

TRiO

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

September 2021

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE VISIONS AND RX PROGRAMS

Welcome to Fall 2021!

by Gaurav Khanna

Director of the Visions and Rx Programs

On behalf of the entire Rx and Visions Program team, I'd like to extend a warm but socially-distant welcome to all our returning and new students as we get started with the fall 2021 semester. We're excited to see you continuing your pursuit of your education!

As with the college, the programs are ramping up on-campus services. We will be open Monday-Friday from 8-4 at our usual location in room 134 on the Gardner campus in addition to maintaining virtual services via our virtual office and individual appointments via zoom. Our physical office space is subject to capacity restrictions: a maximum of eight people in the entire complex, maximum of seven in the shared central area, and a maximum of two in any individual offices. All students and staff must be masked during meetings and maintain a minimum of three feet of distance. If the space is at capacity, students might be asked to wait

outside until space does open up. Because of the capacity restrictions, we will also be rotating staff on campus. To make sure you are seen in person, it might be best to set up an appointment in advance before coming to campus, especially if you are on a tight schedule.

We have a new staff member joining us for the fall. Beshoy Lawindy will be starting as the new math tutor for the Rx Program. You can read more about his background on pg. 5. Set up a session if you need help!

The start of the semester has its own rituals—make sure to schedule your check-ins to get you started on the right foot, as well as any tutoring appointments that you might need for the semester. We still have laptops and calculators available for those of you who might need to borrow them. See the calendar for the schedule of kick offs and our first two seminars on online classes and proactively planning

your semester—they are right around the corner.

STAY CONNECTED!! Although ultimately it is your hard work that will determine your success, our support can make things easier for you. This is the time to use all the resources that are available for you, especially when you hit that first bump in the road. Let's hit this semester running and make it your best one yet!



Rx Program VISIONS Program

Mount Wachusett
Community College

AA/EEO Institution

Know Where You are Going Before You Begin

by Sarah Kipp

Visions Learning Specialist--Writing

How often do you drive somewhere without knowing where you want to arrive? Most of the time, people start road trips with a clear destination in mind. Then, they use their GPS or a map to figure out the best way to get there. People have more success getting somewhere—and getting things done—when they know where they are going! Yet, many students start working on assignments without a clear idea in mind of what the assignment needs to look like when it is done.

In her book, *Dare to Lead*, Brené Brown (2018) talks about the concept of “paint done.” When people on her team ask her to do something, she says, “Paint done for me” (p. 102). Before she starts working on a task, Brown wants to be able to understand and picture in her mind exactly what the task should look like when it is finished. When you begin

working on an assignment, how clear are you about what the assignment should look like when you are done?

Being clear about what an assignment, task, or project should look like when it is done does two important things. First, this strategy helps the person completing an assignment align with the expectations of the person who has given them the assignment. Also, the strategy can help people figure out what steps they will need to take in order to arrive at “done.” For example, if a student is clear that the completed essay needs to have five paragraphs, one of the steps the student might take is to make an outline with five parts and put in a few notes about what they will include in each of the five paragraphs.

Often, professors will include a sample paper or project that makes clear what the finished assignment should look

like. Be sure to look at that example before you start working on the assignment! Notice the level of specificity that is in the example. Notice the structure. Notice how and where credit is given to sources that were used in the process of creating the assignment. This is all valuable information.

If you are preparing to begin an assignment and find that you are not clear about what the final product needs to look like, consider asking your professor for a sample. Sometimes, if professors know why you are asking, they may be willing to show you what a strong example looks like. If the professor does not have an example that they are willing to share, consider asking more questions about the professor’s expectations to be sure you are heading in the right direction before you begin.

Start Thinking About Transfer This Fall

by Sarah Pingeton

Visions Transfer Counselor

Since March of 2020 it has been difficult to use the best tool to help you figure out if a 4-year school is right for you: in person tours. Some colleges and universities got creative during the pandemic and offered wonderful virtual options for tours, information sessions, and open houses. Others allowed self-guided tours of campus with informational maps, and some even allowed small group tours (but rarely allowed visitors inside buildings). This fall that is changing.

Local colleges, including Fitchburg State University, are again offering in person tours and open houses (with three special transfer open houses on Oct 16, 30, and Nov 13 at FSU). Touring a campus in person gives you the best chance to get a feel for the school and if it will be the right fit for you. Nothing

replaces being able to sit in a classroom that may one day be your classroom, see students moving around campus, or getting to walk around and get a true sense of the size of the school when making decisions about where you may want to apply or attend. If your comfort level allows, touring a school in person is something I highly recommend.

All colleges are approaching the return to in person tours differently. Most require pre-registration to keep the group size small. Some require health screenings. Expect masks to be required. But these changes can also mean that your smaller group can have better access to your tour guide to ask questions and get information, and may even get a more personalized tour to cater to your particular areas of interest.

If in-person tours don’t feel right for you yet, you’re in luck. Virtual offerings have improved consistently over the last year. You can participate in guided virtual tours, information sessions, and open houses from the comfort of your own home. Or you can access virtual tours and recorded information videos independently whenever it is convenient for you. This is a huge change that isn’t going away any time soon, and it’s especially beneficial for students considering transferring to 4-year schools that may be a long distance away.

Campus tours are great, so however you want to tour a school I encourage you to sign up for one this fall! Stay tuned for information about TRIO supported visits to 4-year schools this fall!

Learn More about Delta Alpha Pi

by Dawn Babineau

Visions Learning Specialist

Did you watch last year's MWCC graduation ceremony and wonder about the students listed in the graduation program book who are part of the Delta Alpha Pi (DAPI) Honor Society? Are you a champion for spreading the word of unity and equity as part of an inclusive society? Are you wondering how you or someone you know can be part of this progressive group? Then read on....

According to the InvolveMount website, "Delta Alpha Pi Honor Society participates in activities designed to educate the community and society regarding disability issues and the need to apply the principles of universal design in learning". It's an honor society. It's an official campus club. It's a civic minded group that comes

together to celebrate each other's successes while also having a fun time.

Every member of DAPI, as it's called on campus, has achieved a high level of academic and personal accomplishments. In order to be an official member of the honor society, students must first and foremost be committed to demonstrating an interest in disability issues. Members must also have a documented or self-identified disability. As this is a honor society, in addition to the passion for civic engagement, members must also have achieved an overall GPA of 3.10 or above and have completed at least 24 college level credits. If you are still working towards meeting these rubrics, the club is still open to you, but you will have to meet these

requirements in order to be officially inducted into the honor society.

If you think this might be the right group for you, Amy LaBarge or Ann Reynolds from the Disability Support Services office would love to hear from you. You can get more information by emailing: alabarge@mwcc.mass.edu or calling 978-630-9330, or you can also check out the website @ <https://mwcc.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/dapi>.



Delta Alpha Pi

Workshop Spotlights

by Lauren Clifford

Visions Retention Specialist

Understanding Being an Online Student- Maybe this is your first semester taking online courses, maybe you've taken some before but found yourself struggling. Either way this workshop is for you!

Our advisors will discuss what you need to be aware of when taking an online course and what strategies to use to ensure success. Monday, September 13th at 12 p.m. via Zoom at <http://bit.ly/rxvisionsonline>



Proactively Planning Your Semester-

Do your future self a favor and start this semester off with a solid plan. In this workshop we'll go over how to plan for the semester in a sustainable way. We'll talk about the right way to set up your planning so exams and assignments don't sneak up on you. You'll also get some ideas for setting up a manageable weekly plan.



Thursday, September 16th at 3 p.m.
<http://bit.ly/rxvisionsonline>

Monday, September 20th at 12:30 p.m.
in Room 115 on the Gardner Campus

InvolveMount

This semester, you'll find the complete list of Rx & Visions workshops and seminars available on InvolveMount. We are hosting a limited number of in-person events and in order to address social distancing requirements, RSVP is required.

Log into iConnect and click on the InvolveMount icon to activate your account. Make sure to browse other events and activities offered by MWCC offices, clubs and organizations!



How to Deal With Debt

By Angela Snyder

Visions Academic Advisor

Let's face it, after the year we've had, a lot of us are finding ourselves with some debt. Maybe more than we'd like. Well we're here to tell you there is something you can do about it! Don't let your debt overwhelm you, make a plan so you can start tackling your debt and start digging out, one dollar at a time. Here's how...

Debt First things first, you have to assess your debt. Yes, you heard me, you're going to have to get really clear on what you owe so that you can make a plan to get out ahead of it. If you're anything like me, you'd much prefer to let the mail pile up and the email notifications go unread when it comes to your financial situation, but trust me when I tell you that is NOT the way! The first step will always be awareness. Understanding where you are so you can figure out how to get to where you're headed is the only way out of debt.

When making a Debt Reduction Plan (fancy name for coming up with a plan to get out of debt), you do not need to include your mortgage or student loans. These debts typically have much lower APRs and longer repayment terms. You will of course have to remain current on those payments to avoid incurring any additional fees.

How to get started: gather all of your financial documents, (some might be online, you can print these if you choose) and include a credit report which you can get for free at <https://www.credit.com/free-credit-report-card/> this will help you to see which accounts are affecting your credit score the most so that you can prioritize which ones you'll pay down first.

Now you'll want to either write this down or make a spreadsheet and include all of your debts, note the balance, interest rate, annual fees and monthly balance due for each of your

debts. Make sure you also note the minimum monthly payment allowed. Do this for all of your personal loans, auto loans and credit cards.

Budget Next, you'll need to assess your budget. Take your monthly income after taxes and then add up the expenses you have including rent/mortgage, expenses for childcare, telephone, utilities, groceries, entertainment, subscriptions, memberships, phone, cable etc. This is where you'll want to look for places to cut your expenses. Think about which of these expenses are absolute necessities and identify some things you can live without or places you can cut down. Any place you can decrease your spending is great. If you're finding it's hard to find places to cut, you might want to also consider if there are other ways you can bring more money in.

Now you can use the numbers and information you came up with in the previous steps to create your own personalized Monthly Debt Repayment Plan.

For this step you'll take your monthly income after taxes and subtract your monthly minimum debt payments and your monthly expenses (hopefully these are newly reduced expenses because you've already gone through and gotten rid of unnecessary expenses and paired down the remaining items). The money leftover is what you'll use to begin paying down your debts.

Now you need to have a plan of attack. You can decide whether you want to pay down your highest balance first, start with the debt that carries the highest interest rate, or the one that affects your credit score most. Some people even choose to start with their smallest debt first believing that the momentum that is created from paying off the debt will be helpful. It doesn't matter what plan you decide to go with,

just pick a plan that works for you and stick to it!

Negotiate! While you are actively repaying your loans (i.e.: don't delay beginning repayment to have these conversations), you can contact your creditors and see if you can negotiate the terms of the debt.

Maybe you can reduce the interest rate, or negotiate for a reduced settlement. Debt consolidation might also be an option for you if you have decent credit. But beware, debt consolidation requires you to take out a loan which could be even more problematic if you're not committed to making changes in your spending habits and paying down your debt. This option should really be strongly considered before you decide to choose this option.

A balance transfer is another option if you can find a card with the right terms for you. Transferring the balance of your debt to a credit card with a 0% APR and no annual fee could give you the time you need to pay down the debt without having to incur the high interest rates under the current debt structure. Just be sure to keep the balance of your credit card below 30% of the balance limit to keep your credit score intact.

Once you have paid off your first debt, it's time to move onto the next one and so on and so forth until your debt is paid off. It might not be quick or glamorous, but NOTHING beats the feeling of being debt free!

You can do this, I'm cheering for you!



Meet our New Staff

Amy Moury

Rx Retention Specialist

I am very happy to be in a new role in the TRIO office – Retention Specialist in the Rx program! I have been working for four years as the professional math tutor in Rx. Many of you have seen me for tutoring or as a supplemental instructor in our math courses. Going forward, you can meet with me for academic advising, career counseling, financial aid questions, or just pop in and say hi! I particularly love talking to students about study skills like organization, time management, effective note-taking, how to tailor your approach to different courses, and helping you discover how you learn best.



I earned a Bachelor of Science in marine biology from the University of Rhode Island and a Master of Education from UMASS Lowell. Initially I had planned on going into research in marine ecology and later shifted gears to teaching high school biology. But neither of those fields felt quite right. I started working at MWCC in 2008 as an adjunct math professor, a position I still hold. After a couple years, I felt like this was where I wanted to be. The community college setting allows us as

staff to really get to know our students as people.

In my time outside of MWCC, I am married with three kids. I love to bake. Lately I have been making many batches of lemon blueberry muffins which are now a family favorite. One of my favorite pastimes is sitting on my deck reading a book. I read a lot of fiction especially World War 2 historical fiction. My favorite books this year have been *The Hate U Give*, *The Four Winds*, and *The House in the Cerulean Sea*. I track my reading on the app GoodReads, and I am reading book #89 for 2021!

Amy is available

Monday- Friday
8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Schedule an appointment today!

Beshoy Lawindy

Rx Math Tutor

Hello everyone! My name is Beshoy! I graduated last May from UMass Amherst with a dual Bachelor's degree in Microbiology and Public Health. I enjoyed my time at UMass and was able to make memories that will last a lifetime. One of my favorite things about UMass was how I was able to be a member of the UMass Minuteman Marching Band (The Power and Class of New England) for four years strong. I play the trombone and tuba but mainly stuck with the trombone during my time at UMass.

In my free time, I enjoy baking! I make all sorts of sweet treats like lemon tarts, blueberry scones, and my personal favorite chocolate croissants! Whenever I'm not baking or playing trombone, I spend most of my time helping my family out at the family business. We have owned Patriots Roast Beef in East Templeton for almost 20 years now. From a young age

my family and I immigrated to the U.S. for safety, opportunity, and "The American Dream" and I have lived in the Templeton and Gardner area ever since. As for my plans for the future. I hope to one day become a dental professional and help people maintain their oral health. I did not always know I wanted to become a dentist, but when I got the opportunity to shadow a local dentist, I knew that dentistry was right for me. I was able to watch cool procedures like laser treatments, implants, root canals, and even extractions. One time I was even hit in the face by a tooth during an extraction, which I was told is good luck.

I have worked with many students through my time as a peer advisor, teaching assistant, as well as a residential assistant, and have always loved helping students in any way I can. I look forward to helping students in my time at Mount Wachusett Community College and being a pillar of support and resource for any student who needs me. I am excited to kick off this



coming semester and meet all of you. If you see me around feel free to introduce yourself and say hi, but until then I will leave you with a quote from the wisest bear around. "Life is a journey to be experienced, not a problem to be solved." - Winnie the Pooh

Beshoy is available weekly for math tutoring

Monday- Thursday
9 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

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

Student Spotlight: Kelly Kilcoyne

By Alaina Lucchetti

Rx Transfer Counselor

Kelly Kilcoyne was selected to be the TRIO Student Spotlight based on her outstanding commitment to her success last school year and this summer. Kelly joined Rx Program during the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic in fall 2020. Straight out of high school and relatively new to online learning, Kelly impressively jumped feet first into a fulltime schedule with a commitment to complete the nursing prerequisites in time for the next application cycle. Motivated to relieve some of the financial pressure from her family, Kelly registered for another full time class schedule in the spring so she could take advantage of the free courses provided by TRIO over the summer. In addition to working full time as a nanny for multiple families Kelly completed two cycle courses this summer and earned A and B's in both of her classes!

When asked about her support system Kelly attributes her success to her family and friends for their encouragement. She refreshingly also credits her success to her own hard work. So often, students overlook the hard work they put into their accomplishments and achievements. It's not very often in society we are asked to revel in our hard work without it being viewed as bragging. Reflecting

on her journey to MWCC Kelly told me: "In high school we are so wired to keep going. We are not encouraged to stop and take in our accomplishments." She was happy to have this opportunity to reflect on her effort and success. Kelly says time management is the number one key ingredient to her success in balancing school work, a job, and relationships with her family and friends. Additionally, in order to hold herself accountable Kelly remembers a sentiment shared by one of her high school teachers who would remind her to "hand in work you are proud of" which is something Kelly strives to do in all off her classes.

With support from her friends and family in addition to her incredible intrinsic motivation to succeed, Kelly was inspired to pursue nursing school after a life changing event. In the middle of her high school experience Kelly's older brother and best friend was in a life threatening car accident. He was faced with an extensive hospital stays and physical therapy. The interactions that have stayed with her the most from that time are moments right after the accident when Kelly remembers being in the hospital and feeling disheveled from crying and not caring about anything other than her brother's wellbeing. Regardless of the



somber nature of the room or unkempt appearances, her brother's nurse was complementary and kind making them all feel nurtured and comfortable. The nurse was very attentive and shared her own personal stories with the family. Kelly's brother has made a full recovery and it has been years since she has seen that nurse, but Kelly carries that experience with her every day as she works towards her goal of becoming a nurse.

As a reminder to her fellow TRIO peers Kelly would like to remind you to take time to stop and reflect and appreciate your hard work. Whether you're finishing your final semester or just starting out, she sends a heartfelt congratulations for making it this far!

Meet Your TRIO Community at the Fall Kick-Off

Rx Kick-Off

Tuesday, September 14
12:30-1:30 p.m.



Visions Kick-Off

Wednesday, September 15
12:30-1:30 p.m.



Rx & Visions spots still open!

TELL YOUR FRIENDS TO APPLY!

- Individualized advising
- Professional tutoring
- Transfer support
- Seminars
- Financial aid support
- Equipment loans
- & MORE

Email visions@mwcc.mass.edu or rx@mwcc.mass.edu for more information.

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**
- Schedule tutoring**
- Attend at least **one seminar**
- Read the weekly **eletter**
- Build connections** with students, staff and faculty
- Check your email daily**

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 22



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

September 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
			1	2	3	4
5	6 Labor Day No classes all campuses	7	8 Full Semester & Cycle 1 Classes begin	9	10	11
12	13 Understanding Being an Online Student 12:00-1:00 p.m. Zoom	14 Rx Kick Off 12:30-1:30 p.m. Zoom Full Semester & Cycle 1 Last day to add classes and drop classes with 100% refund	15 Visions Kick Off 12:30-1:30 p.m. Zoom	16 Proactively Planning Your Semester 3:00-4 p.m. Zoom	17	18
19	20 Proactively Planning Your Semester 12:30-1:30 p.m. RM 115 RSVP is required for this event	21 FAFSA Boot Camp 12:30-1:30 p.m. See your email for the Zoom link Full Semester & Cycle 1 Last day to withdraw with a 50% refund	22	23	24	25
26	27 TEAS Workshop 12:30-1:30 p.m. Zoom	28	29	30		

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

Join Us on Zoom

Many of our workshops and all of your tutoring sessions will be hosted in the Virtual Office.

Monday- Thursday 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Fridays 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Join us at <http://bit.ly/rxvisionsonline>



Visit Us on Campus

We're in RM 134 on the Gardner Campus

Monday-Friday

8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Stop by and say "hi" or call 978-630-9297 to schedule an appointment