

---

## Fitchburg State University Today

Monday, May 11, 2020 - Volume 10, Issue 14

---

### Commencement honorees announced

Commencement week has arrived! While the university has postponed its in-person ceremonies, we are proud to celebrate the accomplishments of the Class of 2020 whose members are completing their degrees this month.

The valedictorian of the Class of 2020 is **Stanley Louis Choruzek** of Lancaster, who is completing a Bachelor of Science in computer information systems. The Graduate Student Leadership Award will be presented to **Paul A. Thibodeau** of Royalston, who is completing a Master of Science in counseling.

[Learn more about the honorees](#)

### Celebrating the Class of 2020

While we won't have our traditional commencement ceremonies this week, we are saluting the 559 undergraduate students and 379 graduate students who are completing their degrees with the conclusion of the semester.

This week, graduates will be directed to a website featuring video congratulations for their accomplishments, and billboards are being installed in the city and elsewhere to pay tribute to the Class of 2020, who have persevered through a singularly challenging set of circumstances.

The Office of Student Development and the Senior Class Committee created the #FalconsForever2020 mosaic (at right) featuring photos of undergraduate students. The result was shared on social media channels last week, and the university will be highlighting the Class of 2020 on social media again this week.



Several faculty members are inviting graduates to join them on Google Hangouts the morning of May 16th, the original date for the undergraduate commencement, and the names of all the

graduates are being shared with local media outlets - as well as *The Point*, the student newspaper - so the Class of 2020 can take a well-deserved bow.

## Lapidus named to working group on Massachusetts reopening

President Lapidus has been appointed to the Massachusetts Higher Education Working Group that will be advising Gov. Charlie Baker's Reopening of Massachusetts Advisory Board. The working group includes representatives from public and private colleges and universities and will draft recommendations reflecting the 106 institutions of higher education in the state.

President Lapidus said the working group members have been in communication daily for more than a week to develop a framework that will inform how higher education resumes operations this fall.

"I am honored to have been appointed to this group of distinguished educators and look forward to contributing to this critical conversation about the future of our sector," President Lapidus said.

## Library playing a key role in remote instruction

Even though its physical space is closed because of the pandemic, the [Amelia V. Gallucci-Cirio Library](#) has continued to be a vital force for students and faculty this semester.

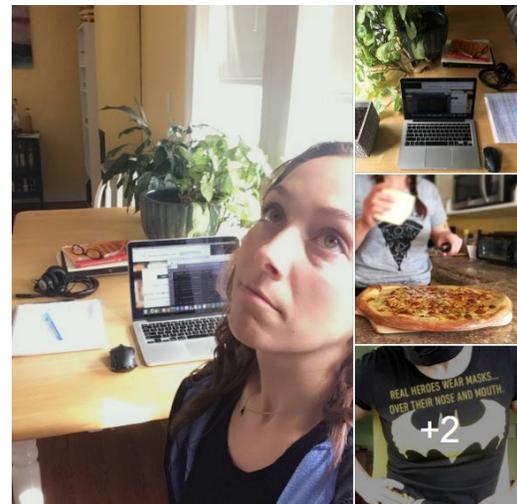
"I'm so proud of the library staff," said Dean **Jacalyn A. Kremer**. "They rose to the challenge and it's gone remarkably well. We moved all of our services to remote. For example, through online platforms, we're still teaching research classes and working one-on-one with students needing reference -research help. We were able to make that pivot to remote pretty quickly, due to the staff's commitment and with Information Technology's support. People may be surprised to know that we offer more books and films in 'e' format than we do in physical format, so in that area the move to online was seamless."



Librarian Connie Strittmatter leads a virtual discussion of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*.

Among the initiatives launched this semester to foster connections with students learning from home was a social media campaign led by **Lori Steckervetz** and **Jodie Duangsay** that featured [staff picks](#) of book and film recommendations for National Library Week that was posted to the library's [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages. Steckervetz also led a "Library@Home" series on both social media channels.

Kremer said public service librarians Duangsay, **Kelly Boudreau** and **Sarah Gilbert** had the "herculean" task of scanning numerous course reserve documents so they would be available to students while learning remotely. "We also worked with faculty and students to use RedShelf and VitalSource to guarantee access to [online textbooks](#)," Kremer said.



Renee Fratantonio was part of the "Library@Home" series.

To help guide students, **Renee Fratantonio** developed online tutorials on [how to find e-books](#) as well as how to [get help](#) from a librarian, along with a [comprehensive guide](#) to COVID-19 resources.

The library also continued to offer its research classes after the transition to remote instruction. Kremer noted that **Connie Strittmatter** had been working with biology students on a discussion group about the book *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, but was able to switch it to an online environment and sustain multiple discussion threads. "We also had to quickly identify and purchase additional e-books on health science ethics topics because many of the books we purchased for their second reading assignment were in print," Strittmatter said.

Kremer said her team was careful to document all of their work associated with the transition in case a similar situation ever emerges. Information about the continuation of all library services can be viewed [online](#).

## Counseling Services continuing to support students

The [Counseling Services](#) staff worked quickly to develop remote platforms to serve students this semester when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. "Suffice it to say that none of the clinicians in the office had much experience providing 'telehealth' services, and it was a very busy week or so creating the sort of safe, private, and supportive mechanisms to enable 'remote' counseling to work," said Assistant Dean/Director of Counseling Services **Rob Hynes**.

The switch required significant training for staff along with the development of mechanisms to protect privacy for phone or online counseling. By the time classes were operating remotely, Hynes' staff was ready. The campus was notified and sessions were being scheduled almost immediately for virtual "meetings" with staff members on secure and confidential platforms including phone and video chat.



Rob Hynes

"The demand for counseling services has been robust," Hynes said. "In addition to the sorts of concerns that our counselors typically hear from our students, the realities of coping with the added stress, the disruption, and the disconnection brought about by this pandemic became part of almost every counseling conversation."

While the remote delivery was a different experience, Hynes said providers and students found the interactions meaningful. "Counselors routinely commented on the incredible poise, patience, and resilience evidenced by our students through all of this," he said. "Our students' strength and courage is routinely part of the discussion in our virtual staff meetings, and has helped to sustain us, the professionals, through this time."

Hynes said his team would prefer to be face-to-face with students, but appreciated they had been able to assist in a challenging time. The office distributed its annual survey to students who had connected with counselors and received some notable responses:

- "Remote counseling was really helpful in place of being able to meet in person. I appreciated that it was one way in which things could feel just a little bit more 'normal' right now"
- "Counseling has definitely helped during this remote time. It's helping me to make sure that I'm taking care of myself."
- "Especially during these troubling times, I appreciate getting some support."

"All of us in the Counseling Services Office are looking forward to the time when we can get back to doing what we do, in person, with our students," Hynes said. "That said, we believe that doing counseling remotely did have value, and it did help to provide much-needed support to our community during the most difficult time that any of us can remember.

"The Counseling Services staff wishes all in our community health, peace, and balance during these times, and reminds you that these challenges will not last forever," Hynes continued. "We ask that you please continue to take care of yourself in whatever ways you're able, you hang onto hope, and you stay focused on your goals and dreams. We'll get through this."

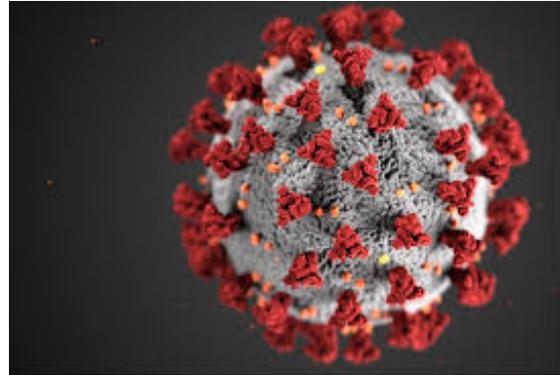
## Undergrads: Encourage parents to subscribe to our newsletter

Dear undergraduate students - Please encourage parents to [sign up](#) for our electronic newsletter mailing list. *Fitchburg State University Today* is typically produced every two weeks during the academic year, and the *Parent Newsletter* is posted monthly during the fall and spring semesters.

## Visit coronavirus page for latest updates

The university's [coronavirus resource page](#), first created in January, is updated regularly and includes an archive of campus bulletins to students, faculty, staff and community members.

Visit [fitchburgstate.edu/coronavirus](https://fitchburgstate.edu/coronavirus) to keep informed.



## Faculty Notes

**Associate Professor Sean Rollins** (Biology/Chemistry) was published in the Worcester *Telegram & Gazette* with a piece about the challenges associated with developing tests for COVID-19. Read the piece [here](#).

---

[Join Our Mailing List](#)

---

Fitchburg State University | 978-665-3000 | [fitchburgstate.edu](https://fitchburgstate.edu)

STAY CONNECTED:

