

TRiO

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

January & February 2021

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE VISIONS AND RX PROGRAMS

The More Things Change

by Gaurav Khanna
Director, TRIO SSS Programs

*"Plus ça change,
plus c'est la même
chose" - Jean-
Baptiste Alphonse
Karr*

Or loosely translated from the French, "The more things change, the more they remain the same...". Sure feels that way some days! 2020 is history and 2021 is here. Hopefully you had some time to rest and recharge. Believe it or not, the days are starting to get longer and we have a new semester about to begin. But along with all the hope and opportunity there is still the stark reality of our current situation: the pandemic continues affecting every facet in our lives. How we work, how we go to school, how we connect with family, the challenges we face—all of them have continued from the fall to the spring.

But challenges or not, you are here, ready to get back to work, and we are here, ready to support you. Based on what we saw in the fall, here are some tips:

Get your tutoring slots locked in early: We saw that tutoring, especially for writing, was at a premium during the fall semester. If you want to make sure that you have access to tutoring, contact us early so we can get you set up with appointments that work with your schedule.

Blackboard & email: Unless you are in one of the few in-person sections, most instructors are communicating with students via Blackboard or email. Each class may be set up a little differently. Make sure to go in and poke around and become familiar with the organization and materials. If you need help, feel free to ask and we would be happy to explore with you and answer any questions.

Pay attention to the add/drop deadline: There is no penalty for dropping a class during the first week. Read the syllabus and other materials carefully to identify if the class is a good fit for you. Staying in the class after the first week means that you are making a choice to accept the class and instructor expectations.

Check in: Though we are virtual, we still want to see you. Please set up a meeting to meet with us during the first couple of weeks of classes.

As always we'll have our seminars and events—keep an eye out for days and times. You've got this. And if you do run into trouble—get in touch with us. We are your academic safety net and here to help you in any way that we can.



How to Set the Right Goals for You: Academic Edition

by Lauren Clifford

Visions Retention Specialist

In the past we've covered **SMART** goals, if you're not familiar I highly recommend reading about them. You can do a quick Google search. In addition to creating goals that are "SMART" here are some things I encourage you to consider as we go into the spring semester.

Things to consider when setting up your semester goals:

Don't set the bar too high-If you give yourself unrealistic expectations you will only wind up disappointed. Take into account the specific classes you're taking, how busy you are outside of school, etc. Maybe you've been a straight "A" student in the past, but this semester is going to be the most challenging so far. It's important to take that into consideration.

Don't set the bar too low-Some times when we don't challenge ourselves enough it can hurt our motivation just as much as aiming too high. Choose at least one of your courses to aim a little higher than you would normally.

Set up your goals for each course separately- Some course material will come more naturally to you than others, and that's okay! When setting your goals for the semester it can be helpful to think about each class individually. Some classes you may aim for an A while in other courses you know you will be proud of earning a C.

Think about what you have on your plate this semester, how does that compare to previous semesters- Each semester is so



different! Not just your courses will be different but there are probably parts of your life that have changed. Is your work schedule the same? Are your family commitments the same? Are you doing more or less courses virtually? These are all things to think about when setting your goals.

Consider what resources you need- This might mean academics resources like taking advantage of office hours or tutoring. It might also be utilizing your Visions/Rx advisor for support. It could mean calling your health insurance to ask about finding a mental health counselor to meet with regularly.

Four Tips for Setting Resolutions

by Kayla Coates

Visions Staff Assistant

Like you, I'm so happy to put 2020 in the rearview mirror and focus on 2021. With a new year comes new opportunities and a chance to start fresh. With the New Year, we can all put our best foot forward and start the year off in a positive direction. Below are four ways that you can keep that positivity going and accomplish your goals.

Write your Goals down or Make a Vision Board: This might sound cheesy but having a spot where all the things you want to accomplish are in one place together helps you stay on track. It also helps keep those goals alive and right in front of you. This in turn can help you prioritize goals and

break it down by day, month etc. of when you want to complete that goal.

Setting Realistic Goals: When you're setting goals for yourself, it's important to not set yourself up for failure. For example, when it comes to a marathon runner, the runner needs to complete smaller accomplishments in order to get to the goal of running the marathon and completing that run. Goals that you want to complete can't always be done in a day so like when you write a research paper, break the goal down into smaller steps and work on the goal step by step.

Hold Yourself Accountable: When it comes to the New Year and when I make New Year's Resolutions, I

struggle to stick with them. This year especially after the year we had in 2020 should be more of a drive and reason to want to see those goals through. It's hard to hold yourself accountable so even if you talk with an advisor about your class/ school goals, friends and family, they can help you stay motivated and can help you continue to work towards those accomplishments.

Have a Positive Activity in your Life: Whether that's going for a walk with your dog, carving out time to watch your favorite T.V. show or continue learning a new skill, having that positive activity in your life will help you stay motivated to complete your other goals. Life is all about balance so having activities that inspire you in your life while at the same time you are juggling your job, homework and family obligations are always important.

The Importance of Connection while attending Community College

by Angela Snyder
Visions Academic Advisor

How did you feel about your virtual semester? While some students seem to have been able to make it work, others really felt the “distance” in the distance learning. If it felt a little odd to you, you are not alone. In fact, there are studies to support the importance of a feeling of connection among college students with their professors and peers. The American Psychological Society finds that when students *feel* connected to the educational experience, they are more likely to earn higher grades, have better attendance and are more likely to stay in school longer.

Feeling connected is important to your academic success, but social connection is also vital for our mental well-being. As the pandemic wears on, we are all experiencing the lack of social connection to varying degrees. Whether you consider yourself a “people person” or not, the isolation resulting from social distancing requirements has been tough. It’s no surprise that being without the company of others is affecting our moods. The Canadian Mental Health Association finds that social connection can lower anxiety and depression, it can help regulate our emotions, and even increase our self-esteem. So, connection is in fact a vital component

to a healthy mental state. So how can you feel more connected in a pandemic where most classes, meetings and gatherings are taking place virtually?

It might feel difficult to create that connection during a pandemic and virtual learning, but there are still plenty of ways to create meaningful relationships. We know connecting with other students is in the front of your mind. Here are some recommendations for cultivating a sense of community in this virtual environment:

- Communicate! Email, phone and Zoom are not on lockdown, utilize them. Be sure to respond to outreach.
- Make the discussion board your friend! Introductions are often made in the first weeks of classes, pay attention to who is in your classes and reach out to them via school email or social media, begin to create the connections you crave.
- Take advantage of study groups and other opportunities to do group work in your classes
- Attend virtual office hours and create a rapport with your instructor.
- Schedule a meeting with your Advisor
- Attend a Visions/RX seminar

- Attend MWCC events

At the beginning of the semester, it would be a great idea if you took a peek at the college events calendar and find some offerings that interest you. Take the time to jot them in your calendar now. Then as you make your way through the semester you’ll have some events (connection opportunities) to look forward to.

Visions will also be hosting a weekly “**Chat and Snack,**” group on Wednesdays at 4. We will come together share our experiences, play games and celebrate our wins! This group can honestly be whatever you need it to be. In the very least, it’ll be a place where you’ll connect with other students and share your college experience TOGETHER, but it can honestly be so much more! It is my hope that together we can form a cohort of sorts. A group of students (friends) who show up because you know there’s someone waiting for you, reminding yourself you’re not experiencing college alone. Together we will build a Tribe. We want YOU to be in it! Let’s start this semester off right, come join us!

Disability Accommodations	FAFSA Reminder	Spring Kick-Offs
If you haven’t yet connected with Disability Support Services for your accommodations and plan to use them this semester, please email Amy LaBarge at a_labarge@mwcc.mass.edu .	Now is the time to file your 2021-2022 FAFSA Schedule your FAFSA appointment today by calling 978-630-9297	RX January 25 12:30
	Mass Grant Deadline for filing is May 1 It takes 3-4 weeks for your FAFSA to process.	Visions January 27 12:30

It's Okay to not be Okay

by Alaina Lucchetti

Rx Transfer Counselor

As we approach the year mark since the beginning of this global pandemic- you are encouraged to take time to yourself for deep reflection and to do an emotional check-in. Ask yourself "how am I doing... really"? In the era of social media, we can too frequently find ourselves comparing ourselves to the smiling faces and seemingly happy people we see on our phone screens. The reality is we are most likely seeing people's highlight reels and not their true realities. It is very infrequent to see dirty dishes piled up in the sink, crying children at the school desk, or tired eyes and unwashed hair make our newsfeed.

In addition to comparing ourselves to other's highlight reels, we also often discount our own struggles because

there are always others who "have it worse". Do you know the feeling? If you let that principle take charge, you will never spend the appropriate time or energy to face your own difficulties. This year has brought on new experiences, struggles, and emotions for everyone. The more you resist feeling "bad" the more that feeling lingers and usually tends to get worse. We know these feelings are inevitable and you've been encouraged not to fight them, so now what? While it is ok to not be okay, it is not okay to struggle alone and leave these feelings unattended. It is crucial for you to identify a support system and to learn strategies that work for you.

Journaling, taking mindful moments, and breath work are great strategies that

work for some folks. If you've tried strategies on your own without success, or feel like you don't know where to start- know you have support right here at your fingertips. Melissa Manzi provides counseling, support, and assistance to students coping with personal difficulties along with crisis intervention, psychoeducational programming, and can assist with referrals to outside services. To schedule an appointment with Melissa please email m_manzi@mwcc.mass.edu, with "counseling" in the subject line. Also, please check out Melissa's vlog series "Melissa's Mental Health Minute" for help identifying mental health symptoms and coping strategies. Hop on over to [Youtube to check it out today!](#)

Transfer Applications Workshop

If you're nervous, confused, or clueless about where, when, and how to start and complete transfer applications, the Transfer Application Workshop is for you. Come get tools to help you stay organized and confidently submit applications ahead of the deadlines this spring. This workshop will review different application types, where to find important dates and information, common pitfalls, common questions, and introduce worksheets, spreadsheets, and apps to keep you orderly and on track!

Upcoming Transfer Application Deadlines	
MassTransfer Priority Deadline	March 1
Westfield State	March 1
Framingham State & Worcester State	March 15
UMASS Amherst	April 15
Transfer Applications Workshop Wednesday, February 3 10 a.m.	

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 Spring check-in by February 3

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!

Spring Check List

- 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**

Print or copy this to-do list and put it somewhere you'll look every day. Make sure to check the boxes once you've done the task!

The ABC's of Self Care

by Sarah Kipp

Visions Learning Specialist--Writing

Taking care of ourselves is one of the most important aspects of staying healthy—and of being well enough to take care of our loved ones. Check out this A-to-Z list of self-care suggestions. Some activities take a minute or less, while others can be done in five minutes, twenty minutes, or in blocks of thirty minutes or more.

Aerobic exercise (5-30 min.) – Getting your heart rate up and the oxygen flowing can be a great stress-reliever. Even a few minutes of jumping jacks in your kitchen counts!

Breathe (1 min.) - Breathe deeply in through your nose and out through your mouth. For sixty seconds, take deep and intentional breaths to clear your mind and calm your body.

Call a friend (15 min.)– Humans are social creatures. Connect to people who make you smile and remind you of how loved you are.

Dance it out (5 min.) – Turn up the volume of your favorite song and dance like no one is watching! When you dance, you benefit from listening to music and engaging in aerobic exercise at the same time.

Eat healthy foods (15 min.) – Making wise food choices throughout the day can influence your energy level, mood, and overall health and well-being.

Foot massage (5 min.) – Take a few minutes to massage lotion into your feet. Foot massages not only relax the muscles in your feet but also increase the release of hormones in your body that help you feel calm and happy.

Gratitude (5 min.) – Write down three specific things that you are grateful for in this moment. Gratitude helps your brain focus on what is working well and can shift your perspective and mood into a more positive, anabolic state.

Hot bath (30 min.) – No fancy bath balms are needed, and even a fifteen-minute bath can be restorative. Add a cup or two of Epsom salts while the water is running to help with relaxation.

Imagine (1 min.) – Imagine yourself feeling calm, confident, healthy, and whole. Imagining that you are feeling what you want to experience can actually help your body shift into feeling that way.

Journaling (20 min.) – Get your thoughts and feelings out on paper! Studies have shown that writing about upsetting things actually helps people feel more in control and calm about what has happened.

Kindness (1 min.) – Offer yourself the same words of kindness and compliments that you would offer a dear friend. This is a great strategy to try when you are having a tough day.

Laugh (1 min.) – Laughter, too, helps reduce stress hormones and increase feel-good hormones like endorphins. Your body responds in the same way whether you are really laughing or faking it! Check out this short TEDx talk on Laughter Yoga: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4p4dZ0afivk>

Make music (5-30 min.) – Play your favorite instrument. Turn a bucket into a drum, blow across the top of a soda bottle, or simply sing! Studies show that singing for half an hour increases oxytocin levels in the brain and leads to feeling happier and more energetic—whether you are on pitch or not!

Nap (20 min.) – While the ideal nap time varies for each person, short 20-minute naps—sometimes called “power naps”—can help restore energy without leading to grogginess or interrupting nighttime sleep.

Organize (5 min.) – Organize your day the night before. Planning out your priorities and the timing in advance helps you avoid the stress of forgetting an appointment or rushing to get someplace.

Play (5-30 min.) – Play is another way you can stimulate the production of endorphins in your brain, feel less stressed, and increase your sense of well-being. Love floor wrestling with your toddler? Eager to join an online improv class? Figure out what feels like fun and play for you!

Qigong (20 min.) – Qigong is a mind-body-spirit practice that uses movement, breathing, self-massage, sound, and focused intent to improve mental and physical health. Click here for a twenty-minute experience: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwlvTcWR3Gs>

Read (5-30 min.) – Read something that *you want* to read. Download an audio book from your local library and escape into someone

else's story while you are doing household chores.

Stretch (1 min.) – Not only does stretching help your muscles and posture, but this is yet another activity that can help get those endorphins flowing!

Track your time (30+ min.) – For three days in a row, write down a list of what you do *every moment of your day*. You may be shocked to see how you are spending your time! Use the time log to see what changes you want to make and where in your day self-care practices will fit best.

Understand your stressors (1 min.) – Start noticing what happens *right before* you begin feeling really stressed or upset. Increasing your awareness helps you choose how you take care of yourself before, during, and after those encounters.

Visualize (1 min.) – Visualize yourself spending time in one of your favorite places, doing what you really love. Notice the sounds, scents, and sensations that you associate with being in that wonderful place. Give your brain a little visualization vacation.

Water (1 min.) – Stay hydrated! Figure out how much water you need to drink to feel good, and create a system that helps you remember to drink that amount each day. Staying hydrated keeps your energy level up and is important for maintaining physical health.

X (5 min.) – “X” off the things on your “to-do” list that drain your energy. Decide which ones you can delete, delegate, or dig into quickly to get them done.

Yoga (20 min.) – Yoga engages the body, brain, and breathing to support physical and mental health. There are many resources available, including YouTube videos, library DVDs, and fitness studios that offer online yoga classes for free.

Zzzz's (30+ min.) – Healthy adults need, on average, between seven and nine hours of sleep each night. Consider this when you create your daily schedule. Getting enough sleep is important for productivity, hormone health, and overall wellness.

Student Spotlight: Sara Guevara

by Catherine Maddox-Wiley
Rx Retention Specialist

If you ask Sara Guevara how life is treating her, she would likely answer that it's a wonderful life! Sara's experiences have put life into perspective, and now after completing her first semester at MWCC, Sara is more determined than ever to live her best life.

Sara's childhood revolved around watching her mother struggle to raise a family while also watching her father succumb to alcoholism. Sara had the responsibility of caring for her siblings while her mother worked, and at fifteen years old, she worked seven days a week cleaning toilets and working in a meat store to bring money into the household.

Though busy at home, work and school, Sara's good grades earned her a spot at UMASS Boston for a criminal justice degree. Feeling like a stranger, alone and with little guidance, Sara describes the experience as horrible. The financial picture didn't help. While Sara received some aid, she paid her \$1000 and \$5,000 semester balances out-of-pocket, pushing her to work as a server at two restaurants. At the end of the second semester, Sara decided she had had enough; college wasn't the experience she was told it would be.

Three beautiful children later, Sara wanted to enhance all of their lives. As someone taking care of others, she turned from serving in restaurants to becoming a certified nursing assistant. Working in a nursing home for four-years made Sara appreciate her youth, energy and everything she had. The elderly people she cared for had once been nurses, teachers, pilots, etc., and Sara, too, wanted to live a life. She took a CNA position in a hospital's Medical-Surgical unit and learned more about nursing. Sara's observations and proficiencies

became second nature, and doctors often mistook her for a nurse. Encouraged by other nurses to join the field, Sara decided she should give college a second chance.

Sara learned about MWCC's nursing programs and enrolled. Education in her household has become a family affair with everyone helping everyone else. With remote learning, Sara wears the hats of student and teacher. Sara and her younger sister help Sara's children; Sara in turn helps her younger sister with English papers; Sara's younger brother helps her in math. Sara has a great deal of appreciation for both her mother's and fiancé's support and strives to make her family proud. Her return to college has influenced other family members to pursue educational opportunities and careers. While Sara is taking classes, she continues to work 30 – 40 hours per week, often finding herself studying at 2:00am when she can focus. One of her "go to" study habits is to take her laptop and books with her everywhere and to use every free minute to review, write notes, take pictures of assignments and watch videos to make connections with the notes.

Sara has strong philosophies about the life of a parent-student-employee, and she shares a few of them here:

1. "After taking the time to apply to MWCC, why not make it count? If you've attended school for 12 years, why not attend for four or five more?"
2. "Appreciate the financial aid because every penny counts." Sara believes



that even though the aid she receives isn't her money, she is taking care of it as if it is coming out of her pocket. She tells her kids: "Take care of what's not yours, like it's yours."

3. "Leave pride to the side." Sara, not one to ask for help, realizes the importance of reaching

out and seeking clarification. She recommends that students meet with professors and retake quizzes as many times as allowed. Resources such as YouTube, Google, Zoom class meetings and study groups can aid in success.

4. Sara says she has stopped making excuses and has learned to balance her time. "We are our own obstacles. We make excuses. If you don't plan for yourself, that's up to you. No one is stopping you. Get help."
 5. Because she doesn't have a lot of family time, Sara explains to her children why she is going to school and uses homework and workouts as opportunities to connect. The kids are understanding and see her commitment. She reminds them that they come first and explains that if she doesn't take care of herself, she can't take care of them.
 6. "If you can stay out late with friends until 3 in the morning, you can stay up late to study."
 7. Make and write out plans. Have a Plan B.
 8. Be proud!
- Sara Guevara isn't wasting a minute of her time. She sees the here and now, and she sees tomorrow. She sees that it's a wonderful life!

January & February 2021 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
January 17	18 Martin Luther King Day No classes all campuses day and evening	19	20 First Day of Classes Full Semester & Cycle 1	21	22	23
24	25 Rx Kick-Off 12:30 p.m.	26 Last day to add classes and/ or drop classes with 100% refund Full Semester & Cycle 1	27 Visions Kick-Off 12:30 p.m. Proactively Planning Your Semester 5:30 p.m.	28 Proactively Planning Your Semester 12:30 p.m. Budgeting & Credit 12:30 p.m.	29	30
31						

February

	1	2 Last Day to withdraw with a 50% refund Full Semester & Cycle 1	3 Transfer Application Workshop 10 a.m.	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11 MWCC Scholarships 12:30 p.m.	12	13
14	15 President's Day No classes all campuses, day and evening	16	17 Family Activity Night 5:30 p.m.	18 Money Games 12:30 p.m.	19	20
21	22 Last day to withdraw Cycle 1 Honors Programs & Honors Societies 12:30 p.m.	23	24	25	26	27
28						

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

The Visions & Rx Programs are funded by TRIO Student Support Services grants through the U.S. Department of Education

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