

# TRiO

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

# April & May 2018

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE VISIONS AND RX PROGRAMS

IN THIS ISSUE

## Finishing Strong

by Gaurav Khanna,  
Director of the Visions and Rx Programs

Going through the academic timeline on an annual basis, most of us tend to see the academic calendar break down into discrete parts. Once spring break is over and students are back in class, it's hard to imagine that the end of the semester is almost here. In the beginning of April, most of you will pick out summer and fall classes and before you know it, we will be entering May and finals.

This time is crucial. If you are struggling with something, come in and let us connect you with support services NOW so you can try to catch up or boost your grades before the semester is over. If you are planning to transfer and have not yet made any concrete plans, this is the time to jump on that task.

This newsletter has a ton of useful information for you. Some highlights: should you take a summer class? If yes, see the information on year-round Pell that is now available to students and may help you pay for that class. Taking a break from classes? Think about summer travel and broadening your horizons!

Read about what your fellow Visions and Rx participants have been doing with transfer planning and leadership development. Get a peek inside the journey of Sam Crisci a MWCC and Visions student working towards a career in the medical office field.

Last year, we were able to offer two free summer classes to students who enrolled full time in the fall and spring semesters, and we will be providing this same opportunity this summer. This will help students to accelerate their path to graduation. Eligible students have received notification via email. If you have questions about your eligibility, make sure to check in with the office.

As always, we are here to support you in any way that we can. Let us know how we can help you reach your dreams. If you know someone who is eligible for the programs and is starting college or coming back after a break in the fall, make sure you tell them to look for Visions and Rx staff during SmartStart—we love getting referrals from our current students. Have a great end of the semester and good luck with finals!



### Make the most of your summer

Summer is great time to learn in so many ways.



### Student Spotlight

Sam shares his education and his plans for the future.

### TRIO Complex Hours

Monday-Thursday  
8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
Friday  
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.



Mount Wachusett  
Community College

# School Is Out For The Summer! - Or Is It? Is A Summer Course Right For You?

by Catherine Maddox-Wiley  
Rx Retention Specialist

Do you have a plan to reduce your fall or spring semester course loads? Are you just one course short for graduation? Do you want to keep your academic momentum and mojo going? A summer course may be the answer to keep you moving forward. Registration for summer and fall begins April 2, but before you register for summer courses, consider the following:

## The Money

You may be eligible for financial aid and opportunities for free courses. Be sure that you have completed both your 2017 - 18 and 2018 - 19 FAFSAs, preferably by April 1 but no later than May 1. If you do receive aid but don't receive enough for books, are you able to pay-out-of-pocket? If you don't receive aid at all, do you have the money to pay out-of-pocket or go on a payment plan? Keep in mind that if you need a loan, you need to enroll in at least six credits.

## The Pace

Most summer courses are offered as Summer Cycle I and Summer Cycle II for four, five or six weeks of "rock 'em, sock 'em" coursework, covering 15 weeks of full semester content. On the other hand, full summer courses run for just ten weeks. Despite the fast-pace, students can be successful if they understand the expectations and time commitments. In essence, prepare to work both smarter and harder.

## Course Selection

If possible, choose a required course in which you are interested and that reflects your strengths. We all tend to do our best work in the areas we enjoy. How many courses is it reasonable for you to take? Students find the most success when they take one course each summer cycle or one-to-two courses for the full summer. There is something to be said for taking one

course at a time and giving it all of your academic attention. You have the time to really explore and hone in on the subject. The other bonus is that the other students in the course pretty much want to be there, so the class sessions are likely to be engaging. If you are dreading a particular course, you may want to steer clear of it.

## Attendance

You need to be in class for each session. Missing one day of a Summer Cycle course is the equivalent of missing one-and-a half weeks of a full semester course. Remember the rule of thumb for absences: Only miss class for situations that truly cannot be avoided.

## In-Class Focus

Class sessions may run for four-to-five hours twice a week. Can you pay attention for that length of time? To ensure that you do, engage in active learning by sitting in the front of the class, sitting up straight or leaning forward, taking notes, participating in discussions, and asking questions. Reading chapters and reviewing your notes prior to class prepares you for lecture and discussions so that you are familiar with and on top of the focus area. Staying focused will make the class time go much faster than drifting off into your own thoughts.

## Time Management: Homework/Study Time

You need a solid study plan. Typically, you are expected to spend two hours of study time a week for each hour in class. That isn't the case for Summer Cycles. Cycles require daily study and homework time, depending on the course. Do you have two-to-five hours every day outside of class? To help you stay on track, write assignments and due dates on a to-do list or into a calendar. Break down assignments into smaller components to gradually

build towards a completed assignment. Procrastination becomes a curse word when it comes to cycle courses.

## Tutoring

Do you anticipate needing and using tutoring? If so, have you contacted the TRIO Office and the Academic Support Center about the availability of tutors? On what days and times will you attend tutoring sessions? You can maximize the tutoring sessions by identifying the material you want to review when you show up for the appointments.

## Breaks

You need breaks! Incorporate fun and relaxation periods into your study time. Make an honest determination about the amount of break time you need. Are you utilizing it or wasting it?

Your Visions and Rx advisors can help you decide if summer courses are right for you. They have appointment sign-up sheets on their office doors, so if you haven't already scheduled a time to discuss advising and registration, do it as soon as possible. You don't want to miss out on a course that you need or a professor you want. Summer courses are both challenging and rewarding. Do you have it in you?

### Summer Notes

#### Read Your MWCC Email Regularly Throughout The Summer!

Campus offices will send important updates about classes, financial aid and other college-related news via email.

#### Waive Your Health Insurance

The health insurance waiver must be completed every year if you are enrolled in 9 credits or more. You can complete the waiver after June 1.

**NOTE:** Your book voucher may be delayed if the insurance cost remains on your bill.

#### TRIO Complex Hours

The TRIO Complex is open throughout the summer. Because we have limited summer staffing, we encourage you to call ahead and make an appointment.

## Speed up your degree with Summer Pell Grants

by Stephanie Giguere

Visions Professional Writing Tutor

Could you finish your degree more quickly? If you are eligible for Federal Pell grants, recent changes mean that you can take classes year round.

Federal Pell Grants are given to low income undergraduate students. A grant is different from a loan; you don't have to pay a grant back after you are done with school. To receive the Federal Pell Grant, you need to fill out the FAFSA each year you plan to attend college. The amount of the grant depends on several factors: your

expected family contribution, cost of attendance, and enrollment status.

Beginning this year, 2017-2018, students who use the full amount of their Federal Pell Grant during the fall and spring semesters can receive up to 150% of the grant amount to use for the summer semester. Students must be enrolled in at least two classes in the summer to be eligible for the extra grant money.

Here's an example of how the year-long Federal Pell Grant works. Let's say that, after filing the FAFSA, a student is

awarded a \$2,000 Federal Pell Grant. The student would be given \$1,000 of the Pell grant in the fall semester and \$1,000 in the spring semester. If she decides to take two or more classes in the summer, she may receive another \$1,000 toward the summer semester. This would bring her annual total to \$3,000 or 150% of the original \$2,000 grant. She may still receive other financial aid in the form of loans that would be paid back after she is out of school.

If you have received a Federal Pell Grant for this year and are interested in taking summer courses so that you can finish your degree faster, visit the financial aid office or the TRIO Complex and ask about year-round Federal Pell

## Tight budget? Travel this summer is still possible!

by Ashley Dill

Visions Academic Advisor

Many people think that travel is unaffordable. However, travelling on a tight budget is entirely possible, plus, once you return from your trip, you will have gained an invaluable experience! With some effort and creativity, you will be on your way in no time!

**Plan ahead:** Even if you don't know where you want to go yet, set aside money once a month or once each paycheck to use specifically for your trip. Have a dollar amount goal you want to reach and figure out how much you need to set aside each time to achieve it. Do some research on places you're interested in to get an idea of how much things could cost. The biggest costs are airfare, accommodation, and food.

**Take advantage of hostels:** Hostels are an inexpensive option for

accommodation. Use the app, Hostelworld, to book hostels directly. These places also often have free or cheap food offerings. Staying in hostels also gives you the opportunity to meet other travelers, which could allow you to share some expenses, like transportation or food.

**Pay attention to price fluctuations:** Some days, like Tuesdays, are less expensive to fly, so if your travel days are flexible, check prices of different days to get the best price. If you decide to book a hotel, pay attention if the room rates go up on the weekends. Sometimes travel booking websites can have higher prices at different times in the day or day of the week, so if you see a price you like, book it immediately because it might be gone or sold out the next day. You might also use a website like Google Flights or an app like Hopper to see past trends and forecasts for the flights you want. Many websites will also show you a map with low cost fares. Take a look, you might find a destination that piques your curiosity.

**Go local and look for the free/cheap options:** Getting away from the tourist areas will show a significant drop in prices on food and activities. Bring food from home, from your hostel, or shop at the local outdoor markets and street food vendors. Find the spots that the locals like or those "hidden gems" that are more off the beaten path. Some cities offer free walking tours or museum admissions and hostels may offer free classes, like yoga. Visit public gardens and parks or rent a bike and use some of the bike paths. Walk as much as possible and use public transportation only.

Lastly, make sure to **choose a place that will best fit with your budget**. Make sure to pick a place that is affordable overall. With some planning, research, and flexibility, budget travel is entirely possible this summer. Do not put off traveling, as there is nothing like it. Travel broadens the mind, gives you different experiences, and makes you a worldlier person. So don't wait - get out there!

## Student Spotlight: Sam Crisci

By Mary Roth

Visions Professional Writing Tutor

### Career Goal/Ambitions:

My career goal is to become a Patient Access Representative. My other goal is to have a job before I graduate.

### What motivated you to attend college?

I had been volunteering in this field for some time when some unexpected life changes happened. I realized then that I needed some more skills to get a job. I came to college to build my skills and earn some credentials. If I were not in this field, I would have become an electrical engineer.

### What has surprised you most about being a college student?

I would say the amount of homework. I am also surprised by the need to balance schoolwork and employment. So many students here are balancing full time jobs, children and school.

### What is the most helpful or interesting thing you have learned about being a student or about yourself?

I am stubborn, so taking the plunge and going to school was something out of my comfort zone. I am glad I did it, though.

### What kinds of challenges you have faced? How have you overcome some of the obstacles you have faced?

I had always thought that college wasn't for me because I wouldn't be

able to cope with the coursework. High school was not a good experience for me, so having some years off from school and trying to get a job, I found that many places were looking for someone with a degree. Some other challenges I faced were learning to drive using adaptive hand controls and navigating the parking lots and sidewalks with my chair. For driving, my vocational counselor at Mass Rehab arranged for me to take driving lessons to learn to use hand controls. The driving instructor came to me, which helped tremendously. These lessons helped me to become confident in my driving skills.

### How do you keep yourself motivated toward your goals?

I just keep telling myself, "You're almost there." There have been times when I have wanted to give up or was on the cusp of giving up. I have had many challenges with my coursework, but I just had to keep on trying.

### How has the Visions Program helped you?

Visions has helped me with tutoring in writing and math, which I think is very helpful, especially in English. I know I write well, but having someone help me get my thoughts on the paper was very helpful. To be honest, I would have been lost without that guidance and might not have done well in that class.



### What advice do you have for students who are just beginning their college experience?

Brace yourselves because it is not going to be easy. It is worth it, though. Don't give up and keep telling yourself, "You're almost there."

### What are your plans for the future?

I would like to get a job before I graduate. I would like to be able to live on my own. I would like to be able to get out and do things and meet new people.

### What advice do you have for students who are about to graduate and enter the workforce?

Be open-minded because the workforce is going to be a lot different from what you learned about it in school. Cultivate good relationships with your professors because they know what is going on in the field. Pay attention to the tips and advice they give you.

## Spring Transfer Highlights

by Todd Bennett

Visions Transfer Counselor

This has been a banner year for transfer. We have had record participation on our transfer trips. More than 30 students registered to attend our popular trip to Fitchburg State. If you have not yet participated in one of our transfer trips I encourage you to think about it. We will

continue to offer at least four trips per semester.

Transfer students complete their transfer applications early in the final semester at MWCC. So far, more than 30 Visions students have completed transfer applications to four-year colleges and universities. Students applied to colleges in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine, New York, Rhode Island, and for the first time ever, Oklahoma. Those who applied

early to some of the state schools are just starting to receive admissions decisions; these decisions will continue to trickle in over the next couple of months. After being accepted to a four-year school, you will receive a credit evaluation identifying how your MWCC classes will be applied to your four-year degree. You will also receive a financial aid award. I am here to help you review these materials in an effort to help you make the best informed transfer decision you can.

# Let's Celebrate Our Graduates

The following students are December 2017, May 2018 and August 2017 graduates

In total, these students have earned **45 certificates** and **116 associate degrees**

Visions Students				Rx Students	
Rachel Adams	Jennifer Davie	Amber Martinez	Nicholas Russo	David Acevedo	Kelly Hillman
Terri Alden	Carrie DeCosta	Arthur McDonald	Angela Salazar	Madeline Allard	Amanda Johnson
Ashley Arsenault	Matthew Diaz	David Mei	Desiree Santana	Annastasia Anderson	Morgann Kirker
Lynn Ayers	Megan DiVito	Nicholas Mimms	Kiaya Shea	Matthew Applin	Emily LeBlanc
Louis Ayisi	Justin Girard	Andrew Mori	Kaitlynn Shea	DeJanee Ashmore-	Amanda L'Ecuyer
Dan Baboci	Tammy Goodgion	Franklin Moschetti	Megan Skinner	Acevedo	Edna Lopez
Aaren Bailey	Nicholas Grube	Jana Murphy	Mitchell Smith	Allison Aucoin	Jillian Mathurin
Alexander Batutis	Bryanna Hache	Alisa Nano	Austin Stacy	Eliza Barrios	Kimberly Mertell
Nicholas Bedini	Elise Hamblett	Brandi Neuberg	Brianna Stevens	Kelsey Belair	Paola Molina
Amanda Bettencourt	Ifra Hassan	Wendy Newcomb	Sondrea Surette-	Cynthia Cajigas	Michael Niall
Elizabeth Bosselman	Stephen Houchins	Alexis O'Neill	Narcisse	Sadiya Clark	Jennifer Noel
Christina Bruce	Robert Hoyt	Kennedy Owino	Starsha Tennessee	Kimberly Cook	Karen Pietila
Stephanie Buck	Jared Kuczwar	Beatriz Padilla-Lazarin	Emily Tenney	Bailey Culver	Justine Pottinger
Emma Burnett	Stephen Larson	Jamie Parker	Skylyn Torres	Genevieve David	Jessica Prichard
Chelsea Bussiere	Trevor Leger	Melissa Paulhus	Jacob VanHillo	Kiana Delgado	Sylvia Ramirez
Florencia Carneiro	Brionna Luchock	Shannyn Pomeroy	Gina Vilayphone	Melissa DelValle	Kelsey Rayner
Dylan Clark	Alphoncina Lyamuya	Rebecca Racine	Haley Visconti	Jaclyn Esparza	Erin Richard
Nicholas Coddington	Nicholas Mackowiak	Tracey Ramsey	Jacquelyn Vokey	Ashley Ferris	Amy Ross
Josefina Coursen	Linda Maher	Aidan Reynolds	Matthew Waite	Elizabeth Fogle	Louise Russell
Samuel Crisci	Crystal Maki	Amanda Robichaud	Timothy Whalen	Elizabeth Fowler	Shanneah Santiago
Mary Crumpton	Joshua Mandaglio	Paula Rosario	Aja Williams	Ann Giaquinto Scott	Danica Sauvola
Bertha Dancause	Jillian Manty	Meghan Rothermel	Allyson Williams	Kelly Gorham	Racheal Walker
Mckenzie Dano	Jonathan Marshall	Jasmin Ruiz		Rachael Grammont	Naomi Wood
				Jennifer Harrington	

\*\*This list is based on information available at the time of printing.

## Finding the Leader in Me

By Lisa Naze

Rx Transfer Counselor

Eight Visions and Rx students took part in the TRIO Leadership group this spring. Led by Visions counselor, Dawn Babineau, and Rx counselor, Lisa Naze, Visions and Rx students came together to participate in workshops designed to help members find their voices as leaders. We had the good fortune of working with Marie Ewing, Amanda Robichaud, Linda Maher, Kaitlyn Tanner, Cassie Carlson, Jennifer Fitzpatrick, Wendy Newcomb, and Vanessa Paquette.

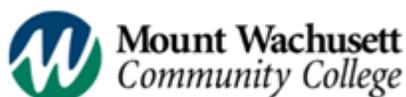
Every one of us has a different definition of what being a leader is and what kind of leader we want to become. What we all learned was that we may have individual

styles but working together made us stronger. We are not alone in our struggles, and we can lean on and learn from each other. Leadership takes on many forms, and every one of us has a different leadership gift. I was in awe of witnessing the growth of each of our members and the sense of pride and enjoyment they had as they ran the Mid-Semester Gatherings. I am grateful for the opportunity of getting to know each of them and learn from their commitment, positive attitude and viewpoints.



We may have come together to find the "Leaders in Me," but we found something much more powerful...leadership also comes in the form of "We."





444 Green Street, Gardner, MA 01440-1000

**TRIO**  
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

**Annual Awards  
Ceremony  
Monday, May 14, 2018  
12:00 - 2:00 p.m.  
South Café**

Every year, we celebrate the end of the academic year and recognize students who have demonstrated both initiative and progress throughout the fall and spring semesters. We also recognize our graduates and transfer students.

Watch your mail for your invitation and join us for this great event as we celebrate student success.

## April & May 2018 List of Important Dates

Check your email daily for the most up-to-date information on program events and campus news

<i>Monday, April 2- Friday, April 6</i>	<b>Priority Registration Begins for Summer and Fall</b>	<i>Monday, May 7</i>	Cycle 2: Last day of classes
<i>Monday, April 2 &amp; Tuesday, April 3</i>	<b>Open Lab Registration</b> 12:30-1:30 p.m. RM 240	<i>Wednesday, May 9</i>	<b>Full Semester:</b> Last day of classes
<i>Monday, April 9</i>	<b>TEAS Exam Prep Workshop</b> 12:30-1:30 p.m. W11	<i>Monday, May 14</i>	<b>Annual Awards Ceremony</b> 12:00 -2:00 p.m. South Café
<i>Tuesday, April 10</i>	<b>Financial Aid/ Summer Aid Info Session</b> 12:30-1:30 p.m. W11	<i>Wednesday, May 16</i>	<b>MWCC Graduation</b>
<i>Thursday, April 12</i>	<b>Dinner at the South Side Grill</b> 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. Gardner, MA **Sign up in the TRIO Complex	<p><b>May 20- May 23, 2018</b> <b>TRIO Trip to Washington, D.C.</b></p> <p>Watch your email for more information</p>	
<i>Monday, April 16</i>	<b>Patriots' Day</b> No classes all campuses, day and evening		
<i>Wednesday, April 18</i>	<b>Monday Schedule:</b> All day classes, all campuses <b>Cycle 2:</b> Last day to withdraw		
<i>Friday, April 13</i>	<b>Peabody Essex Museum</b> 8:30 a.m. -4:00 p.m. Salem, MA **Sign up in the TRIO Complex		
<i>Wednesday, April 25</i>	<b>Staying Active &amp; Healthy for Busy People</b> 12:30- 1:30 p.m. W11		

If you have a disability and require accommodations in order to participate fully in program activities, please contact the program director to discuss your specific needs.  
Affirmative Action/ Equal Opportunity Institution