

TRiO

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

September 2020

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE VISIONS AND RX PROGRAMS

Welcome to Fall 2020!

by Gaurav Khanna

Director of the Visions and Rx Programs

"A new normal", "unprecedented circumstances", "difficult and trying times"... I think I have lost track of the number of times I have heard these words and others to describe our current collective situation. The mind does become numb after a certain point, perhaps a circuit breaker designed to protect our human psyche from the scale of something almost unimaginable.

But despite these challenges, we can keep moving forward by putting one foot in front of the other. Breaking down everything to its discrete parts: your next assignment, your next advisor appointment, your next zoom call, your next work shift, your next family commitment, your next step. It's amazing what you can accomplish if you just keep moving forward.

With that spirit in mind, I welcome all of you back to the fall 2020 semester. As you are aware most of our classes will be conducted virtually this semester. As such most of our advising, tutoring, and other support services will also be offered online to support you while minimizing health risks. As in the past you can always call the main number (978-630-9297) for help. We will also have a virtual presence where you can pop in via zoom to schedule appointments and get help. You will

find links regularly posted on Blackboard and Facebook. Besides this, you can always email and call us and we will respond as soon as we can. Responses may not be instant in case we are working with other students but rest assured that we will return all messages.

We also have a new staff member on board with us this semester. Please join me in welcoming Sarah Kipp who is highly qualified and will be joining us as a Writing Learning Specialist in the Visions Program. You can read more about her on page 7

If you know you need support in specific areas, remember that now is the time to grab a tutoring spot, especially when it comes to our TRIO writing and math tutors. Tutoring slots fill up early and you may not be able to find one that works with your schedule later.

Our usual beginning of semester check-ins are happening now. You've receive email reminders to connect with us. These quick meetings can set you up for success for the semester.

If you have friends who need help navigating college, especially in these challenging circumstances, please refer them to us if they meet any of the TRIO criteria (first

2020



Very bad, would not recommend.

generation, limited income, or documented disability).

STAY CONNECTED! Although the bulk of your work this semester will be online, do try to make an effort to connect where you can. We will have a variety of online events, seminars and check in opportunities. We all need social interaction and connection in some measure to stay well. Please use our services to make some of those connections that will lead to your success. We are here to you to support you in any way that we can!



AA/EEO Institution

Remote Learning Success Tips

by Mary Roth

Visions Writing Tutor

Remote learning, online classes, web-based instruction. Although these terms have been around for years, they took on new meaning with the abrupt shift many schools and colleges made in the spring to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Many students, instructors and staff members found themselves working in a whole new virtual environment. Despite the benefit of being able to continue with instruction and learning, online or remote learning places heavy demands on students and teachers alike. Here are some suggestions to work effectively and successfully in the online environment. With practice, these tips will help you to develop the discipline, time management and organizational skills that successful online learning requires.

Set up a designated work area:

While it may not look like a classroom, your work area or office area needs to be located in an area that has access to the internet, has room for your laptop, books, notebooks and other materials and is in a low traffic area that will allow you to focus on your online instruction and independent work. If you have children, having a designated work area sends the signal that they need to let you work when you are in that space.

Have the right equipment:

Online learning may seem convenient and easy, but having the proper equipment can make it much easier and reduce stress. Headphones with a microphone, a laptop with a working camera and proper lighting all contribute to working efficiently in the online environment. Adjusting the brightness of your screen and positioning lighting to reduce glare can reduce eye strain and prevent headaches. Additionally, working at a desk with an office chair that is correctly adjusted for your height will prevent unnecessary strain on your neck, shoulder and hands. While working from your couch or bed might seem like a tempting option, it is not recommended. These are places your body associates

with relaxing, so working from these locations interfere with focus, attention and being alert.

Have a mission mindset: Working from home can be challenging because you may be blending the roles of student and parent, as well as balancing household, childcare, work and homework tasks. To help ease this and make the most of your online learning, adopt a mission mind set. Consider scheduling set times for online school work and using the alarm on your cell phone to remind you of when it is time to get to work. Another subtle way to help increase your focus is to make sure you develop a daily schedule and stick to it. Consistent bedtimes and waking times, following a daily routine and making sure that you are showered, dressed (including wearing shoes) and ready to go to work condition your mind to focus and be productive during those scheduled work times.

Use technology to help you manage time and information:

Technology can help you plan, organize and use your time efficiently and keep your course information and assignments organized to help save time and reduce stress. Use an online or paper calendar to outline all of the due dates for your online courses once you have reviewed the syllabus. Use the reminder feature to remind you of due dates a few days ahead of the deadline to help you stay on track in completing and submitting assignments. Use the alarm feature on your cell phone to remind you of your scheduled times for working online or attending scheduled class meetings. Successful online students also make a point of checking both their e-mail and online learning platforms, such as BlackBoard, daily. Additionally, creating folders and organizing materials from your online classes can help you stay on track with completing assignments and will reduce your stress

when looking for assignments to complete and submit.

Communication is key: Students and teachers will agree that online learning is very different from face to face instruction in the traditional classroom. Because the online format cannot duplicate the direct, in person communication in the classroom, it is imperative that students make a strong effort to communicate with their instructors. In some cases, students enrolled in online courses have been stopped out by their instructors because they had not participated in discussion boards, responded to e-mails or submitted assignments. In almost every case, the students were surprised by the instructor's actions and did not know that they were required to complete those activities. To avoid this, it is important to check the Announcements section of your online learning platform daily, complete and submit discussion board questions on time, and e-mail your instructor with any questions or concerns you have about course assignments, concepts or projects.

Know when to ask for help:

Online learning requires a higher level of discipline and self-management than in person instruction. Because you are learning independently, it can feel like you have to go it alone when challenges arise. This is not true. The Visions and Rx advisors and tutors are available to help you transition to online learning smoothly to help ensure your college success. Tutors are available to meet with you on the Zoom video conferencing platform, through phone calls or through e-mail for math or writing support. TRIO advisors also service as academic counselors and can help you navigate through course selection, registration and other issues, as well as helping you explore and set career and transfer goals.

“Communication works for those who work at it.”—John Powell

by Catherine Maddox-Wiley
Rx Retention Specialist

The words of John Powell, film producer, were never truer! As our remote learning and work practices progress into the fall semester, we will continue to rely on our phones and computers. Do you feel it takes longer to get answers? Do you have to restate your point or re-ask your questions because you didn't get the information you requested? Communication is a two-way street, involving the speaker/writer and the recipient/responder. Let's look at how we can be more organized, efficient and effective when connecting with each other.

Prepare before communicating

1. Understand the purpose of your communication. Are you prepared to explain your needs?
2. The answers to your questions may be at your fingertips. Check MWCC's website and iConnect for information. <https://mwcc.edu/>
3. Consider the individual or department that can best respond to your needs and consider when they might be available. Even during quarantine, most faculty and staff are working a traditional schedule and are not available in the evenings or on weekends. Communicate early, not at the last minute.
4. You may need to refer to or log into iConnect or MWCC's website, so have your computer handy.
5. If you need help understanding a letter, voice message, or email that you received, have the letter in hand, re-listen to the message, and have the email available. This will help you explain the situation to the person assisting you.
6. Have paper and pen/pencil handy for notes you may need to take.
7. Jot down a list of days and times you are available to meet.

8. Choose a quiet place to communicate.

9. Have a mind-set to be respectful of the recipient's time and be mindful that you may not get an immediate response. You are among the many wonderful students the recipient is working with, so same-day responses and scheduling may not be possible.

Make the phone call

1. When you make a call, identify yourself with your first and last names and identify the full name of the person you are trying to reach. There are three Sara(h)'s in the TRIO Office and a number of Sara(h)'s amongst the student body.

2. When obtaining information from an office, get the person's full name.

It's helpful if you can refer to "Jessie James in Financial Aid" rather than "That lady."

3. When leaving a voice message, state your name, message, and phone number clearly, slowly, and loud enough to be heard. Repeat the phone number.

4. Background noise may make it difficult for the person on the other end of the phone. Pick a quiet time and location to talk.

Send the Email

1. Use your college email for all MWCC correspondence. MWCC faculty and staff cannot share your college-related information through an unknown email. This policy protects your privacy and confidentiality.

2. Include your full name, student ID and a phone number. This enables a staff person to quickly access your records.

3. If you are emailing one of your professors, provide your course information and section (Bio 113, section R2). If your class is on campus, it doesn't hurt to add the class days and times.

4. Before you start typing, consider ALL of the questions you need to ask. Avoid asking one question at a time. Going back and forth in a "chat" situation via multiple emails may not be convenient for the recipient.

5. Provide the recipient with appropriate details that will help resolve your issue. Avoid going too long or too short.

6. Read the email responses carefully. Do not just read the first sentence. Were your questions answered? Are you informed and able to proceed?

7. If you need to schedule an appointment, provide the recipient with several days and times you are available. Avoid going back and forth to schedule a meeting.

8. Confirm all scheduled appointments.

Meet by Zoom

1. Make sure your technology and internet connections are working properly.

2. Be on time for the meeting, but don't show up too early. The meeting host may be busy prior to your meeting.

3. This is not the time to multi-task. Focus your attention on the business at hand.

4. Quiet, low distraction locations are the rule of thumb.

5. As a courtesy, if you can't attend the Zoom session, send the meeting host an email as soon as you possibly can.

These are good tips not only for virtual business but for face-to-face communications, as well. Everyone involved will appreciate the efficiency and time saved!

Start Thinking About Transfer This Fall

by Sarah Pingeton

Visions Transfer Counselor

If you're planning on transferring to a 4-year school in the next year, you probably have a lot of questions. Some of those questions are normal: How do I find schools with the major I want? What are the application requirements? How do I find out the cost? Students have asked those questions every year for decades, and your friendly neighborhood TRIO transfer counselor is happy to meet with you to discuss those things whenever you want! If you have some of those questions you might even want to check out one of the great transfer seminars this fall!

But this year is not a normal year, so some of your questions probably are not very normal: How do I meet an admissions rep virtually? Are campus tours allowed? How will I know if I'll like a school if I *can't* go on a tour? Will

classes be online or in person when I transfer? These questions are tougher, and we'll figure out the answers together.

We won't be able to take group trips to visit other schools in person anytime soon, but watch your email for information about other transfer opportunities. Colleges will be hosting virtual information sessions, we'll book times to go on virtual tours as a group, and we'll participate in special events when they become available. Keep your eyes out especially for a virtual TRIO day at UMass Lowell this fall!

Making transfer decisions isn't usually easy, making them via Zoom is even harder. We'll do our best to get all of your questions answered so you can make the best decisions possible. If there's one positive to all of this, we're

no longer limited by our location with the schools we can tour! Now would be a great time to ask to tour the University of Hawaii!

Many four-year colleges & universities are scheduling virtual tours. See Alaina or Sarah P. for more information about scheduling a virtual visit and connecting with admissions reps!

Join the TRIO Transfer Counselors for *Decisions Making Through the Transfer Process* on October 5.

More details to come!

FAQ for Fall 2020 Accommodations

by Dawn Babineau

Visions Learning Specialist

Didn't it seem like just when you started to finally feel like you figured out how to secure your accommodation services—BAM!—COVID hit and the process changed. No worries, you are not alone. We've got you covered. Our friends in Disability Support Services and The Testing Center have some important bits of information and short videos to help you in this NEW NORM of 2020.

Accommodations and Disability Support Services: What are they? Who can get them? How do I get them?

The Disability Support Services team has put together a short video with all of these answers. You can click right here <https://youtu.be/o4kAZRZnm34>.

What will accommodated testing look like for the fall and how you can use this service?

The Testing Center has made a short video about this topic. Please click on this link to view



Accomm Testing 2020 (Wilkins Victori

What can Read and Write Do for You?

Our friends at the Testing Center also created this short video overview of the top tools used in Read & Write, which is free software for MWCC students.



What can Read and Write do for you 3 (

Should you still request accommodations when you are taking online classes?

Good Question! The answer is probably YES! Please contact one of our Advisors in the TRIO Office or Ann or Amy in the Disability Support Office to start the discussion.

If you have other questions, ***please ask***. Staff in the TRIO office have specializations in supporting students with finding strategies to bring out the strengths in each person's own unique learning process. We are eager to have a discussion with you about how you can be your best student possible!

Be a STAR-Workshop Series

(Student Training for Academic Readiness)

by Lauren Clifford

Visions Retention Specialist

Start off your semester right with the STAR (Student Training for Academic Readiness) Workshop Series. Get insight in managing online courses and expectations with the following workshops.

Proactively Organizing Your Semester-

- Do you find yourself procrastinating throughout the semester?
- Do you get behind in your work or feel unsure of what's do and it causes you stress?
- Do you want to improve your time management skills?
- Are you worried about balancing multiple online courses?

If you answered yes attending this workshop was made for you! We will be talking about both managing your time as well as managing your assignments. Our goal is to help you start the semester off right to make the weeks that follow less stressful and more productive.

This workshop will be offer four-times throughout the STAR Seminar Series. Students are encouraged to attend at least one session.

Being an Online Student

Based on the *10 Best Practices of Successful Online Students* Video by Dr. Jeremiah Riordon. We will cover helpful things to know if you're feeling unsure about navigating this mostly online semester. We will also leave ample time to answer your questions. We will also share the link to Dr. Riordon's video in our session for those wanting to dive deeper.

Using Disability Accommodations while Online

Just because most courses will be virtual for this coming fall semester doesn't mean you aren't entitled to accommodations. This workshop will explain how to set up accommodations for those with documented disabilities and what they might look like in this new virtual setting.

Managing Online Expectations & Etiquette

Is this your first time taking an online course? Are you feeling unsure of what to expect and what will be expected of you? This workshop will discuss how these classes may differ from traditional in-person classes and what appropriate behavior from the student looks like.

How to Succeed in an Online Course -PROFESSOR PANEL

Hear from current MWCC who have taught online about what they want you to know about taking classes online. They'll share their expectations, pet peeves, and keys to success. You may even hear from one of YOUR current professors

We strongly encourage you to attend at least one of these sessions, but we hope you will attend them all!!

STAR Seminar Series

Being an Online Student	Using Disability Accommodations While Online	Managing Online Expectation & Etiquette	How to Succeed in Online Courses
Monday, Sept. 21	Tuesday, Sept. 22	Wednesday, Sept. 23	Thursday, Sept. 24
12:30-1:30 p.m.	12:30-1:30 p.m.	12:30-1:30 p.m.	12:30-1:30 p.m.
Proactively Planning You Semester- * Attend One Session*			
Monday, Sept. 21	Tuesday, Sept. 22	Wednesday, Sept. 23	Thursday, Sept. 24
9:00-10:00 a.m.	11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	5:00-6:00 p.m.	3:00-4:00 p.m.
Zoom links will be included in the weekly e-letter. Check your email for important updates <i>Can't make these sessions?</i> Make sure you check out the Visions & Rx Blackboard portal to get key materials and recordings of the sessions			

Financial Literacy & Budgeting

By Angela Snyder

Visions Academic Advisor

Budget, Credit Score, Student Debt, Loans – these are words that often create a sense of anxiety, confusion and frustration for many. But, don't worry, you are NOT alone! The TRIO office is here to help you demystify these topics and more. Be sure to check out our Financial Literacy workshops which explore topics like Understanding Credit September 23, 12:30-1:30; The Basics of Budgeting October 7, 2020 2:00-3:00; FASFA A-Z October 13, 2020; So you Think You Can't be Scammed? Think Again! November 4, 2020 12:30-1:30 Frugal Living November 19, 2020 and Holidays on a Shoestring December 7, 2020.

These workshops will go into detail on important financial literacy topics to help keep you informed and Money Smart.



This month we will focus on the basics of Budgeting.

-Adapted from Dave Ramsey Budgeting

Here is an easy exercise to get you started on a working budget. It is a good idea to sit down and figure these things out before your classes really get underway so you can head into the school year having a solid framework for your spending.

Write down all of your income (money coming in)

1. Total take home pay
2. Consider all sources of income (traditional jobs and freelance work)

List your expenses

3. Regular bills
4. Rent, utilities, electricity, water, internet, phone,

5. Quarterly bills like insurance
6. Groceries, gas, subscriptions, entertainment and clothing
7. Every dollar should be accounted for!

Subtract your expenses from your total income to equal zero

8. Your income minus your expenses should equal zero
9. Every dollar has a place in your budget
If you have a **surplus**, label it. Now it has a category of its own. Maybe "savings" or "fun money"

Track your spending

10. Once you've created your budget, track your spending to ensure your spending lines up with your plan.

Make sure you come to our Budgeting 101 seminar on October 7th, to learn the fail proof tricks to make your budget an instant success! We hope to see you there, this is one workshop you can't afford to miss!

Zooming With Your Best Foot Forward

by Lauren Clifford

Visions Retention Specialist

Many of use our newer to need to participate in video chats as part of our academics, whether it be Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate or another platform.

You want portray yourself in a professional way so others know you are taking the meeting/class seriously

By setting yourself up in "work mode" opposed to "comfy mode" you will have an easier time staying focused and be more productive

Here are some tips to get you started:

Reduce Noise

- Try your best to pick a quiet place to have your meeting

- Using headphone can help reduce noise
- If you are part of a larger meeting consider putting yourself on mute until you are ready to speak

Choose a Background

- Try to sit in front of a neutral background, like a solid color wall
- Try NOT to sit in front of a window or other light source

Set up a Location

- Choose a workspace that is appropriate. Do no join video chats from your bed, bathrooms, or other places that may feel too personal to others.

- Avoid sitting in locations where people will be moving around behind you

Dress for success

- Dress like you would for any other course or on campus meeting
- Avoid pajamas and other clothing that may come across as too casual

Plan to Focus

- Put other tasks aside and focus on the meeting
- Avoid eating, smoking, talking to others, etc. as much as possible



Meet our New Staff

Sarah Kipp

Learning Specialist—
Writing

Sarah is thrilled to be a part of the MWCC TRIO team! Sarah began her career in campus writing centers, connecting with college students who needed writing and editing support. After years of helping adult learners reach their goals in a variety of professional and educational settings, Sarah is delighted to be working with college students again. Sarah has a Bachelor of Arts in English, a Master of Science in Deaf Education from McDaniel College, and is working on an advanced degree in Human Development and Learning. When she's not working or studying, Sarah is often running, swimming, biking, or making some room on the couch to share an episode of whatever her younger teen is watching. She is looking forward to getting to know everyone in the Visions and Rx Programs!



Sarah K. is available to weekly writing tutoring

Mondays:	8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Tuesdays:	12:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Wednesdays:	9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.;
	12:15 p.m. – 4 p.m.
Thursdays:	8 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

To schedule an appointment contact your Rx or Visions advisor or call 978-630-9297

Free Passes to Mount Fitness, MWCC's Fitness Center

The Rx and Visions Programs have a limited number of free passes to the MWCC's Mount Fitness. These memberships include access to fitness equipment, classes and more!

In order to be entered into the raffle for a free gym membership, you must complete your Fall check-in by September 18.

Help us connect with potential Visions & Rx students!

Do you know students who would benefit from the services available the Visions & Rx Programs? Refer them to us! Encourage them to call 978-630-9297 or email visions@mwcc.mass.edu or rx@mwcc.mass.edu to connect with a TRIO advisor!

Fall Semester Checklist

- Buy/Rent textbooks** and gather school supplies
- Log-in and **participate in all classes**
- Check-in with your Rx or Visions advisor**
- Attend your program's **Kick-Off Lunch**
- Schedule tutoring**
- Attend at least **one seminar**
- Read the weekly **eletter**
- Build connections** with students, staff and faculty
- Check your email daily**

This semester may look a little different, but the strategies for success remain the same.

Use this checklist to make sure you are on the path to success!

Student Spotlight: Marlene Boucher-Ripley

By Alaina Lucchetti

Rx Transfer Counselor

Before her classes switched to remote in the spring of 2020, Marlene Boucher attend an Rx seminar titled "How to Succeed in Online Courses". When she left the room that day, Marlene was convinced online learning was NOT. FOR. HER. She needed more structure and in-person attention in order to be successful, or so she thought. Fast forward to August 2020 and Marlene closed out the spring/summer semesters with two A's and a B+ – despite the transition to remote learning. Like many of you, Marlene was not only focused on school work during this stressful time but also the health and well-being of her family. As a single mother, adding the responsibility of caring for her nephew so that her essential working sibling could go to work, made life that much more hectic.

Self-doubt crept in resulting in many days/nights of tears, frustration, and thoughts of giving up. Marlene reflected on that time and said:

"It was not the class that is the challenging part, it was my lack of confidence that I internally instilled in myself the day I said online classes could not be successful for me. I was secretly setting myself up for failure. I had unconsciously prevented myself to be open to the new change and embrace it. I caused myself to mentally shut down and to concede to the reality of failure at achieving my life goal. I decided to speak to myself like I would speak to a friend and begin the process of building up my self-confidence. Removing the "I can't with the I cans". Every day, multiple times I would say, you got this! You are not alone! We will cross this finish line together! I started putting positive affirmations all over



my computer, pumping myself up for success."

Marlene proved to herself and can be an example for anyone who doubts themselves during a challenging time, that anything is possible with a positive mindset, hard work, and using your resources!

As you start this new semester take Marlene's works of wisdom with you and remember "YOU GOT THIS—FOR YOU !!!!!"

Meet Your TRIO Community
at the Fall Kick-Off

**Rx Program
Kick-Off Lunch**

Tuesday,
September 15, 2020
12:30-1:30 p.m.

**Visions Program
Kick-Off Lunch**

Wednesday,
September 16, 2020
12:30-1:30 p.m.

**Zoom link can be found
in weekly e-letter**

Let's Get Inspired

We love to showcase our students!

We know that we have talented Visions & Rx students who are also artists and writers and we want to showcase your work

If you are interested, please email Sara W. at

swiliams@mwcc.mass.edu for more information and ways you can get involved in the monthly newsletter



"Rainbow Plume" by Connor Martino

September 2020 Calendar of Events							Check your email daily for the most up-to-date information on program events and campus news
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
		1	2	3	4	5	
6	7 Labor Day No classes all campuses	8	9 Full Semester & Cycle 1 Classes begin	10	11 Math & Writing Skills— Meet the Tutors 12:30-1:30 p.m.	12	
13	14	15 Rx Kick Off 12:30-1:30 p.m. Full Semester & Cycle 1 Last day to add classes and drop classes with 100% refund	16 Visions Kick Off 12:30-1:30 p.m.	17	18	19	
20	21 Proactively Planning Your Semester 9:00- 10: a.m. Being an Online Student 12:30-1:30 p.m.	22 Proactively Planning Your Semester 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Using Disability Accommodations while Online 12:30-1:30 p.m. Full Semester & Cycle 1 Last day to withdraw with a 50% refund	23 Managing Online Expectation & Etiquette 12:30-1:30 p.m. Credit 12:30-1:30 p.m. Proactively Planning Your Semester 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.	24 How to Succeed in Online Courses 12:30-1:30 p.m. Proactively Planning Your Semester 3:00- 4:00 p.m.	25	26	
27	28 TEAS Workshop 12:30-1:30 p.m.	29	30				
<p>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</p> <p>The Visions & Rx Programs are funded by TRIO Student Support Services grants through the U.S. Department of Education</p>							

Join Us on Zoom

All workshops, seminars and events will be hosted on Zoom. See your weekly e-letter for the Zoom links for upcoming events!



Start Smart with Your Check-In

Complete your semester check-in during the first two weeks of the semester to maximize your success.