

TRiO

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

January & February 2022

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE VISIONS AND RX PROGRAMS

A New Beginning

by Gaurav Khanna

Director, TRIO SSS Programs

Welcome back to the spring 2022 semester! For the first time in almost two years, we now have an increased number of classes and offerings on campus. The Rx and Visions staff are excited to see at least a few of you in person and work with all of you to achieve your academic goals. But the challenges of the pandemic remain, so as we've been doing since the spring of 2020, we will continue to adapt.

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:

Staffing: Our long-serving Program Manager, Sara Williams, has accepted a new position at the Advising Center. To fill the role, Gloria Correa has come back to her roots in the Rx & Visions Programs. Gloria was a student herself at MWCC and a participant in the Visions Program. She later served for many years in the program before

transferring to Financial Aid office. She brings a wealth of experience with her.

Tutoring hours will be limited at the beginning of the semester as we are without the services of a couple of our professional tutors. We hope to have these roles filled as soon as possible to provide our full suite of services. Please check in with a counselor to schedule an appointment.

Get your tutoring slots locked in early: Keeping in mind the information above, if you are certain you need tutoring, contact us early so we can get you set up with appointments that work with your schedule.

Blackboard & email: 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 look around and become familiar with the organization and materials. Check your email regularly, and set it up on your phone or somewhere you will see it regularly.

Pay attention to the add/drop deadline (1/25): There is no penalty for dropping a class during the first week. Read the syllabus carefully to determine 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. See your email for appointment links.

As the days lengthen and the darkness and cold start to recede, let us hope that this new year brings a safer environment and progress towards our objectives. We are here to support you in any way that we can, so don't hesitate to ask!



New Year, New Budget

by Stephanie Chancey
Visions Learning Specialist

Money and finances can be uncomfortable, complicated, and downright depressing. Using a budget can help change that!

Once the essentials are paid, some people might feel less inclined to keep track of where their money is going. This could be for a variety of reasons, but for some it can be hard to believe that saving the little money they have leftover each month will amount to anything significant in the foreseeable future. This can be a pretty comfortable routine to get into because you are not expecting to have much, if anything, in savings, and by living without a better planned budget, this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Creating a zero-based budget plan and sticking to it for a few months can help you change this mindset. The basic

concept of a zero-based budget is that your income minus your expenses = zero. This meaning that after you subtract all of your regular expenses from your income, you then assign any extra or leftover money to a future goal or savings so that you are less likely to spend it on something else.

For example, if your income is \$1,200 and your expenses are \$952 then you have \$248 left over. Maybe you have decided that you are saving for a car and you also want to build your savings account. You can assign the \$248 to these two categories in whatever way makes most sense to you. One approach would be to split it 50/50, assigning \$124 to your new car fund and \$124 to your savings account.

Some people may feel locked in or restricted with budgets, but try to have

an open mind and make it work for you. Having a budget does not mean you have to give up everything. If your morning Dunkin' coffee is important to you, don't eliminate it completely. Get it twice a week instead of five times a week. Not buying 3 coffees saves about \$10 a week and \$10 X 52 weeks = \$520 a year!

The goal is to be more mindful of spending and to save money when you thought you couldn't. If this seems intimidating, start with small steps and gradually work up to saving more each month. If the zero-based budget doesn't sound right for you, there are several other types of budgets you can try if you do a simple Google search. Your future self will thank you.

Selective Application Information

Nursing (RN/ADN)	February 1	How to Apply to a Selective Program: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attend a mandatory Information Session 2. Download the appropriate application 3. Request transcripts from all colleges <i>other than MWCC</i> 4. Bring or mail your completed packet to the Gardner Campus Office of Admissions by the application deadline
*Re-admission (fall start)	February 1	
Dental (DHY)	February 1	
Paramedic Technology	April 1	
Veterinary Technology	February 1	

Reminder:

The 2022-2023 FAFSA Application is available.

In Massachusetts submit your application by **May 1, 2022**, at midnight Central time (1am Eastern time) for priority consideration and to receive MassGRANT funds.

<https://studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/fafsa/renew>

Academic Health: How to Start Off the Semester Right

by Amy Moury

Rx Retention Specialist

It's a new year, and it's a great time to start new habits. How should you prepare for a new semester? Use the list below to ensure you will meet your goals!

PREPARE

1. Set your goals for the semester. Keep those goals in mind every week as the semester progresses.
2. Check in with an advisor to confirm that your course load meets your educational goals. If your situation has changed since last semester, this is especially important.
3. Buy any required textbooks, access codes, and supplies. Seek out other options like renting, borrowing, or online versions.

PLAN

1. Use an agenda, whether it be virtual, mobile, or a physical one. This will help you visualize your time and all responsibilities.
2. Write down all important dates including exam dates, due dates of papers/projects, MWCC academic calendar, work schedule, etc. If two exams end up in the same week, it won't be a surprise to you when it actually happens.
3. Create a realistic study routine that you can maintain for the entire

semester. Don't forget to plan for study breaks.

4. Make sure your class schedule works with employment, transportation, and child care and that you have back up plans. Plan for the unexpected.

PARTICIPATE

1. Attend every meeting of every class if possible. By having perfect attendance, you will hear all of the important information, all of the "this will be on the test" comments, and all of the content presented to you.
2. Be fully present by putting the phone away, being engaged, taking notes, audio recording the class, and asking questions. Show your professor that this class is important to you.
3. For online classes, meet with your professor virtually at least once a month. This gives you the opportunity to ask questions, seek clarification on assignments, and check in on your overall performance.
4. Seek out opportunities in the MWCC community to enrich your education. There are numerous clubs, groups, and ways to be involved. Many of these are operating virtually as well.

PRIORITIZE

1. Be on time for all classes. Walking in or Zooming in late is distracting to other students, and you will miss valuable class time.
2. Fully complete all assignments on time. Your final grade literally depends on it.
3. Eat healthy, get enough sleep, and stay active. Take care of your body so it can function.
4. Take time for yourself to rest and recharge. Finding a balance of work and play is incredibly important.

PRACTICE

1. Put all of these suggestions into practice. Be fully committed to your education in every way.
2. Continue working hard every day until the end of the semester. Every week, every class, and every assignment count.
3. Challenge yourself to learn new things. Education is a lifelong pursuit. There is so much to discover.

Each semester brings its own challenges, but you are capable of rising up and meeting them. Keep a positive attitude. Start preparing for your final exams from day one. Use the resources in TRIO to support you along the way. **YOU'VE GOT THIS!**

Disability Accommodations

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.

A Different Transfer Option

by Sarah Pingeton

Visions Transfer Counselor

Nearly two years into the pandemic and online learning, a lot of students are starting to consider options for transfer to 4-year schools they may not have in the past. Fully online programs are becoming more and more popular options for transfer as students have become used to online learning and the flexibility it allows in their lives. If you are considering staying completely online for transfer, there are a few things that are important to consider in your search:

• Location doesn't matter!

You may be tempted to consider only programs that are based locally, but a big advantage of online learning is that

you can do it from anywhere. If you expand your search, you may find more unique majors or programs that are better fits for you.

• Public vs. private might not be as important to cost as you think.

Tuition and fees for online programs are often different from tuition and fees for traditional programs, and are usually much lower. Private schools often price competitively with public options, and public schools will usually have no difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition.

• Check for accreditation

Making sure the school you're attending is accredited is extremely important, and you really want the school to have a regional accreditation. If you're not sure, ask your transfer counselor.

If web classes are something that have worked well for you, it is definitely worth considering online programs for your next step beyond MWCC. If you want help considering this possibility and searching for programs, schedule an appointment with your transfer counselor!

Upcoming Transfer Application Deadlines	
MassTransfer Priority Deadline	March 1
Westfield State	March 1
UMASS Amherst	April 15
Transfer Workshop Wednesday, February 3 12:30 p.m.	

Spring Kick-Offs
RX January 25 12:30 https://bit.ly/rxvisionsonline
VISIONS January 27 12:30

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 E-letter
- 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!

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 4th.

Help us connect with potential Visions & Rx students!

Do you know students who would benefit from the services available through 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!

Our Bodies as Stress Busters

by Sarah Kipp

Visions Learning Specialist--Writing

Different people experience stress in different ways. While some people cry, others may yell or become more quiet than usual. Some people may withdraw and avoid other people, while others reach out to friends and family for support. The choices we make are often based on what our brain thinks we need. Yet, when we experience stress, our entire body is impacted. The degree to which we care for our body's needs influences how well our brain can stay online and working well for us when we experience stress.

One question that can be helpful to ask is **"What does my body do when I am stressed?"** Does your stomach become tense? Does your heart rate increase, or do your shoulders feel tense? How does your unique body say, "Hey! I'm experiencing stress!" Sometimes, our bodies start communicating with us before our brain computes that we are feeling overwhelmed

by a situation. Understanding your body's "call for help" can be the first step in choosing an action or behavior that may help shift your experience to something that feels more manageable.

The second question that can be valuable to ask is **"What helps me shift my body from feeling stressed to feeling calmer and more grounded?"** Rather than finding just one answer to this question, some people experiment and create a whole list of options from which they can choose. What feels best, and what helps the most? For many, what worked pre-pandemic may not be an option now in the same way. This can be frustrating but also provides an opportunity for experimenting and discovering new ways to move a stress response out of your cells and body! Actions can be small—like chewing gum, playing with a fidget, pushing the soles of our feet into the ground, hugging a tree (yes, really!), or giving yourself a strong hug.

Or actions may involve more movement—like going for a walk or run, doing yoga poses, or hitting a punching bag. Breathing with intention (for example, breathing in for a count of four, holding your breath for a count of four, and then breathing slowly out for a count of eight) is a simple but powerful way as well to shift energy that the body is feeling and holding. This website article offers eight different deep breathing exercises! <https://bit.ly/3fyMKOf>

Experiencing stress is a common part of being human. Remembering that you can use your body to recognize and shift your stress response gives you more options and agency in the moments when you experience stress. By having a "toolbox" full of small and big actions that help you shift into a calmer, more grounded state, you can use your body as a powerful partner in managing experiences of stress when they occur.

Workshop Spotlights

by Lauren Clifford

Visions Retention Specialist

Financial Literacy

Why do we teach financial literacy? When you graduate from MWCC, we don't just want you to leave with the academic knowledge you've gained from your courses. We also want you to feel better prepared to be a part of the world. By offering these sessions, we hope that you leave MWCC feeling confident in your ability to manage your personal finances.

Are you wanting to grow your financial literacy? Take a look at this semester's offerings and add some to your calendar today!

Academic Success Series

The start of the semester is always a great time to reflect on your strengths as a student as well as what skills you want to improve. This semester we have ramped up our offerings of academic success workshops and will have a robust variety of sessions to choose from to help you BOOST your academic performance.



Proactively Planning Your Semester- Start your semester off right by making a plan you can stick to over time! In this session we will talk about managing your time vs. managing your assignments and how to do both in a way that works with your lifestyle.

Academic CPR- This workshop is targeted towards students who may have fallen behind in some or all of their courses. In this

session, we will talk about how to come up with a plan to get caught up and finish the semester strong.

The Finals Countdown- Finals are a stressful time, but I promise that if you plan ahead we can lessen that stress. Planning for finals often starts earlier than you might assume. Join us to talk about how to set yourself up for a successful end of the semester.

Student Spotlight: Joshua Costa

by Amy Moury

Rx Retention Specialist

Josh Costa was born here in Massachusetts but moved to Brazil as a child. He lived there with his older brother and mother, while his father moved to London after his parents divorced. When he was a teenager, he and his brother moved back to Massachusetts and lived on their own. Josh recalls that his brother told him to do whatever he wanted as long as he didn't get into trouble.

Once Josh graduated from high school, he knew he had to work to support himself. Two years after graduation, he started classes at MWCC and was able to get financial aid since he had his parents' income information at that time. But he admits that his focus was on making money by working as much as possible and not on school. He had no passion for school then, so he did not do well. He decided not to return for another semester and questioned whether college was right for him.

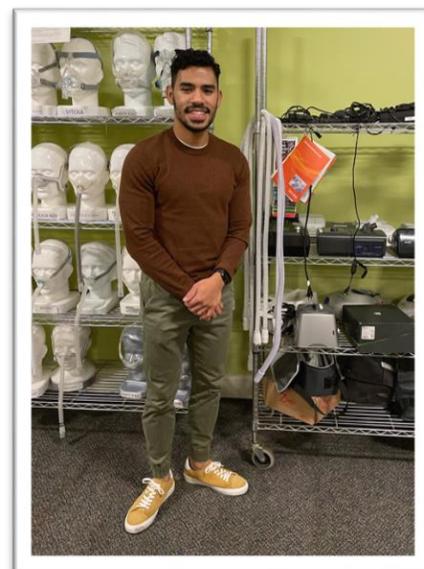
In the time after Josh left MWCC, he discovered a passion for wellness, helping people, and staying active and healthy. To that end, he earned a certification in personal training. He thought about returning to MWCC to pursue that further. In order to pay for college, he needed his parents' income information again, but since they live on different continents, it was nearly impossible for Josh to fill out the FAFSA. So he waited until he turned 24 when he no longer needed his parents' income information.

Josh returned to MWCC in fall 2021 hoping to pursue a career in dietetics. This came from his interest in wellness and understanding nutrition more. Rx Advisor Alaina recommended that Josh take HEA 106: Exploring Health Careers to learn about many health fields including dietetics. Josh was skeptical

since he was sure this was what he wanted to do, but he also saw the benefits of taking this class. That decision to enroll in HEA 106 would change the trajectory of his career plans! Throughout the semester, students in HEA 106 are asked to explore a variety of health careers, and the class includes a number of guest presenters who share their backgrounds, education, and experiences. One in particular really spoke to Josh, but it wasn't the presenter from a nutrition and dietetics field. It was a respiratory therapist that caught his attention. Since that Zoom session in late October, Josh has pivoted and has decided to pursue the Respiratory Therapy program at Quinsigamond Community College by completing the pre-requisite courses at MWCC.

Right around the time that Josh became interested in respiratory therapy, he started a new job. He used the résumé and cover letter he created as one of the assignments in HEA 106 to get an interview and later land the position. This new job, recommended to him by a friend, happened to be at a local home care company that specializes in sleep, respiratory, and oxygen services. This opportunity—along with the presentation in HEA 106—resonates with Josh's passion for wellness and for helping people.

Josh struggled with his time management when he returned to MWCC which is something that many college students experience. For him to be successful in maintaining all of the things he does, Josh shared that he must manage his time wisely and creatively. He has a very strict routine for Monday through Friday that involves working, attending class,



studying, and going to the gym. He gives himself more flexibility on the weekends for spending time with friends and family and catching up on TV, but he does commit time to school on Saturdays and Sundays as well. He also sings at weekly services at his church, so he uses the time while commuting in his car to listen to the music he needs to learn and to practice the songs.

I asked Josh what piece of advice he wanted to share with students in Rx and Visions. He said "don't be afraid to say no." Josh learned that he needed to focus on his classes to do well this time around, and that meant saying no to a friend's request to hang out if Josh had a paper to do. He prioritized himself and his future. He said he didn't think it was selfish to say no if he had other commitments. Saying no meant that his goals were important, and he could spend time doing his favorite activities when he had more time to do so.

Josh's work ethic this semester has been impressive, and that stems from his decision to put 100% effort into his coursework. He takes every opportunity presented to him as a chance to learn and grow, and he finds ways to overcome obstacles to continue moving forward.

January & February 2022 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 16	17 Martin Luther King Day- No classes all campuses day and evening	18	19 First Day of Classes Full Semester & Cycle 1	20	21	22
23	24	25 Rx Kick-Off 12:30 p.m. Last day to add classes and/ or drop classes with 100% refund Full Semester & Cycle 1	26	27 Visions Kick-Off 12:30 p.m. Proactively Planning Your Semester 1:30 p.m.	28	29
30						

February

	Jan 31 Proactively Planning Your Semester 12:30 p.m.	1 Last Day to withdraw with a 50% refund Full Semester & Cycle 1	2	3 Transfer Application Workshop 12:30 p.m.	4	5
6	7	8 MWCC Scholarships 12:30 p.m.	9	10	11	12
13	14	15 Honors Programs & Honor Societies 12:30 p.m.	16	17 Good Debt, Bad Debt 12:30 p.m.	18	19
20	21 President's Day No classes all campuses, day and evening	22 Last day to withdraw Cycle 1	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