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QCC’s New Vice President of Academic Affairs – James Keane

This issue is sponsored by the QCC Foundation

QCC Connections is a publication of Quinsigamond Community College
Today’s collegiate landscape is a far cry from the one we had at the beginning of the year; however, it is one that gives me hope for the future. In the days following the start of the pandemic, I saw the QCC community rise up as one and come together for our students. In a few short weeks, when many higher education institutions were still struggling to figure out how to move forward, our faculty and staff had already seamlessly transitioned almost all courses to remote instruction. In conjunction with classes moving to remote learning, our support services not only moved online, but also in some instances, increased support services, as students looked for guidance in navigating this new education model.

Our Food Pantry and Resource Center, which is so crucial to many of our students especially in these uncertain times, has adapted to a weekly drive-through service. Dedicated QCC administrators and staff have worked tirelessly to keep this vital service available for our food insecure students and their families.

Recognizing the dire financial straits this pandemic is putting on many of our students, QCC’s Community Connections staff worked with the QCC Foundation and set up a Student Emergency Fund that to date has raised over $95,000 for QCC students with immediate life needs, as well as laptops and internet access. It is heartwarming to see so many who have donated and I encourage those who have not to consider making a donation.

I am also proud to say that around every corner in our community, you will find QCC alumni or students lending a helping hand. They make our community stronger and help to keep it whole.

We do not know what lies ahead, but we do know that whatever challenges we face, we face them together and we will be stronger in the end. Thank you for your support, your understanding and for being a part of our QCC family.

Sincerely,

Luis G. Pedraja, PhD
President
On behalf of the Quinsigamond Community College Foundation, I am pleased to write a letter of appreciation to all of you. The Foundation’s mission is to develop and promote resources that advance Quinsigamond Community College’s goals, particularly achieving 100% student success. Under normal circumstances, this is a major task because QCC serves many non-traditional students who face many hardships that threaten their education and career dreams.

In the early spring, the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) struck home and at the Foundation we knew that our students would be hit harder by the effects of the pandemic on higher education and the economy. While QCC extended spring break and rushed to initiate remote operations and instruction to complete the semester, the Foundation approved a $25,000 donation to create the Student Emergency Fund to help students whose needs were exacerbated by the pandemic.

Under the leadership of Dean of Students Terry Vecchio, the food pantry modified its services. Terry and her colleagues in Student Affairs attended a health safety training to be able to prepare weekly food packages and distribute to students safely. With the support of Board members, we are soliciting monies from banks in the region and are actively applying for additional funding from nonprofit organizations. I want to give a special thanks to all of you -our friends- who have donated an additional $73,700 for the Student Emergency Fund. Your support has allowed us to help 476 students so far. I also want to thank President Dr. Luis Pedraja, Trustee Chair Sue Mailman, and our dedicated Foundation staff for their tireless efforts in achieving so much in so little time.

Finally, I want to welcome Ms. Gladys Rodriguez-Parker and Mr. Christopher P. Provo to the QCC Foundation. Gladys currently serves as Senior District Representative for Congressman Jim P. McGovern. She will bring to the board extraordinary experience in legislative affairs and community organizing, and a long and productive career focused on achieving social justice and equity for underserved populations. Mr. Provo is the President and CEO of Provo Wealth Management Group. He will contribute a world of knowledge to the Foundation about wealth management and investment for individuals, corporations, and nonprofit organizations.

Together we can beat this pandemic. We cannot do it without you! Join us in any way you can. We are so grateful for all that you do.

Warmest wishes, stay healthy and heartfelt thanks,

Linda Maykel, D.D.S.
President
Quinsigamond Community College Foundation

“Together we can beat this pandemic. We cannot do it without you! Join us in any way you can. We are so grateful for all that you do.”

– Linda Maykel, D.D.S.
Going Forward

Last week Lu Costa, assistant to the President asked if I could share a few thoughts for the next issue of the Connections Magazine. If you know Lu – you will know there are very few kinder, more thoughtful people – so of course I would say yes to her.

It is an amazing honor to chair the Board of Quinsigamond Community College before, during and after COVID-19. Our Board has been witness to the tireless efforts on behalf of administration and faculty and students. The extra hours and the willingness for everyone to imagine a different world and to act upon that is nothing less than inspirational.

I heard Micho Spring, executive at Weber Shandwick, a communication company, speak this morning and she said "we should not be thinking about going back to work, or school, we should be thinking about going forward to work (or school)." I think that captures what the team at QCC has been doing, figuring out how we will go forward with community college education. The pandemic has catapulted us into a realm where we are forced to look at new ways of doing things. As we do that we promise to hold on to the values of our community college!

We know that many students and their families are facing very difficult challenges, job loss, illness even death. Challenges such as children not in school, or parents that need extra care and attention. QCC is here for you – we want to help and assist and be part of your path to go FORWARD.

Susan Mailman
Chair, Board of Trustees

QCC is Always Your Home

Greetings QCC Alumni!

The last months have been challenging for all. More than ever before, our homes have become the core of our lives. We work, attend school, entertain ourselves, and socialize without leaving our homes. We have also learned to practice social distancing, wear facemasks and gloves when in public, and be proactive to stay safe and healthy. The world has changed but what remains constant is that we are all part of the Quinsigamond Community College Family.

I feel extremely proud of being a product of QCC. The college is an essential component of the Central Massachusetts community and its alumni are at the forefront of the pandemic. Our former classmates are now our nurses, respiratory therapists, radiology technicians, emergency medical technicians, and other frontline workers -- all risking their lives to keep us safe. QCC alumni have shown strength and commitment toward us and it is time for us to pay it forward.

I hope you are inspired to become a mentor for a current student, volunteer to be a lecture speaker, or make a gift to the QCC Student Emergency Fund at www.QCC.edu/emergencyfund.

We want to hear from you! I encourage you to become active in the Association by following us on social media, joining the QCC Alumni Association Advisory Board and staying in touch with your former classmates. Also, check our upcoming events at www.QCC.edu/alumni/events.

Remember that QCC will always be your home!

Cheryl Marrino
President, QCC Alumni Association Advisory Board
In the blink of an eye, the world has changed due to the international health crisis of the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic and with that change Quinsigamond Community College, has risen to the challenge in ways that are truly remarkable. QCC’s administration, faculty and staff’s unwavering focus on students and their academic success has remained the cornerstone of each and every new plan, process and procedure. In a matter of a few short weeks, the College transitioned all in-person courses to remote instruction and faculty adopted a variety of remote learning methods tailored to their courses and students’ needs.

In a show of strength and solidarity to support the College’s student body, QCC’s Foundation and the College banded together to respond to the COVID-19 health crisis by setting up a Student Emergency Fund. The Foundation allocated $25,000 to help provide immediate relief and timely financial support for QCC students who are in emergency circumstances. To date the Student Emergency Fund has raised $98,700 for students in need, with $73,700 coming from the many alumni, QCC employees, QCC Foundation Directors, QCC Trustees, banks/foundations/corporations, other donors and friends who recognized the needs of our student body and stepped up to assist. This enabled QCC to distribute aid to 476 students so they could pay their rent, food, medical services, childcare, and other basic needs.

Due to the pandemic, many QCC students have lost their jobs and it is anticipated that the number of students needing support will increase exponentially. Many may now need to depend on support services just to survive. To assist students in need, QCC’s Food Pantry and Resource Center has adopted a new way of delivering food to those in need by way of a drive-up service. Each week QCC staff visit the Worcester County Food Bank to collect over 2,000 lbs. of food, which is then sorted and distributed to those in need. Thanks to a small group of QCC administration and staff, 253 students and their families (810 family members) have been served thus far. Additionally, over 400 Price Chopper gift cards have also been distributed to students facing food insecurity issues.

One student who recently utilized the food pantry sent a letter of gratitude to the College.

Pandemic Brings Wyvern Nation Together

From left: Dean of Students Terry Vecchio, Phi Theta Kappa Bonnie Coleman, Dean of Compliance Liz Woods and Assistant Vice President of Student Success Michelle Tufau Afriyie.
“I have never been to a food pantry before and didn’t know what to expect. I fasted for a few days and it was horrible, making me unable to do work and get my responsibilities done, but now having healthy food that’s energizing, I feel like I can get back on track. Who can I thank for this? I just feel emotional...and grateful... and want to thank someone.”

Students’ technology needs have also changed due to this crisis and many students have now found themselves without access to computers and WiFi services. Quickly the QCC Computer Scholarship Fund was established with the support of the Melvin S. Cutler Charitable Foundation, The Francis A. and Jacquelyn H. Harrington Foundation, and the Digital Federal Credit Union that allowed the College to repurpose issued grants to provide computers and technology to students. These repurposed grants were added to the Follett Bookstore in the form of $10K in scholarships. To date, approximately 234 laptop computers and 150 WiFi hotspot devices were awarded to students.

QCC Shows Its True Wyvern Spirit

In the days and weeks since the pandemic began, QCC students, alumni, faculty and staff have risen to the challenges before them, coming together to help the Central Massachusetts community. The College’s science department donated 45 cases of nitrile gloves to Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA); QCC’s Center for Healthcare and Workforce Development donated masks and gowns to hospitals and nursing homes in the region; students made and donated masks and Professor Lee Duerden utilized QCC’s Fab Lab and form lab resin printers to make respirator masks.

QCC’s Coordinator of the Respiratory Care Program, Professor Karen Kaletski Dufault, petitioned and received approval from the accrediting agency to allow QCC respiratory therapy students to work on a student license and earn credit simultaneously. In the past this was not allowed, but due to the great need within our healthcare facilities and the tenacity of Professor Dufault, our students are now able to enter the workforce while finishing their degrees. These students are saving lives by providing hospitals with much needed assistance as they deal with COVID-19 crisis.

Community Connections Outreach

In early May, Community Connections staff organized a Virtual Legislative Town Hall Meeting for area legislators, and QCC students shared their stories with the legislators. They described the impact the pandemic is having on them and their fellow students, as well as enlightened them on the ways in which the College has rapidly stepped up to meet today’s unprecedented challenges. Additionally, to keep students engaged and informed, a virtual student forum was held for all QCC students to disseminate information and help mitigate any fears or concerns students are having due to the new college landscape.

Community Bridges has been assisting in all areas of the City since the pandemic struck. From helping with the Worcester COVID-19 Food Security Taskforce, to translating public service announcements and other important communications into Spanish for community partners such as Harvard Pilgrim, Worcester Family Resource Center and the Worcester Community Connections Coalition Parent Taskforce, Community Bridges is making sure the Spanish community has access to all vital COVID-19 information. Director of Community Bridges, Déborah Gonzalez, has also been presenting survey findings of community needs at various City meetings, such as the Worcester COVID-19 Food Security Taskforce and the Worcester COVID-19 Housing Taskforce.

For more details on QCC’s COVID-19 initiatives, visit www.QCC.edu/connections-sp20
Ultimate Golf Raffle Takes a Swing at Raising Funds for Students in Need

If golfing is your passion and you want to help a student in need, the QCC Foundation has the perfect partnership for you - The Ultimate Golf Raffle, 30 Rounds in 30 Days™. This unique raffle concept is designed to raise funds for the Endowed Scholarship Fund and the QCC Food Pantry and Resource Center. Participants will have a chance to win one of 30 golfing prizes at some of today’s most elite golf clubs. You have a one in 1,000 chance of being a winner, since only 1,000 tickets will be sold! The grand prize is a full Las Vegas golf extravaganza and other top prizes that include Naples, Florida and Martha’s Vineyard golf experiences. Winning tickets are based on the last three digits of the Massachusetts mid-day daily lottery number. Tickets are $50 and the raffle is being held throughout the month of September.

Buy tickets or learn more: www.QCC.edu/30rounds
QCC’s the Right Prescription for Alumna Laurence Fankep
Overcoming the odds is nothing new to Quinsigamond Community College 2016 alumna Laurence Fankep. Ms. Fankep lives in Worcester, a far cry from her native Cameroon, where she emigrated from in 2011 with her husband and young daughter. She is poised to graduate from the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (MCPHS) with her pharmacy degree in May 2020 and said it is all thanks to Quinsigamond Community College, a place she fondly calls “home.”

As a native French speaker, life in Worcester was not always easy for her and she struggled to understand the English language. In 2014, after having her second child and pregnant with her third, she decided to look into programs that could help with her English, as well as advance her education. She decided to choose QCC for its flexibility, affordability and location; enrolling in the General Studies program, while taking English as Second Language (ESL) classes.

“I wanted to do something in nursing or in the health field, but I wasn’t sure just what,” she said. “At first it was hard for me to understand and interact with people because I only spoke French. Kathy (ESL Professor Kathleen Lewando) was really so helpful to me from the start.”

Throughout her pregnancy, Ms. Fankep took full-time classes at QCC and said she was thriving. In fact, she was in class the day before delivering her third child; however, what should have been one of the happiest moments in her family’s life, turned into a life-threatening scare when she developed a blood infection (sepsis) after giving birth to her son that next day.

“I was very sick and it was one of the worst moments of my life. I didn’t know the American term ‘sepsis’… it was so scary. My son was also sick when he was born,” she said.

Thankfully, Ms. Fankep and her son recovered and after three weeks, she was released from
the hospital, grateful to be well, but wanting to make sense of what had happened to her.

“I wanted to know what was going on. I read my health report but I couldn’t understand it and I was so depressed. I wanted to know what had happened and I told my husband I wanted to go to pharmacy school to understand about sepsis shock and the treatment and medications,” she said. “This was such a difficult moment in my life because my other children were 5 and barely 2 years old. “

While she knew the challenges she would face changing majors, particularly with three young children at home and going into an area of study (science) that she was unfamiliar with, she was not deterred.

“I got back from the hospital on a Friday and on Monday I was back at school. I got all the material I missed, took my final exams and did well,” she said, adding, “I had wonderful, supportive professors.”

“I was so scared at first but Professor Patel said ‘you are smart and I know you can do it,’” she said. “He was very, very supportive.”

Ms. Fankep said the math and writing tutoring centers, coupled with her professors, were also instrumental in her success at QCC. So successful that she was asked to become a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society (PTK) and subsequently became a PTK officer.

“The tutoring centers were great resources for me,” she said, noting that she went from using the tutoring centers to becoming a tutor herself.

Having a mentor in Dean of Compliance Liz Woods was also instrumental in her progress at QCC.

“She was always there to listen to me when I was nervous or stressed,” she said adding that PTK Advisor Bonnie Coleman was also someone she could turn to for support.

“Being a PTK officer was scary at the beginning because I’m shy, but Bonnie was there to tell me I could do it,” she said.

A Foundation for Success

Ms. Fankep is now in her final months at MCPHS where she has worked to complete her pharmacy degree, while raising her three children (now 9, 7 and 5) and doing her clinical rotations at area pharmacies. She is in the end stages of these rotations, and while she does not have a concrete plan yet on what she will do after she graduates in May, she has already been offered a job with one of the pharmacies where she did a clinical rotation.

The Road to MCPHS

As Ms. Fankep neared graduation, she was encouraged to apply to MCPHS after discussing her options with Professor Patel. Not only was she accepted, she also earned a $30,000 scholarship. English Professor Michael Gormley worked with her on the scholarship application.

“He reviewed my first draft and told me I had to sell myself. I came back with my second draft and he helped me again so I could get it just right,” she said.

Not only did she take her exams, she also changed her major to pre-pharmacy and never looked back.

Under the tutelage of Chemistry Professor and Pre-Pharmacy Coordinator Dilip Patel, Ms. Fankep excelled.

Ms. Fankep is now in her final months at MCPHS where she has worked to complete her pharmacy degree, while raising her three children (now 9, 7 and 5) and doing her clinical rotations at area pharmacies. She is in the end stages of these rotations, and while she does not have a concrete plan yet on what she will do after she graduates in May, she has already been offered a job with one of the pharmacies where she did a clinical rotation.

A Foundation for Success

She encourages everyone to take a look at QCC. She was so enthusiastic about the College that her husband, Edris Lodue, also came to QCC and earned a Computer Systems Engineering Technology Certificate.

Her advice to others who are considering attending college is simple.

“You have all the support that you need here at QCC. Just go for it. There’s always someone to talk to,” she said. “I will always come back here to visit...QCC is where I started. I love this place.”
Quiinsigamond Community College’s President, Dr. Luis Pedraja, was part of a comprehensive roundtable discussion with Governor Charlie Baker, Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, and other state and local legislators to discuss the Governor’s new Career Technical Initiative. This initiative is designed to help close the skills gap and train an additional 20,000 skilled trades workers over the next four years, in order to meet the needs of businesses across the Commonwealth.

QCC is already one-step ahead of the game when it comes to innovative skilled workforce initiatives.

The College has a longstanding partnership with Burncoat High School, where QCC’s Automotive Technology associate degree program is held. Additionally, QCC has a partnership with Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School and with Worcester Technical High School (WTHS) for its HVAC program, funded by a $431,900 Capital Skills Grant.

“We are very excited about this partnership with WTHS,” President Pedraja told Governor Baker adding, “We are now trying to see how to articulate our programs into early college.”

Prior to the roundtable discussion there was a tour of QCC’s HVAC program. QCC HVAC students Brian Mele, of Rutland, and Jason Laraia, of Sutton, described to state dignitaries what it was like to be an adult learner taking part in the HVAC program, in order to change career paths. Mr. Laraia, currently a land surveyor, said he initially got into the program at the encouragement of his mother, who is also a QCC student. Both students said they are enjoying the program and expect to use this to re-imagine and advance their careers.

“There’s a lot of people who want to be able to expand their career options,” President Pedraja said.

Mr. Mele, who has been in the HVAC space for 15 years, said he would like to become a vocation instructor.

“A lot of schools are in need of teachers for this field,” he said.

The Governor has included $15 million in his fiscal 2021 budget for this initiative.

“The bottom line is that every single business you can think of is going to be playing in the STEM space,” Governor Baker said. “This is gratifying work we’ve done, but we have a long way to go.”
QCC HVAC students Brian Mele (far right) and Jason Laraia (second from right) took part in a roundtable discussion with Governor Baker, Lt. Governor Polito and others to discuss the Governor’s new Career Technical Initiative. Inset photo: From left: President Pedraja discusses the HVAC program with Massachusetts Secretary of Education, James Peyser and State Senator Michael Moore.
Quinsigamond Community College student and Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Officer Tabitha Leber found herself in an elite group of college students when she received a Mechanics Hall Collegiate Apprentice Award, during the 2019 Celebration of Excellence event, held at Mechanics Hall in Worcester. This is the first time the Worcester County Mechanics Association has given this type of award to exemplary student leaders within Worcester’s higher education community.

Ms. Leber, an Elementary Education major, personifies the definition of a Mechanics Hall Collegiate Apprentice award winner. She is president of QCC’s Alpha Theta Zeta Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa’s Honor Society, overseeing the chapter’s research projects; working on developing goals for the chapter, representing PTK at all its functions, as well as playing an integral role in the PTK Live and Learn Greenhouse on QCC’s main campus. Ms. Leber wasn’t always as committed as she is today. Before coming to QCC, she said she felt her life lacked direction and while being a mom to her daughter was fulfilling, she felt something was missing.

“When my child was in kindergarten, I was volunteering on a daily basis in her classroom. Her teacher saw how well I did with the students and told me she believed I would make a great teacher. It was her gentle nudge that inspired me to go back to school,” she said. “Knowing that going back to school would set a better example for my child, I jumped in head first.”

She chose QCC because it was close to her home and offered a flexible class schedule that worked with her and her family. In 2018, she began classes and when PTK held its open house, she decided she would attend.

“At the open house I learned about the PTK/ Burncoat Mentoring Program and that’s when I knew I had to get involved in PTK,” she said. “What drives my passion for community service is that I am putting good out into the world. As a member of PTK, the work that we do here on campus and out in our local communities has inspired me to do more and be better.”

Her drive, passion and academic excellence were not lost on those at QCC, which was why the College nominated her for the award. Ms. Leber aspires to be a first grade teacher. She hopes to graduate in 2020 before transferring to a four-year university to complete her bachelor’s degree and then her master’s degree.
QCC student **Zuheyry Encarnacion** finally knows what it’s like to have someone in her corner. Since she began taking criminal justice classes at Quinsigamond Community College, Ms. Encarnacion has had the support and guidance of a special woman in her life - Dr. Natalie Anumba, a forensic psychologist and assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. This special partnership, thanks to QCC’s mentoring program, is one that has made an indelible impression on both women and one that has given Ms. Encarnacion the motivation and self-confidence she was looking for in her life. She became part of the College’s mentoring program when she first started taking classes at QCC.

QCC’s mentoring program connects students with staff, faculty, industry, and community members to create one-on-one mentoring relationships. The program provides extensive benefits to students, as well as professional development and networking opportunities for mentors. Ms. Encarnacion found herself matched with Dr. Natalie Anumba, who also happened to be the first community partner to become a QCC mentor.

“I didn’t want to do it at first, but I’m so glad I did. Natalie helps me with my major and helps me with resources in my career. She got to know me,” Ms. Encarnacion said. “She’s my motivator even if I’m having a bad day.”

Dr. Anumba said she heard about QCC’s mentoring program after attending a Worcester Chamber of Commerce event where she heard QCC President Dr. Luis Pedraja speak about the value of mentorship. She said one of the points he made, which resonated with her, was that employers need to pay attention to the local workforce because there’s a wealth of potential right in Central Massachusetts.

“There is a demand for mentors and mentoring is so important. I look back at my career and the people who contributed to it and the mentors along the way,” she said. “I personally feel like I’m contributing to something special that is in-line with my skills.”

Ms. Encarnacion has a close relationship with her mentor.

“Having someone in your corner, no matter what, is amazing. Not a lot of people can say they have emotional and academic support,” Ms. Encarnacion said. “What you put into this program is what you get out of it and I’ve gotten a lot.”

To learn more about QCC’s Mentoring program, visit www.QCC.edu/connections-sp20
In 2019, the average salary of a dental assistant was $40,080 per year with the upper 10 percent making $54,800.*

New QCC Dental Materials Lab
Up and Running

It has been an exciting time for Quinsigamond Community College college’s dental programs. In late August, the College received word that it was awarded a $476,807 Skills Capital Grant. This was the third largest of the 45 grants awarded by the Commonwealth to high schools, colleges and educational institutions. QCC has a long history of receiving Skills Capital Grants. In 2016, the College received $488,735, $431,900 in 2017 and $10,000 in 2018.

Through funding from the new Capital Skills Grant, state-of-the-art dental equipment was purchased for the College’s new dental materials training lab. This is the type of equipment used in today’s top dental materials labs and is a valued addition for QCC’s Dental Assisting program.

The College’s program is accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). The Commission is the sole agency to accredit dental and dental-related education programs that are conducted at the post-secondary level. Dentists and community leaders across the region have sung the praises of QCC’s dental programs and now its new dental materials lab.

Central Massachusetts dentist, Dr. Brandon Cairo is working with QCC students in the College’s hands-on educational lab. He said QCC’s dental assistants will be more valuable when they enter the marketplace because they will have more skill sets than their contemporaries.

“The less I have to teach (dental assistants) the more valuable they are to me. Sometimes assistants bring skill sets to the office that a dentist doesn’t have,” Dr. Cairo said. “They command a pay that’s better than average and increases your worth as an employee.”

“You learn more here,” said current dental assisting student Taylor Handson, noting that QCC’s program puts her in a great position for a top paying job.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the percent growth rate in employment from 2018 to 2028 for dental assistants will be 11%, compared to the average growth rate of 5% for all other occupations. The Commonwealth’s Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development projects the number of

*Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
Massachusetts dental assistant jobs to grow by 12.5% over a 10-year period ending in 2022.

The new dental materials lab is being heralded by students, faculty and the community at large as a perfect way to enhance the College's dental programs, creating a hands-on teaching classroom to train future dental hygienists, dental assistants and new expanded function dental assistants.

“We've been told that there is only one other training lab at a college or university in the state with this level of equipment,” said QCC Dental Clinic Operations and Facilities Manager Sheryl Ficorilli.

The state-of-the-art equipment is enabling students to learn how to utilize CAD/CAM technology, digital cameras, as well as how to use a milling machine that can make a crown. Other cutting-edge dental equipment purchased included a high-tech scanner, staining unit and oven.

“This project will have a positive impact on QCC students and our residents for years to come,” said Brian A. Genna, D.M.D.

For more photos and program information, visit www.QCC.edu/connections-sp20.
Local CBS News Affiliate WBZ/Channel 4 featured QCC’s Food Pantry and Resource Center during their “4 Your Community” segment.

QCC’s Food Pantry and Resource Center Still Available for Students
A vital resource on campus has become even more of a necessity since the Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Quinsigamond Community College’s Food Pantry and Resource Center provides food for students in need, as well as resources to help with other challenges such as homelessness. The food pantry and resource center has regularly assisted over 400 students weekly; however, this number is expected to rise as many are laid off from jobs due to the pandemic crisis. The College has begun implementing a curbside pick-up in conjunction with the Worcester County Food Bank to help those students who are experiencing food insecurity.

In recent months, the food pantry has also had a great deal of positive exposure, which has helped to shine a light on the plights of our students. By pure chance Douglas resident Ingrid Murphy read a story in a local Worcester paper about the College’s Food Pantry and Resource Center. A mother to two grown daughters, she was stunned to learn of the food insecurity that college students were facing, particularly right in her own back yard.

“I had never thought about college students going through hunger,” she said.

Ms. Murphy contacted QCC and spoke with Bonnie Coleman, who is the College’s Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society advisor and is instrumental in helping run the food pantry. Ms. Murphy learned from Ms. Coleman that a national survey (2018 Wisconsin Hope Lab Survey) showed close to 50 percent of students at QCC were food insecure. This statistic stunned her into action.

“This is just so sad that these students are going through this on top of all the other things they have to deal with,” Ms. Murphy said.

As a member of the Blackstone Valley United Methodist Church in Whitinsville, and active member of the women’s group at the church, she presented her idea of gathering donations for QCC’s food pantry to her church group as a possible mission project. The women of the church were immediately onboard. Quickly the project snowballed as the entire church learned of the students’ needs. For eight Sundays the entire church collected donations for the school’s food pantry.

“We got a lot of donations. It was just wonderful and it spurred a lot of conversations,” she said, adding that she has no connection whatsoever to QCC.

However, the donations didn’t stop there. When Ms. Murphy celebrated a milestone birthday, her husband, Brian Murphy, decided to do something extra special for her. Unbeknownst to her, he planned a surprise party in her honor and asked the invited guests to bring donations for the College’s food pantry. This donation raised a great deal of food, toiletries and over $100 in cash. To date between the two donations, Ms. Coleman estimates there was close to $1,000 worth of food and toiletries donated. The church is also planning to do another donation drive for the College’s food pantry in the spring.

Young people need a break and we need to help them more. They’re our future,” she said, adding, “It takes a village doesn’t it?”

– Ms. Ingrid Murphy

Visit www.QCC.edu/connections-sp20 for more information and ways you can help.
Today, as a pandemic has challenged and stressed hospitals across the region to the breaking point, Quinsigamond Community College’s Respiratory Care students have taken center stage with their expertise in helping to save lives. This comes as no surprise to the top health care professionals in hospitals across the Commonwealth, who have come to rely on QCC respiratory graduates prior to the health crisis.

Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston is a world-renowned, fast-paced, dynamic institution caring for critically ill patients. It is also a place that has welcomed many QCC respiratory care graduates to its staff.

“Over the past several years, we have welcomed quite a few students from Quinsigamond Community College,” said Carolyn La Vita, assistant director for the Department of Respiratory Care at Massachusetts General Hospital. “QCC has provided a solid foundation of clinical knowledge of the cardiopulmonary system, which has helped their respiratory therapy students adapt well to our institution. In addition, their desire for professional development and process improvement has been appreciated.”

At St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester, Director of Pulmonary Medicine, Dr. Richard Rosiello, has come to rely on QCC respiratory care graduates.

“At Saint Vincent Hospital we hire respiratory therapists educated at many institutions throughout New England and beyond. The therapists from the QCC program are always well-prepared to work in all areas including the emergency room, intensive care unit and the nursery,” he said. “Their knowledge, skills and work ethic are outstanding. We know we can count on them to deliver the very best care to our patients.”

“I have hired grads from Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Western Massachusetts and none are as well prepared as the QCC graduates,” said Scott McLean, Manager of...
Respiratory, Cardiology, and Sleep at Harrington Hospital and the Harrington Healthcare System, in Southbridge. “The QCC program prepares the grads to contribute to the department immediately. They have a strong knowledge base and have been taught critical thinking.”

One recent new hire at Harrington Hospital is QCC graduate Megan Romero. In 2014, Ms. Romero had a life-altering event happen, which left her nine months pregnant and alone with a small child. Instead of letting the tragedy define her, it led her in the direction of the medical field. She decided to go to an open house at QCC in Southbridge, where the presenters discussed the different medical degree options that were available.

“When they discussed respiratory, a light bulb just went off. I knew at that moment that was the direction I needed to go,” she said, noting the ability to apply for a student license after the first year and get immediate, hands-on, real-world experience was a particular draw. Today, Ms. Romero is working as a licensed respiratory therapist at Harrington Hospital.

“Megan has stepped in like she’s been here for years. Her respiratory knowledge is excellent,” Mr. McLean said. “QCC grads exhibit a different level of confidence in their knowledge and skills than other schools.”
Over a dozen legislators or their representatives from across the region, in addition to Quinsigamond Community College faculty and staff, spent part of their morning learning about what makes QCC so unique, from the people who can speak to this best – the students. The College’s annual Legislative Breakfast is designed to show local legislators the investment that QCC and the QCC Foundation have made in its students, as well as demonstrating the need for legislative support to ensure student success. The breakfast featured impassioned testimonials from students such as Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Honor Society Vice President, Krystle “Mixhe” Bedrick. Ms. Bedrick gave an emotional and heartfelt accounting of her life as a first generation college student describing an upbringing of intergenerational poverty.

“I never believed in my entire life I could attend college. I stand before you having worked incredibly hard to be worth the accolades bestowed on me today. QCC lifts you up and I’m proud to be a student here. When I graduate from QCC, I will be the first in my family to graduate college,” Ms. Bedrick said.

In May, Ms. Bedrick will graduate with an Early Childhood Education degree and this fall will attend Smith College. She has a plethora of...
of scholarships and honors to take with her. She is QCC’s first Newman Civic Fellow, a semifinalist for the Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship, and a recipient of the MLK Scholarship, Fuller Foundation Scholarship and the Roland Lajoie Scholarship.

QCC’s Student Government Association President Jorgo Gushi, a bilingual engineering student from Albania, and a member of PTK, told the legislators of the metamorphosis he experienced when he began at QCC.

“QCC was the place where I grew as a student leader and individual,” he said.

Mr. Gushi has been accepted to Worcester Polytechnic Institute for the fall (he is still waiting to hear from some Ivy League Schools) and told the legislators QCC has put him on a path that has transformed his life.

“QCC is about far more than attending classes,” he said, noting that it is also about building confidence and acquiring leadership skills. “My voice was fostered by the QCC family. Many of the skills that are making me a good leader were developed and taught at QCC.”

QCC’s Student Trustee Mustafa Bowden, who came to this country from Libya, expounded on the issues students face, addressing one of the common obstacles – purchasing textbooks.

“Here we have the most dedicated, committed students who step over every barrier there is, yet the biggest barrier we face is paying for a $500 textbook,” he said, addressing the Open Educational Resources (OER) that offers students the ability to access online textbooks for free. “This alternative will be an accessible way for our students to have better grades in college. I represent 7,000 students - close to 50 percent of them are facing hunger and nearly 12 percent are facing homelessness insecurity. If we can take away that $500 book cost, then no one will have to choose between a meal and the cost of a book.”

Another student speaker, PTK President Tabitha Leber described her journey to QCC as a young, single mom who had experienced a debilitating, on-the-job injury and as a result could no longer work. Having to take care of not only herself but also her young child, she began working in her daughter’s kindergarten classroom. She enjoyed her role in the classroom and came to the realization that she wanted to become a teacher. She began taking classes at QCC part-time, while continuing to work for the Worcester Public Schools. Today she is a full-time student, telling those in the audience of the amazing initiatives the College’s honor society works on such as the QCC Food Pantry and Resource Center and the PTK Live and Learn Greenhouse.

“Education is a way to release those bonds so that our dreams can be a reality. This can’t happen without legislative support,” she said, adding, “Without this institution I would not be the person I am today.”

For additional photos and insight, visit Community Connections online.
For the second year in a row Quinsigamond Community College has received a $10,000 Gene Haas Foundation Grant. The grant funding is a welcome addition to QCC’s Manufacturing Technology program and one that Lee Duerden, associate professor of Manufacturing Technology at the College is hopeful will become an annual award.

The Gene Haas Foundation was formed in 1999 with the primary goal of building skills in the machining industry. The Foundation provides an opportunity for schools to apply for funds annually, providing scholarships for CNC machine technology students and NIMS (National Institute for Metalworking Skills) credentials. QCC is a Haas Technical Education Center (HTEC) approved member.

“We are fortunate to work with amazing colleges including Quinsigamond Community College. The College is working constantly to help address and close the skills gap in Massachusetts,” said Toni Neary, HFO Trident, director of Education (a Haas Factory Outlet, in Windsor, Ct.) “Local manufacturers need skilled machinists in order to keep manufacturing here at home, and these scholarships remove barriers for students allowing them to complete the program.”

Ms. Neary said they look for colleges with strong pipelines for CNC pathways. QCC currently offers a CNC Technologies Certificate, as well as a Computer Aided Design Certificate, a Manufacturing Technology Certificate and an associate degree in Manufacturing Technology.

“Our goal is to help allow the next generation of machinists continually develop their skill set,” she added.

Southbridge Students Now Honored as H.A.C.E. Recipients

From left: Shelia del Bosque, Dr. Viviana Abreu-Hernandez and Gilmarie Vongphakdy.

From left: Thao Chai (student), Lee Duerden (Faculty), Justin Smith (student), Jeffrey Pavone (student), Matthew Osmolowski (student), Sam Souryavongsa (student), Dan Quinn (Gene Haas Foundation), Mariana Ferraz (student) and Brian Boland (student).

Below: One of QCC’s technology labs.
QCC Awarded Workforce Success Grant

Quinsigamond Community College was one of only four community colleges to receive a grant in the first round of Senator Kenneth J. Donnelly Workforce Success Grants. This grand funding is dedicated to training that will assist unemployed or underemployed people in filling in-demand jobs within the Commonwealth, while also enabling entry-level workers to advance in their current workplace. The College was awarded a $249,527 grant, which will be used to help advance current programs already in place at the College. The Baker-Polito Administration awarded $4.2 million to 18 grant awardees.

“We are thrilled to be awarded this grant that will help us to advance our current programs. This funding will be used to train individuals for jobs in healthcare and social assistance,” said QCC President Dr. Luis G. Pedraja. “At QCC we are training people for the in-demand jobs of the today, as well as the jobs of tomorrow.”

Quinsigamond Community College was once again host of the Hispanics Achieving and Celebrating Excellence (H.A.C.E) Youth Awards, a program that began in 1985 to raise community awareness of Hispanic culture and honor and celebrate Hispanic youth for their achievements in leadership, academics, sports, arts and civic engagement.

This year, 36 high school seniors from both public and private high schools were honored. Historically the high school students have been from Worcester; however, for the first time this year high school students from Southbridge were also recognized. Southbridge has a large (56%) Latinx population and according to Jeffery Villa, receiver for Southbridge Public Schools and a Cuban immigrant himself, there was tremendous pride in seeing these Southbridge students recognized.

“You have so much skill to bring to America and the world,” Mr. Villa said to the students. “We’re going to show what Latinxs can do in this country.”

As has been tradition, Worcester Mayor Joseph Petty proclaimed October 9 H.A.C.E. Day in the City of Worcester. The students not only received a proclamation from Mayor Petty, they also received a citation from Senator Harriette Chandler and a citation from Senator Michael Moore, a QCC alum himself. Keynote speaker for this year’s event was world-renowned Cuban flutist Sheila del Bosque, an expert in Latin jazz and Cuban music. She described her difficult upbringing and told of how she has persevered and succeeded in her life.

“Be proactive. Listen to the voice inside you; it will always tell you the truth. Study more, apply for scholarships... don’t be afraid.”

– Shelia del Bosque, Keynote speaker
Alumni Bake-Off Delivers Sweet Dividends for QCC Students

This year, QCC’s Alumni Association Bake-Off was not exactly the “Great British Bake Off,” but it still had all the makings of an exciting, tasty and good-natured baking competition. QCC students, faculty and staff were invited to enter their homemade baked goods for the chance to earn bragging rights as QCC’s Best Baker. The judges consisted of any student, faculty or staff member who paid the nominal judging fee. No one crumbled under the pressure, unless it was the pressure of choosing their favorite sweet treat, as many turned out for the tasty voting. After a hard fought battle that brought in close to $800 for QCC’s Alumni Scholarship Fund, the 2020 QCC Bake-Off first place winners chosen were Director of Disability Services, Kristie Proctor, with her Salted Chocolate Caramel Cookies and QCC Alumna, Cheryl Letson with her Strawberry Rhubarb Cheesecake Squares. Winners received an exclusive QCC cutting board, custom-made for the event in QCC Fab Lab.

Visit www.QCC.edu/connections-sp20 for a complete list of winners.

Mystery Dinner Theater Nets over $1,000 for Students in Need

QCC’s Alumni Association Advisory Board rounded out its year of fundraising with its annual Mystery Dinner Theater production, featuring the Comical Mystery Tour Players. Students from QCC’s Hospitality program decorated the Worcester Senior Center (where the production was held), designed the dinner menu, as well as prepared and served the meal. The annual fundraising production brought in more than a $1,000 for the Alumni Scholarship Fund.

QCC Students Take to the Airwaves to Promote Census 2020

The year 2020 marks the 24th time in our country’s history for a United States Census. As a public institution, it is crucial that our community is accurately represented. To help ensure this and alleviate unnecessary fears, the Community Connection staff worked with QCC students to record videos in seven different languages to help promote the 2020 Census in every Worcester community.

Director of Community Bridges, Déborah Gonzalez, went on Xpresso 1600, a Spanish radio station in Worcester, to help debunk the concerns of disseminating private information.

To view these amazing video spots, visit www.QCC.edu/connections-sp20.
Nurse Pinning Ceremonies are Time Honored Traditions at QCC

In mid-December, Quinsigamond Community College’s day and evening nursing classes each held their annual graduation pinning ceremonies at Hebert Auditorium. A total of 32 day students and 63 evening students received their nursing pins in these powerful, annual ceremonies that are steeped in tradition. According to Professor of Nurse Education Patricia Creelman, all nursing graduates are expected to sit for their licensure exam in early spring. QCC nursing graduates have an amazing pass rate with 96 percent of students who graduated in 2019 (prior to December), passing the exam on the first try.

“This past year was a great one for our nursing programs. We graduated over 90 nursing students in December, our largest graduating class ever,” said Dean of the School of Healthcare Pat Schmohl.

Visit www.QCC.edu/connections-sp20 for the list of graduates and more photos.

Alumni Social Welcomes Newest QCC Grads

Making new friends while keeping the old is always the best part of QCC’s Alumni Social. It is an opportunity to gather with fellow alumni, including QCC’s newest graduates, for a night of networking and reminiscing about college experiences. The June 2019 alumni social was held at Revolution Pie and Pint in Worcester. The featured speaker was QCC 1977 Alumna Joan Wackell, owner and principle of Maestro Strategic Marketing, who spoke on ways to market yourself for success and advance your brand. Music was provided by QCC students Yozue Davila, Alyssa Durham, and Evan Couture.
For as long as she can remember, Viviana Abreu-Hernandez has been an advocate. Whether it was defending the rights of others, or working to change the name of her junior high school in Puerto Rico, Ms. Abreu-Hernandez has never shied away from taking a stand that she believes in. On Sept 1, 2019, she became the Associate Vice President for External Affairs at Quinsigamond Community College, bringing with her over 20 years of higher education and policy advocacy experience.

“I am the product of public education and I grew up in Quebradillas, a small town in northwest Puerto Rico. This defines who I am,” she said.

According to Ms. Abreu-Hernandez after graduating from high school, she started college at the University of Puerto Rico in San Juan. Shortly after she began school, there was 100 percent increase in the cost of tuition.

“Granted, the tuition was cheap, but it was a 100 percent increase. My classmates were already working to make ends meet – pay tuition, rent, utilities, transportation and books. Any increase in tuition would make things significantly harder for all students. This was particularly true for those, like me, who came from small towns in the island where poverty was more prevalent,” she said, noting state policies did not consider the effect on the poor, underserved and marginalized populations.

It was her “aha” moment in a lifelong mission of advocacy against social justices.

“Public policies, unions and community colleges are instruments of social justice. They all provide services and advocate for those who were left out of the socioeconomic structures that benefit the few,” she said. “I taught in higher education; did public policy in higher education, workforce development in higher education and now external affairs in higher education. This is the right thing for me to do at the right time. I love what I’m doing here at QCC.”

Ms. Abreu-Hernandez majored in political science at the University of Puerto Rico and went on to earn her masters and PhD at Purdue University, becoming an advocate within the community for the under-served, as well as being politically active on campus. She advocated for better health insurance for graduate students and their families, and was instrumental in bringing to light the inequities she saw within different departments when research and teaching assistantships were assigned. All these experiences helped to cement and define what she wanted to do with her life. She continued on a path of educational advocacy, teaching and holding two other positions at the Puerto Rico Council on Higher Education before eventually becoming the Commissioner of Higher Education. The role afforded her with the opportunity to help protect those who didn’t have a voice and ensure the quality of higher education on the island. Unfortunately, in 2008, there was a drastic shift in public policy and unprecedented cuts in higher education budgets. She was told that she would have to lay off the bulk of her staff, something she could not reconcile within herself. In a bold move, she resigned with several other top-level administrators during a press conference.

“I loved everything I did and felt I had a huge impact on the 223,000 students in higher education in Puerto Rico,” she said. “To be able to address social injustices we need purposeful interventions and solutions to transform oppressive structures so we live in a more just society, in which we all have the same opportunities of access and outcomes.”

Fast forward to 2012 and with 10-year-old son in tow, she moved to New York to take a job as the assistant director of research and program development for the 1199SEIU Training and Upgrading Fund. She worked in healthcare workforce development through higher education before coming to QCC.

“I am the product of public education.”
New VP of Academic Affairs – James Keane

Quinsigamond Community College’s new Vice President of Academic Affairs, James “Jim” Keane, has never left a job the way he found it. In his years in academia, he has made it his mission to address social injustices, particularly in higher education, and worked on making positive and lasting changes.

A first generation college student, he understands first-hand the challenges and the level of tenacity it takes to be successful in higher education.

“There are always two events that I point out as to why I am in education. In my graduate Theology program, I had the opportunity to spend a year as an intern in a local prison. I also spent about three months working on banana farms in Panama, as internship experiences,” he said. “The prison really brought me to understand the only powerful equalizer (social justice) and rehabilitation was education. In Panama, working with the very poor, in trying to do community organizing and addressing issues of justice, the same message came through that education was often the missing tool for the poor.”

Working on actionable plans to address social justice particularly in education soon became his primary focus. He worked in a diverse high school in Queens, New York for six years where the socio-economic diversity was vast and worked on implementing changes where he could. He took students into low-income communities so they could “put a face to the poor” and understand the social inequities within the community. Eventually he was enticed to St. John’s University and helped to launch an innovative freshmen center.

“It was a one-stop shop where students had all the services they needed in one location,” he said. “I had a 250 student case load and helped them with everything from academics to personal issues.”

At the same time, he was also working to earn another master’s degree in Higher Education Administration from New York University, as well as teaching as an adjunct at St. John’s. While Mr. Keane was continuing to make positive changes in higher education, he still felt he could do more by being, “at the table where decisions were being made.” He went back to school, earning his doctoral degree in Higher Education Leadership, Management, and Policy from Seton Hall University. This enabled him to become the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies and Director of the Institute for Core Studies at St. John’s, where he was able to address the issues of poverty and social injustice head-on, creating an expanded learning community through new programs.

For the past 10 years, Mr. Keane was the Executive Dean and campus CEO of the Grant Campus at Suffolk Community College in New York. In his role, he worked on breaking down the silos that can be found on college campuses and worked on instituting new curriculums, and was instrumental in helping build a $3 million learning center from scratch.

In January 2020, he took over as Academic Vice President of Academic affairs, delighted to be working for an institution whose president was so committed to 100 percent student success.

“I liked QCC’s strategic plan and it showed that 100 percent student success was beyond just a philosophy. Academics are the heart of higher education and wraparound services are what make academics successful,” he said, adding how delighted he is to see the renaissance that Worcester is experiencing. “I love the spirit and the pride of the community. I’m excited to be here.”
A 2018 study done the Wisconsin Hope Lab found that 11% of Quinsigamond Community College students experienced some form of homelessness; 54% were housing insecure, and 49% had low or very low food security. This is a situation the College immediately addressed, developing a food pantry and resource center to help students in need. However, it is just the tip of the iceberg in what is needed to ensure that all students achieve 100% student success.

Making a positive difference in the lives of students is the premise behind Quinsigamond Community College and the QCC Foundation; however, we cannot do this without the help of the community.

There are many ways to support QCC. A planned (or estate) gift can help to fund a multitude of programs and services at QCC, from the College’s food pantry and resource center, to scholarships for students, and academic and student services programs. There are several, simple and direct ways in which you can include QCC in your estate planning.

Please contact Shirley Dempsey, assistant director of operations at 508.854.4520 or sdempsey@qcc.mass.edu.

Life Insurance

Life insurance policies also make an excellent giving opportunity. You may donate an existing policy to the Quinsigamond Community College Foundation, Inc. or name the QCC Foundation as the beneficiary of that policy.

Bequest

This is the easiest way to make a planned gift. With a bequest, you can leave a specific amount of money or a percentage of your estate to the QCC Foundation in your will.

Retirement Plans

Did you know that you can name the QCC Foundation as a beneficiary of your IRA, 403 (b) or other retirement accounts? Talk to a financial advisor regarding this option.

Gifts of Appreciated Securities

Stocks or shares of mutual funds provide a great way to avoid capital gains tax and your gift is based on the current market value, not what you originally paid for the stocks. To maximize the tax benefits available to you, your shares must be transferred to the QCC Foundation before they are sold.
**IN MEMORIAM**

We’re sorry to hear about the loss of our alumni. Join us in expressing our condolences to the families of the following:

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QCC Alumni Association

As a graduate of QCC, there are several ways that you can remain involved in the College. Various activities include participating on the Alumni Association Advisory Board (meetings once a month), becoming a mentor for a QCC student, volunteering, and attending events throughout the year.

We invite you to stay connected, send us your news, and get involved at www.QCC.edu/alumni, or contact June Vo at jvo@qcc.mass.edu or 508.854.4235.

Upcoming Events:
✓ H.A.C.E. Awards
  October 21, 2020
✓ Mystery Dinner Theater
  December 5, 2020

Please visit www.QCC.edu/alumni/events for details, updates and additional event listings.