



Fitchburg State University Today

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Additional commencement honorees announced

The university celebrates its 120th [commencement exercises](#) this year. The [graduate ceremony](#) will be held at 6:30 p.m. **Thursday, May 19** in the Athletics and Recreation Center, while the [undergraduate ceremony](#) will be held at 10 a.m. **Saturday, May 21** on the main quadrangle.

In addition to the previously announced honors for for commencement speaker [Barbara Wilson](#) '80 and president's medal recipient [Daniel M. Asquino](#), several other awards will be presented at this week's ceremonies.



Contributions to Graduate Program Award: Nancy L. Murray

Nancy Murray, who has been a full-time member of the Fitchburg State faculty for almost nine years, has brought energy, professionalism and leadership skills to the demanding work of fostering and transforming the university's graduate level special education programs. Her efforts have helped the programs thrive and evolve to meet changing needs. Her connections to students, families, professionals and educational administrators in the area reflect positively on the university as a center for excellence in special education. To her colleagues and students, she is a consummate educator.

After completing undergraduate and graduate degrees in special education at Fitchburg State, she joined the Fitchburg State community as an adjunct instructor more than 20 years ago. She has been a full-time member of the Education



Department faculty since 2007. A year later she assumed the chair of its graduate programs in moderate disabilities. She oversaw the creation of new handbooks and guides to better align university coursework with state subject matter requirements, and to show students additional opportunities to build on their initial license to acquire additional credentials.

Nancy Murray

Building on her extensive work with students with autism, Murray initiated the process that led to the university's behavior analyst certificate program. The program was developed in response to the high need for behavior analysts in this region, and Murray played an active role in developing the course syllabi and working with faculty members to get the program approved by the university as well as the Behavior Analysis Certification Board.

She has also helped lead the way in the university's forward-looking evolution to online hybrid delivery of special education coursework, which is more conducive to the needs of its students. Her enthusiasm and solid experience in online teaching was instrumental to the successful transition.

Murray has chaired other graduate programs during her tenure at Fitchburg State, developing new advising materials and recruiting faculty members, and serving as a mentor. Her students praise her for the intellectually challenging and stimulating courses she teaches. Her colleagues describe her as a teacher who demonstrates depth and breadth of knowledge about disabilities and their effect on learning, about curriculum, about differentiated instruction, the use of technologies to teach, and the use of innovative assistance technologies to support others.

In recent years she worked to see the passage of the autism omnibus law, addressing the unmet needs of people with autism. She will be working with colleagues this summer to create courses that will result in new certificate opportunities for graduate students working in the field.

Murray lives with her husband, Gerry, in Leominster. The couple has four children, a son-in-law and daughter-in-law and one granddaughter.

Graduate Student Leadership Award: Ross Caputi

Ross Caputi is described by his professors as an exceptional student, ambitious and disciplined in his academic pursuits. He enrolled in the Master of Arts in English Studies program at Fitchburg State in 2014 and immediately made a lasting impression on its learning community.

Caputi's service in the U.S. Marine Corps had a profound impact on his life. Following his deployment to Iraq, he became active in antiwar efforts. His master's thesis is entitled "The Battle for Your Hearts and Minds: The Occupation of Iraq, Information Warfare and American War Culture." In 2013 he co-founded the Islah Reparations Project and directed and produced a documentary film entitled *Fear Not the Path of Truth*, which won the Changemaker award at the Traverse City Film Festival in 2015.

As a student at Fitchburg State, he asked thoughtful questions and followed up on answers with insightful probes, demonstrating strong critical inquiry skills. Praised by faculty members for his curious and incisive intellect, he was hired as graduate assistant to the English Studies graduate program and is viewed as a trusted colleague; detail-oriented and committed to helping others.

For the past year and a half he served as resident editor of the graduate journal *The Falconer*, where he was instrumental in guiding the publication from soliciting submissions to editing and printing. He also took the initiative to reconsider the overall submission process and devised a proposal for the procedures moving forward, demonstrating remarkable self-discipline and poise.

Caputi graduated from Boston University with a degree in linguistics and continued his academic training with a Master of Arts in linguistics from the University of Delaware.

Caputi's academic career continues this fall when he begins his doctoral studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He lives in Lunenburg.

The Dr. Vincent J. Mara Award for Excellence in Teaching: Meledath Govindan

Meledath Govindan, chair of the Biology and Chemistry Department, has taught at Fitchburg State University since 1996.

Govindan's colleagues describe him as "a natural leader who draws on his extensive experience to move the department forward," and "an active and engaged instructor committed to all levels of science education." Govindan employs a wide variety of teaching techniques in order to convey the complexities of biology and chemistry, while remaining open to new strategies in order to ensure his students receive the best possible education.

His advisees describe him as dedicated to their success beyond the classroom, offering valuable insights into varied career paths, and a caring and supportive counselor and educator. Students say he will take whatever time is needed to make sure that even the most daunting concepts are understood by all.

They also hail Govindan as an efficient educator whose natural wisdom breeds a strong command of subject matter. They praise his ability to create a safe and rewarding laboratory environment where he imparts field techniques not often found inside textbooks. His refined lab process covers more ground without sacrificing the importance of the hands-on approach, an accomplishment that has increased the value of his student's scientific education.

Govindan received his Ph.D. in organic chemistry from the University of Georgia and his



Ross Caputi



Mel Govindan

master's degree in organic chemistry from the University of Kentucky. Areas of research include isolation and characterization of bioactive compounds from soft corals, as well as a collaborative research initiative with the Biomaterials Science and Engineering Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology regarding the chemistry of plant natural products. He has been department chair for the Biology and Chemistry Department since 2014, where the management of faculty and staff was added to an ever-growing list of commitment and responsibility to our institution.

Faculty Award for Research and Scholarship: Eric Budd

Eric Budd, professor and chair of the Economics, History and Political Science Department, has taught at Fitchburg State University since 1994.

Budd's research and scholarship explores large-scale questions about our planet, wondering why some nations are poorer than others, how globalization is changing the worldwide structure, and why problems like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seem so intractable. Budd has searched for answers to these questions and many more through his well-received political science volumes *Democratization, Development, and the Patrimonial State in the Age of Globalization*, and *Conflicted are the Peacemakers: Israeli and Palestinian Moderates and the Death of Oslo*. In these works, Budd investigates variable social norms, examining societies that embrace shifting values and ones that refuse them. He presented a research paper on this topic at the annual meeting of the Northeastern Political Science Association entitled "Changing Our Stories, Changing Our Politics: The Politics of Abortion and Same Sex Marriage in the US and Ireland," and further explored areas of interest through a variety of book reviews and articles published in peer reviewed journals.



Eric Budd

While Budd spends a lot of time looking at global issues, he is also focused on our local community in the university's host community. In 2014, he served as co-evaluator for a Working Cities Grant from the Federal Reserve Bank to promote socio-economic development north of Main Street. His colleagues describe a dedication to issues both local and global that is matched only by a passion for teaching, where his knowledge is applied to courses exploring topics like third world politics, economics and society. He is also developing a course on political change in a changing world.

Budd received his Ph.D. in political science from the University of Chicago and his master's degree in political science from the same institution. He received his bachelor's in politics from Brandeis University. He is the previous recipient of the Vincent J. Mara Award for Excellence in Teaching, and was awarded "Faculty of the Year" by the university's Student Government Association during the 2003-2004 academic year.

In Budd's own words, he transformed from someone who loved politics into someone who loved political science. To his colleagues and students, Budd's years of social curiosity and

extensive research have greatly benefited all who have learned from him.

Learn about MBA programs at webinar June 8

Learn about Fitchburg State University's Master of Business Administration programs at a free [webinar](#) at 1 p.m. **Wednesday, June 8**. The university's Office of [Graduate and Continuing Education](#) offers MBA programs on campus, online or a hybrid of the two.

Those who attend the 30-minute webinar and elect to apply for an MBA program will have their \$40 application fees waived.

The webinar will describe the university's online (which can be completed in 17 months) and on-campus programs; admission and application requirements; tuition, fees and payment plans; and financial aid and scholarship opportunities.

Fitchburg State offers online MBAs in management and human resources management, along with on-campus MBAs in accounting, management and human resources management. The university also offers a graduate certificate in not-for-profit management.

For more information, including how to register for the webinar, visit fitchburgstate.edu/gce.

"Pink on the Rink" raised more than \$10K for cancer research



The ice was dyed pink - as were the players' uniforms - when the Fitchburg State Falcons took on Westfield State back in February. The game was a win for the Falcons and a win for cancer research, as proceeds from the night - more than \$10,000 - was raised for the Cup Crusaders/Susan G. Komen 3-Day. Team members recently presented Cup Crusaders co-captains Kathy DiRusso and Tara Manzello a check for \$10,173, representing receipts from the festivities that raised dollars as well as awareness. Members of the Falcons hockey team,

along with Coach Dean Fuller and Fitchburg State Athletic Director Sue Lauder, attended the presentation. Pictured, from left, front row: hockey players Corey McMahon, Max Lorenzen, Cup Crusaders co-captains Tara Manzello and Kathy DiRusso, and Paul Falanga; second row: Athletic Director Sue Lauder, players Jordan Furlane, Nathanael Rojas, Michael Morrison and Michael Fish; back row: players James Gordon and Evan Byrnes and Hockey Coach Dean Fuller.

Newsletter to return this fall

This is the final edition of Fitchburg State University Today for the academic year. The newsletter will return this fall.

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