ALFA was also a mechanism for keeping a sense of community for students who were otherwise physically isolated from friends and family. "People were checking in on each other, and we got hundreds of folks trained on how to use Zoom," Hinckley said.

Hinckley looks forward to the fall when she will be co-teaching a course with past and present Fitchburg State faculty on topics from history that everyone should know. "Who is a learner and who is a teacher isn't always one or the other," she said. "That blurred line between being a learner and a teacher will change over the course of your lifetime."



## A NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENT

### SUSANNAH M. WHIPPS '12 CULTIVATES A PASSION FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AS A LEGISLATOR

State Rep. Susannah M. Whipps looks at the long and winding route to her degree in interdisciplinary studies and sees a voyage defined by curiosities followed and an imagination well-nourished.

"I don't believe I've ever had a clear path," said Whipps, who was torn by a calling to work for her family business in Athol with following her own aspirations.

For a while, she chose the latter, studying culinary arts at

Johnson and Wales University, and later working at her own restaurants. "I loved the restaurant business, but it's hard and you have no personal life," she said.

She began looking at other options, including taking courses at Fitchburg State, first in occupational education. Yet she couldn't resist sampling other items from the collegiate menu. "I took a class on the Bible and literature, which just sounded interesting," she said. "I took courses out of a desire to learn, not in pursuit of any endgame. With an affordable school like Fitchburg State, you could do that."

More than 10 years after her first course at Fitchburg State, Whipps had accrued nearly enough credits for a bachelor's degree, but her coursework spanned disciplines and departments. "I called Fitchburg State and said I wanted to finish, and they were so great," she said, describing the formation of her interdisciplinary studies degree. "They said, 'Absolutely, welcome back.' That was so meaningful to me."

Whipps said she sees education as a journey, not a destination. "I know very few people I grew up with who are doing what they thought they would be doing at 16 or 17 years old," she said. "I tell young people, 'Go to a state school, figure out what you really want to do.' We're so fortunate in Massachusetts to have the public higher education system we have. We're a leader in the country."

In 2012 she graduated with a degree in interdisciplinary studies, concentrating on occupational education, history and sociology.

Already active in her community as a member of the Board of Selectmen, Whipps turned her ambitions to the state Legislature. She was elected in 2014.

"There's so much learning in this job," Whipps said. "I feel as a lifelong learner that Fitchburg State inspired that in me. If you're the smartest person in the room you're in the wrong room, and you've got to move on."

Whipps feels she has found the ideal place for her to make a positive impact on her community and in her district, including advocacy for investment in public education.

"I don't look at this job as a stepping stone," Whipps said. "I expect someday to be back working with my family again, but right now I'm glad I'm in the spot I'm in. You end up in the right spot at the right time, and I think everything has worked the way it was supposed to. Like during my college years, I guess I'm just non-traditional."





## LIGHTING THE SPARK

### SHARON BERNARD '99 TURNED A PASSION FOR THE WRITTEN WORD INTO A REWARDING CAREER IN THE LIBRARY

Sharon Bernard '99 has always been a bibliophile, a fitting passion for the longtime director of the Fitchburg Public Library, whose 50-year career began in the Main Street landmark as a page.

"I chose English for my undergraduate major because I loved to read, which is almost a requirement to be a librarian," she said. "One of my favorite days in class was in a seminar on Jane Austen with Professor Colin Bourn. We spent the entire hour and a half discussing the first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*. It was exciting."

That moment was a long time coming for Bernard, whose educational training included one semester at Fitchburg State after graduating from St. Bernard's Central Catholic High School. "I was a shy kid and I just didn't feel like I belonged."

Schooling took a back seat when she met her future husband and started a family. Later, Bernard decided to resume her studies. She returned to Fitchburg State in 1997 with a new perspective.

Bernard was eventually hired as a catalog librarian in Fitchburg but major budget cuts by the city cost the facility its state certification and led to the exodus of most of the staff, including her.

When she learned Fitchburg's interim director was going to be retiring, Bernard was summoned back.

"It's nothing I ever planned on," she said. "It was not my goal to be director, but I felt like they needed me at that point in time."

Under Bernard's directorship, the library's certification was restored and planning began for a major renovation that is on the state's waiting list for funding. She also led the library through the COVID-19 pandemic that forced a radical reimagining of its operations.

Jim Walsh '75, president of the Fitchburg State Alumni Association, has worked with Bernard for years, first in his role with the Friends of the Fitchburg Public Library and for the past 10 years as a trustee on the board.

"Sharon was the right person at the right time to be the library director," Walsh said. "She had the patience and skills to lead the library during a difficult time. She will be missed but what she accomplished will not be forgotten."

Looking back, Bernard is grateful for the twists and turns of her educational journey. Theater classes helped her step out of her comfort zone, for example, and art history courses let her see the world in a different way. Her only academic regret is not taking a graphic design class, which she said would have been helpful in creating promotional materials for the library.

"To me, a liberal arts and science degree is the ideal course of study for anyone who isn't really sure of the path they want to take," she said. "You never know when a particular subject or teacher will light a spark that will shape the rest of your life."





## OPENING DOORS

### STATE REP. MICHAEL KUSHMEREK '08, '13 FOUND 'THE PERFECT FIT' AT FITCHBURG STATE

Michael Kushmerek '08, '13 can truly say he found his calling at Fitchburg State.

The Saugus native faced a number of challenges at home, encountering substance abuse and mental illness in his family. A high school dropout, he first set eyes on Fitchburg State when he tagged along with a high school friend for a campus tour.

"I knew right away it was the perfect fit," Kushmerek recalled. "It was exactly what I was looking for – large enough to get lost in my personal experience, but small enough that I knew I'd know my fellow classmates, and my professors would know my name."

A course on the history of ancient arts challenged him to leave preconceived notions at the door. "That was the first time I was intellectually stimulated," he said, and he had found a passion for history. "From the classics to modern political and U.S. history, it allowed me to take a broad-based look at the interconnectedness of the world."

Coursework in sociology, psychology and English furthered that perspective. "Nothing happens in a silo," he said. "There's a foundational approach to everything we do, and without that foundation, you're nowhere."

He majored in history and political science, and also completed minors in criminal justice and French, with his linguistic skills getting a boost by studying abroad in France.

Kushmerek's career in university advancement began at Fitchburg State, while he also pursued his interest in public service. He was elected to the Fitchburg City Council in 2014, and where his colleagues elected him council president in 2016.

Fueled by a passion to serve his community at the state level, Kushmerek was elected state representative for the 3rd Worcester District in 2020, where he hopes to advocate for mental health resources, public higher education, and helping businesses and families hard-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kushmerek said he has loved his time in the Legislature, and being able to serve his diverse constituency while representing his adopted hometown where he lives with his wife, Carissa (Scottfenton) Kushmerek, a licensed social worker and fellow double Falcon who completed her bachelor's degree in human services in 2011 and an MBA in 2020.

"If I had to do it all over again, I'd come back to Fitchburg State, definitely," Kushmerek said. "A Fitchburg State education has opened every door that was presented to me, including the doors to the Statehouse."



## FINDING HIS WAY

### RANDY MEECH '97 PUTS THE FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS HE LEARNED AT FITCHBURG STATE TO WORK AS AN ENTREPRENEUR AND INNOVATOR

Randy Meech '97 wasn't sure where his studies would take him. A self-described late bloomer, the Billerica native enjoyed high school English and was interested in film. Early on at Fitchburg State, he found himself responding to courses in communications and history.

"What I liked about Fitchburg State was, if you applied yourself you got noticed by the faculty," he said. He missed the energy of mounting theater productions in high school, so was encouraged by Professor Chola Chisunka (English Studies) to help restart the dormant Falcon Players student theater troupe.

"If I look back, that's really what I learned the most from," he said. "You want to do a play? You need to get the budget, you need to sell ads, then you need to build a set, and work with the electricians. That was a really big practical education. Now, working in start-ups, it's the same thing: bringing something from nothing."

As an undergraduate, Meech was always interested in the religious aspects of the English and history courses he took. He went on to get his master's degree from Harvard Divinity School, but emerged into a challenging job market. He had done some basic website updating while in school, and looked for additional jobs in that arena. "I just became more technical," he said. "As the economy collapsed, I built up my skill set."

He landed at Google in 2002 and spent five years there before launching his career in start-ups. For the past 12 years, he has helped build software that supported open source maps.

One of his ventures was acquired last year by Snap, Inc. (operators of the hugely popular Snapchat), where he is now director of engineering for maps. "We want to facilitate meeting up in real-time with real friends," Meech said, adding that privacy settings keep these applications safe.

Meech said the lessons he learned on the Fitchburg State campus still resonate. "You're learning the subject matter, but you're also learning about the clarity of your arguments," he said. "I code a little, but most of what I do is reading and writing. In any career path, the higher you go, it's still a sales job. You're always communicating, and it's important you're describing things coherently and consistently, whether it's in a design document or an email or making a pitch to an investor."



Our New CURRICULUM





# A PASSION FOR LITERACY

## FOR LIZA MCFADDEN '83, HELPING KIDS LEARN TO READ IS THE GREATEST GIFT

Liza McFadden '83 recalls a particularly challenging assignment during her professional writing studies at Fitchburg State. Using words and no diagrams, students had to explain in precise detail how to draw a complex shape.

"It was definitely one of the hardest courses I had," she said. "That level of definition, and the ability to bring detail to your writing, has helped me in so many ways."

It's a skill McFadden has used in pursuit of her passion to advocate for basic literacy, a drive that has allowed her to make a positive impact on the lives of children and adults at the local, state and national level.

McFadden is currently president of Liza and Partners, where she advises philanthropists and executives, and her previous record of service includes appointments as president and CEO of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, an organization that believes education is a civil right, no matter one's age. She was appointed by President George W. Bush and confirmed by the Senate to serve on the National Institute for Literacy Board. She is also a board member of the publicly traded education technology company STRIDE which drives innovation and advances the quality of education by delivering state-of-the-art, digital learning platforms and technology to students and school districts across the globe.

"I love to advocate on behalf of issues," said McFadden, for whom environmentalism is also a passion.

While she calls Florida home, McFadden grew up on Osgood Street, a stone's throw from the Fitchburg State campus. She recalls sledding down the steep slope of Ross Street during the winter, and attended St. Bernard's elementary and high school.

McFadden's environmental concerns were also forged in Fitchburg, recalling the pollution in the Nashua River by paper and plastic plants. But activists and policymakers were able to rescue the river, which gives McFadden hope. "There is an incredible book, *The World without Us*, which gives me hope that nature has great strength to recover," she explained.

Entering Fitchburg State, her career path wasn't totally clear, but she had one guiding light. "Upon entry, I didn't have a clear career direction, but I was bibliophile with a passion for writing. "My belief is that writers are the framers of our world, whether they go into traditional lines of work like working in the news, or whether they write legislative bills, or pen highway billboards."

She left the sledding on Ross Street behind her and pursued her master's degree at Florida State University, which led to a position with the Florida Department of Education scoring essays on standardized tests. "That got my foot in the door," she said. "I rose through the ranks and did a lot of work in adult education, which is still a great passion of mine. If we help parents, no matter their age, to read and graduate high school, research shows it is one of the greatest gifts we can give a child."

When a former boss was elected to serve in then-Governor Jeb Bush's administration, McFadden was invited to work on a variety of education policy matters. Projects there included recruiting 200,000 adults to be mentors for children who were struggling with reading.

With the Barbara Bush Foundation, McFadden's launched a program for teenagers to be literacy mentors to elementary school pupils, and parents who may themselves have struggled with English or literacy were encouraged to listen to their children read at least three times a week to boost their own skills.

McFadden, mother to two grown children, sees a direct line from the challenging Fitchburg State assignment to the work she has done to support life-changing literacy efforts. "The same level of detail goes into writing a bill," she said. "You have to think about, 'How does that program line connect to this policy line, and then to that appropriation line.' It's the same process."

# CLASS NOTES

This Class Notes section includes news that was received between November 17, 2020 and May 7, 2021. 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.

## 1960s

**RICK SMITH '69** recently published his first novel, *Dan & Nellie: A Story of War, Love, Loss & Hope*, a work of historical fiction based on a true story (Dan and Nellie were the grandparents of Smith's wife, Wendy). Dan Hickes fought in World War I and was never able to overcome the horror he witnessed on the battlefields of France. The book is available online (but not in stores) at [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com).

## 1980s

**JOHN A. CHURCHER '87** and Vet Together, a group he started in 2012, was recently featured in the Sentinel and Enterprise. Vet Together is a support system for veterans and a way for vets to connect with one another.

**JOHN T. GARTEN '89** was named senior customer success manager at Allego in Needham, a platform that personalizes its content for sales professionals to onboard faster through reinforcement, on-the-job coaching, and peer collaboration.

## 1990s

**CHRISTOPHER P. HENDRY '91, '07** was appointed president and CEO of IC Federal Credit Union. Prior to this, he served as the senior director of external affairs for HealthAlliance Clinton Hospital and served as vice president for institutional advancement at Fitchburg State University.

**CHAD S. ADAMS '93** was appointed principal of Lunenburg Primary School. Adams served the district as a teacher, student dean, and assistant principal before taking the interim principal position last August.

**LISA-MARIE IPPOLITO '93, '95** was appointed as the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction for Newburyport Public Schools.

Most recently, Ippolito was principal of Joshua Eaton Elementary School and has over 28 years of experience working in education.

**DELO L. (BARNES) NIETO '97** was named chief human resources officer for CorEvitas, LLC. Nieto brings over 30 years of experience to the job.

**EDWARD D. DENMARK '98** was elected to the Rollstone Bank & Trust Board of Directors. Denmark has served the town of Harvard for 17 years as its police chief. He has 30 years of experience in the force and has offered his knowledge and skills, both nationally and internationally, through discussions and trainings.



**CHRISTOPHER CHEW '99** was appointed superintendent of the Westford Public Schools. Chew taught theater arts and English before becoming the academic headmaster and assistant principal of North Middlesex Regional High School and was most recently, the Stony Brook Middle School principal for seven years.

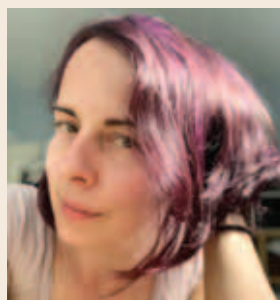
**CHAD M. GARNER '99** was promoted from assistant coach to head coach of the Fitchburg High School baseball team after Ray Cosenza retired earlier this year.

## 2000s

**ADAM J. RENDA '01** was appointed superintendent of the Ayer-Shirley Regional School District. Renda started his career as a teacher, before becoming an assistant principal and principal, and finally, the chief innovation

and intervention officer for the Fitchburg Public Schools.

**COELYNN E. MCININCH '02**, along with other members of the Fierce Fabulous Fitchburg Females, participated in a roundtable conversation about the perception of women in society and leadership in arts and culture for Fitchburg Access Television's "Discussing Fitchburg Now."



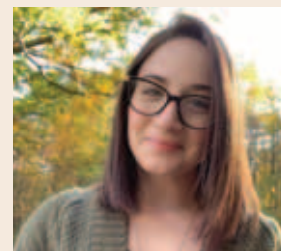
**LACY N. GILLOTTI '05** joined the Monadnock Conservancy as the deputy director, responsible for the daily operations and management of the land trust.

**ALEXANDRA D. (DINATALE) CARDINALE '07, '12** and **DAVID GINISI '16** are hosting "Forks Over Fitchburg," a new program on Fitchburg Access Television, exploring the City of Fitchburg's dining scene.



**STEPHANIE E. (FIELDING) MARCHETTI '07, '10** was named the executive director of the Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center. Most recently, Marchetti was the director of Academic Support and Testing Services at Mount Wachusett Community College and had served the community college for over 10 years. Marchetti also

serves as the secretary of the Alumni Association Board.



## 2010s

**MARCIO J. CIRINO '10** was promoted to assistant vice president of retail lending at Rollstone Bank & Trust. Cirino has been with the bank since 2011.



**SAMSON G. GIRMAY '10** was appointed to executive director for the River Terrace Rehabilitation



and Healthcare Center. As a former executive director for Worcester County and Merrimack Valley nursing facilities, he brings with him over 10 years of experience.

**MICHAEL J. MARCHAND '13**, of the Townsend Police Department, was commended last October for saving the life of a man who was suffering a heart attack while behind the wheel.

**KAREN MAGUIRE '13** was appointed the superintendent-director of the Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical High School. Maguire was a teacher for vocational and traditional high schools before serving as a vice principal and most recently, director of career pathways and integrated learning and engagement at Southeastern Regional Vocational Technical High School in South Easton.





**KELLY M. (MCLAUGHLIN) GONCALVES '14** joined the Fitchburg State team as a physician assistant working at the ACTION Center of Community Health Connections in Fitchburg.

**ALEXANDRA VALDEZ '15** was named executive director of the Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement in Boston. Previously, she served as the director of engagement for the city's Economic Mobility Lab, focusing on how to improve economic mobility for the city's low- and moderate-income populations.

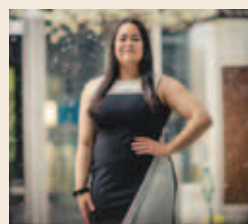
**ALEXANDER CALDER '16** was named the head of sport science at Houston Dynamo Football Club. Since 2013, Calder has been coaching, focused on fitness and sports performance.



**ALYSSA M. PIERMARINI '16** was named vice principal at Clinton Middle School after serving in an interim capacity. Prior to the promotion, Piermarini was a sixth grade teacher and literacy coach.

**WILLIAM FISHER '18, '19** joined the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency as a local coordinator. For the past 19 years, Fisher served Fitchburg State as an officer and an operations lieutenant for the University Police Department.

**MARIA MONTARO '18** received a 30 Under 30 Award in the Pittsburgh Business Times. Montaro is the lead consultant of Montaro Consulting Services LLC and a community fundraising coordinator for the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank.

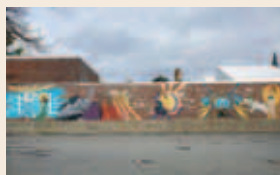


**SEFERINE A. BAEZ '18** was hired by Boston University as a residence hall director. Prior to joining Boston University, Baez was a case manager at Northeastern University.

**TABITHA KAMAU '18** assisted in a special presentation at Fitchburg State for Black History Month to discuss the political challenges and accomplishments of Black Women in politics.

**GARY D. BATY '19** was hired as the new director of Ottawa-Sandusky-Seneca Solid Waste District in Fremont, Ohio. He is a former division manager with Republic Services and has served over 20 years with the U.S. Army.

**MONIQUE A. GUTHRIE '19** contributed her artistic talents to beautifying downtown Fitchburg. Her public art piece can be seen on the side of Fitchburg Public Library facing Boulder Drive.



**GEORGE W. MANIGAULT '19** was named vice president and regional manager for Rockland Trust in the Worcester Retail Banking Division. He brings to Rockland Trust 24 years of experience in sales and business development, having worked at Webster Five Cents Bank and Santander.

**ANN-MARIE F. SIMAO '19**, a mathematics professor at Springfield Technical Community College, was honored with the Joseph J. Disio Sr. Endowed Chair for 2021.

**ALAINA M. SOCRAT '19** was officially sworn in as an officer of the Edgartown Police Department. In 2019, she served the department as a seasonal officer.

**DONALD WUCHTERL '19** was named the senior vice president and chief manufacturing officer for T-knife Therapeutics, in San Francisco, Calif. Prior to the announcement, Wuchterl worked at Audentes Therapeutics as the senior vice president of technical operations

## 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](mailto:alumni@fitchburgstate.edu) for more information or to nominate someone. Nominations may be submitted at any time but the deadline for July 2022 consideration is March 1, 2022.

### OFFICERS

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and quality. He brings over 29 years of experience to T-knife, a next-generation T-cell receptor company, focused on therapeutics for cancer patients. Wuchterl was also appointed as an independent member of Abeona Therapeutics Inc.'s Board of Directors.

## 2020S

**MEAGHAN L. CAMPBELL '20** recently joined Green Millennial, a marketing agency, as a marketing specialist.

**JOSEPH A. BOURGEOIS '21** was promoted to Accountant II in Fitchburg State's payroll department. Bourgeois started working for the university in 2019 as an accounting intern and was officially hired as an accounting assistant in 2020 before this most recent promotion. Bourgeois was recognized in May as valedictorian of the undergraduate Class of 2021.

**TANYA M. (HOOS) CROWLEY MS '21** recently transitioned from Fitchburg State University's Director of Annual Giving to Director of Alumni and Family Relations. Crowley has been with the university for five years. Her late father, Gunther G. Hoos, was a beloved professor in the Communications Media Department.



# 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.

**DR. EDMUND B. THOMAS, JR.**, of Fitchburg, on December 6, 2020. Professor Thomas came to teach history at Fitchburg State in 1967 and was awarded Professor Emeritus status upon retiring. During his decades of service to Fitchburg State, Professor Thomas was recognized with the Dr. Vincent J. Mara Award for Excellence in Teaching and was admired by his peers and his students.

**GAIL (DONAGHY) FECKLEY '96, '07** of Leominster, on May 16, 2021. Feckley worked at Fitchburg State for more than 30 years, most recently as administrative assistant to the Behavioral Sciences Department. She was also union steward for the university's AFSCME employees. Her community work included several terms as a member of the Leominster City Council.

## 1950S

**ROBERT BROGAN '50**, of Westminster, on February 19, 2021.

**RICHARD G. ASELTINE '51**, of New London, N.H., on December 16, 2020.

**CONSTANTINE G. (GUS) CHRISTY '51**, of West Hartford, Conn. on May 26, 2020.

**JAMES A. SHEA '52**, of Worcester, on March 29, 2021.

**DAVID W. ROLLINS '53, '79**, of Troy, N.H., on January 10, 2021.

**MUZIO DONALD PIERMARINI '54, '59**, of Leominster, on April 18, 2021.

**ROSEMARY R. (ROHAN) KASPER '57**, of Marlborough, on February 17, 2021.

**ROBERT C. ANDREWS '59**, of Keene, N.H., on February 13, 2021.

## 1960S

**WADE H. LONGLEY '65, '70, '72**, of Charlottesville, Va., on October 17, 2020.

**LUCILLE J. THONIS '67**, of Townsend, on September 23, 2020.

**KATHLEEN M. (REILING) YUOF '69**, of Norwell, on July 14, 2020.

## 1970S

**MICHAEL E. KENNEY '73**, of Rutland, on November 22, 2020.

**DEBRA K. (SIMONIS) CASSANELLI '74**, of Spencer, on December 15, 2020.

**MARIA E. (MARTIN DEL CAMPO) REGAN '74**, of Leominster, on December 17, 2020.

**DAVID L. LAMACCHIA '75**, of Holden, on December 18, 2020.

**DONALD V. HURT '77**, of Hollis, N.H., on November 30, 2020.

**SALLY J. (SMITH) KNORR-DINES '78**, of Baldwinville, on January 19, 2021.

## 1980S

**MIRIAM A. MORRELL '82**, of North Andover, on December 26, 2020.

**MARY E. (PHELAN) NORDMAN '82**, of Gardner, on March 10, 2021.

**KELLY A. (WERNICK) BROGAN '84**, of East Alstead, N.H., on February 4, 2021.

**SHIRLEY H. (HANNON) CROWLEY '85**, of Rindge, N.H., on December 14, 2020.

**TAMBRA A. (COURTEMANCHE) STATTERS '89**, of Loxahatchee, Fla., on December 16, 2020.

## 1990S

**SCOTT J. GAUTHIER '92, '97**, of Winchendon, on February 18, 2021.

**LINDA A. (RIGNANESE) NEWMAN '94**, of North Kingstown, R.I., on February 7, 2021.

## 2010S

**PAULA J. (GOODCHILD) GASTONGUAY '01**, of Fitchburg, on January 16, 2021.

**THOMAS P. KEATING '02**, of Sterling, on December 11, 2020.

**AMY A. (STODDARD) GRACIA '12**, of New Bedford, on December 28, 2020.

## SUBMIT A CLASS NOTE

To place a Class Note, Celebration, Introduction, or In Memoriam in *Contact*, please visit [fitchburgstate.edu/alumni](http://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.





## Tanya Hoos Crowley, M.S. '21

APPOINTED NEW DIRECTOR  
OF ALUMNI AND FAMILY RELATIONS

Tanya has been running around Fitchburg State since she was five years old. That's when her Falcon history starts. Some of you may remember her father, Gunther Hoos, who taught film production here for 27 years. He helped grow the program from its very beginning. Tanya grew up around her dad's students. It was completely normal to her to find them in her kitchen in the morning, raiding the cookie jar, after spending all night editing their films in Gunther's edit suite in the basement. When Gunther retired in 2007, he left a legacy of sorts and when he passed away

in 2015, that legacy was cemented further with the endowment of the Gunther G. Hoos Award to help provide funds for living expenses for a Communications Media student going on their capstone internship.

Tanya joined the staff of Fitchburg State in 2016 as the Director of Annual Giving and over the past five years has helped raise over \$1 million to support all areas of the university's mission. During her tenure as Director of Annual Giving, she has helped launch our Planned Giving initiative, The Saxifrage Society, our faculty and staff payroll deduction donation program and created the Go Falcons Challenge, which is a day of giving to support our athletic teams. She also coordinated our yearly Phonathon and worked closely with her group of student callers, many of whom she has stayed connected to after they graduated.

By moving into the Director of Alumni and Family Relations role, Tanya looks forward to building closer relationships with our alumni and their families and working to create a culture of engagement starting at the beginning of the student experience and continuing throughout their lives. Her goal is to increase alumni engagement by connecting with affinity groups and expanding our outreach through social media and regional alumni groups.

This past spring, she launched a long-hoped for student video segment on the alumni Facebook pages. "Life in the Nest," featuring intern Jordan Costa '21, showcased many areas and programs on campus and followed Jordan on her last semester at Fitchburg State. These videos helped increase the number of followers on social media by over 200 people and have almost tripled the "reach" for the visibility of posts. She plans to continue this video feature in the fall with a new student. She also has plans to start an alumni version of this segment called "After the Nest," so get ready for your close up.

Tanya's personal connection to Fitchburg State is an asset to her new role and she recently became an official Falcon herself by graduating with honors with her Master's degree in Applied Communications. She is keeping her family legacy alive here at Fitchburg State and helping showcase the amazing talent and accomplishments of our alumni in this magical place where education happens. Go Falcons!

You can reach Tanya at [tcrowle7@fitchburgstate.edu](mailto:tcrowle7@fitchburgstate.edu) or 978-665-3441.



Professor Gunther Hoos



## RECENT ALUMNI EVENTS

The Alumni Association continued its series of **FALCON TALKS** to address the need for virtual programming in the time of COVID-19. The series proved incredibly popular and let us feature alumni and other distinguished speakers from all over the world. This spring's events featured **YLA EASON '71**, a professor at Rutgers University and an entrepreneur who described the importance of positive Black images, and **RICHARD KERRIS '83**, general manager of media and entertainment at NVIDIA, who talked about the future of collaboration through real-time photorealistic simulation. **MARIA MILAGROS '81**, an award-winning speaker and life coach, offered an empowering talk about embracing diversity and making our goals real.

The association also shared the powerful video "**UNTIDELED**" BY **KAREEM WOODS '13**, which honors the filmmaker's younger cousin who was taken too soon by what he describes as racial biases. Woods shared the story of how he found peace within the midst of the storm through his artistic expression of dance and his family. And the hip hop artist **RED SHAYDEZ**, also known as **SHALAYAH C. WASHINGTON '14**, shared the story of her upbringing and how family played both blood and extended impact the evolution of her identity and musical career.

Alumni took center stage when the university's Center for Diversity and Inclusiveness presented a BIPOC Alumni Panel featuring recent graduates **KEVIN BERNARDEZ '17**, **ISAIAH FANFAN '18**, **JONATHAN GUZMAN '18**, **RACHEL KAMAU '18**, **BRENDA SANCHEZ '18**, and **KYLE SUAVE '18** and facilitated by **TABITHA KAMAU '18**. The event focused on re-engaging students and establishing strategies and techniques to better support student organizations.

**KRISTIN LINK '85**, an executive public speaking coach, was the featured speaker when the Career Services and Advising Center presented a workshop on elevating the "virtual" interview. Link's interactive presentation included public speaking techniques to help you excel in interviews.

Keep up with all our events at [fitchburgstate.edu/alumni](http://fitchburgstate.edu/alumni) and watch your inboxes for updates.



Red Shaydez, also known as Shalayah C. Washington '14, performs.

## If you have stuff, you have an estate.

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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](http://fitchburgstate.edu/PlannedGiving) or contact Jeffrey Wolfman, Vice President for Institutional Advancement at 978.665.4933 or [jwolfman@fitchburgstate.edu](mailto:jwolfman@fitchburgstate.edu)



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- Forensic Nursing (online)



SAVE THE DATE!



ONCE A FALCON,  
ALWAYS A FALCON

# HOMECOMING

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More details to come!

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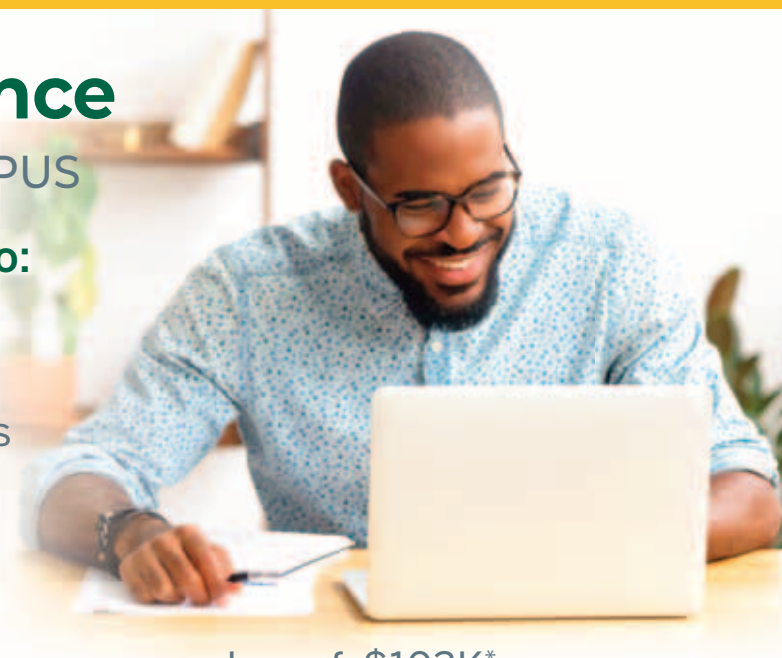
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