

QCC offers solutions for post-pandemic recovery

WORCESTER — A Community Conversation hosted by Quinsigamond Community College for government, social service and religious organizations in Worcester drew over 60 attendees this week. The hour-long virtual meeting addressed ways to accelerate economic and civic recovery post-pandemic, using education as a pathway to success. The College gave a snapshot into what it can offer the organizations, which serve the underrepresented populations in Worcester and surrounding communities that have been so devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have the programs and the training and together with our community organizations' help we can thrive. We are counting on you and your partnerships to achieve this," President Luis G. Pedraja, Ph.D. said.

Chair for the QCC Board of Trustees Sue Mailman noted that as a community college, QCC has the unique ability to deliver pathways that will help Worcester communities grow and prosper.

"We need to get ahead of the game and lead the way in retraining and developing a stronger Worcester," Ms. Mailman said. "We need to create conditions for our underrepresented populations to succeed and community colleges have a real lead in this."

QCC's Vice President of Academic Affairs James Keane, Ed.D., said the pandemic proved to the world just how nimble a community college could be, and what was learned would be beneficial for years to come. He described the two-week timeframe in which QCC successfully transitioned to remote instruction and said the new virtual course modalities, coupled with increased online support services, have increased access and engagement in higher education, particularly for adult learners. Dr. Keane described new advisory boards that are a part of each college program. Board members advise on relevant workforce curriculum and course design to prepare students when they enter the workforce.

Lillian Ortiz, Ed.D., vice president for Enrollment Management and Student Engagement, highlighted the financial opportunities available at QCC. The College received \$13 million in CARES Act funds that have helped 3,800 students impacted by the pandemic with tuition, fees, laptops etc. An additional \$9 million is still to be awarded.

"The core mission of the College is to remove barriers that impede students from attending college," she said.

Other supports and resources of note include the Student Success Center with its academic tutoring, QCC's Food Pantry that feeds approximately 50 families per week throughout the year, and the Resource Center that coordinates with local agencies to offer assistance for students in need.

"We have a strong mentoring program and our Accessibility Services Department that serves 1,000 students annually on campus, offering accessible, equitable and inclusiveness to all members of the community," Dr. Ortiz said, adding, "We have also been designated as a military friendly school."

Carol King, dean of College and Career Pathways told of QCC's 25 free English literacy programs from beginner to intermediate, as well as the HiSet and GED programs that even include a GED prep classes in Spanish.

"We understand the challenges of going back to school as an adult," she said. "We offer free college readiness classes virtually any day and time."

Kathie Manning, dean of Center for Workforce Development & Continuing Education described the flexibility of the programs and training that is being offered such as a new online, self-paced, professional development training subscription model. She said the College offers numerous programs at low to no cost and many even support transportation and childcare. Recent programs have included nurse assistant/home health aide, help desk, medical assistant and lead teachers for early

childhood programs, with some offered in Spanish.

"Programs generally take six months to complete and classes begin every week throughout the year," she said.

Nichole Wheeler, coordinator Career Services & Credit for Prior Learning mentioned the variety of ways students can gain credits for prior life experiences and save money and time.

"We meet with students and evaluate and match what they have with QCC courses to try and give them college credit," said.

According to Dr. Pedraja, the COVID-19 pandemic brought unique conditions to community colleges that have historically seen an upsurge in enrollment during economic downturns. Today, on a national level 40 percent of students are now canceling their plans to enroll in college with 30 percent giving COVID-19 related reasons. Diverse populations have seen the steepest declines in college enrollment. However, he told the organizations in attendance there is reason to be hopeful as the region looks ahead.

"Hope is at the core of who we are at a community college. We are a beacon of hope for our students and our community. Losing students impacts us as an entire community and we cannot thrive if we leave anyone behind," Dr. Pedraja said. "It takes a community to help students succeed and you know where your needs are and with your help, we can reach out and find strategies to bring people to college."

For more information about QCC, contact Josh Martin, Director of Institutional Communications at 508-854-7513 or jmartin@qcc.mass.edu.

Blackstone students named to honor roll at state's largest online school

WALPOLE — TEC Connections Academy (TECCA), the Commonwealth's largest virtual school, today announced that Gabriella Bosen and Aidan Boyd of Blackstone have been named to the school's Honor Roll of academic excellence and recognized for maintaining a high grade average in the previous semester.

TECCA serves more than 2,500 students from across Massachusetts in grades K-12 and employs more than 100 teachers and support personnel at its Walpole learning center. In its

seventh year, TEC Connections Academy has significant expertise in providing a high-quality online program built specifically for the virtual environment. With the combination of state-certified teachers, focused academics and an emphasis on social and emotional well-being, the school has been providing a highly engaging curriculum and a nurturing, safe academic environment for students from across the state.

"I am very proud of our TECCA Honor Roll students for their continued academic

achievements," said TECCA Superintendent Patrick Lattuca.

"From our TECCA teachers committed to giving our students an excellent education, to the families who work every day behind the scenes to support students, our new Honor Roll recognizes the hard work of the entire TECCA community," he added.

For more information on 2021-22 TECCA enrollment, please visit [www.TECConnectionsAcademy.com](http://TECConnectionsAcademy.com).

UniBank to host free home buying Webinar

WHITINSVILLE — UniBank will be hosting a free home buying webinar on Thursday, June 24 from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. Join UniBank's Mortgage Representative, Dave Sampson (NMLS #688948) for this educational opportunity that will provide homebuyers with valuable information about finding and buying the home of their dreams. Important discussion topics include: Negotiating a Winning Offer, Finding the Right Mortgage and Pre-Qualifying, Down Payment Options, The Importance of Home Inspections, and more.

Attendees will be entered for a chance to win a \$100 gift card. Sweepstakes to win gift card is subject to complete official rules which are available at www.unibank.com. To enter, individuals must register and attend the seminar. No purchase or account required to enter or win.

All seminar attendees will receive a \$500 mortgage closing cost coupon from UniBank.

To register, visit www.unibank.com.

UniBank is rooted in the Blackstone Valley with assets of \$2.3 billion as of March 31, 2021. A full-service, mutually owned community bank, UniBank has branches in Central Massachusetts and the MetroWest region of Massachusetts. UniBank is dedicated to contributing to the overall quality of life and economic health of the communities it serves, while maintaining a high level of financial soundness and integrity. UniBank is an Equal Housing Lender and Member FDIC and Member DIF. UniBank NMLS #583135. The company Web site is www.unibank.com.

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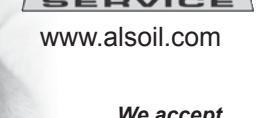
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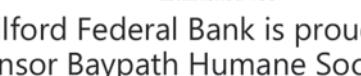
PET of the WEEK



Small Shelter Big Heart

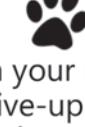
Met Shanty! A 10 year old female. This sweet senior is looking to find a home to call her own! Shanty loves to spend time with people, and is happy to go for walks or hang out inside. Shanty can be a bit nervous at first, but warms up to new people quickly. We think she would do well in a home with kids over 13. Shanty is an active girl and likes to be busy! Once she bonds to you, she will follow you everywhere you go! Shanty gets along well with other dogs, and has previously lived in a home with other dogs. She may do best as the only dog in her home. We are not sure how she would be with cats. If you are interested in adopting Shanty, please email adopt@baypathhumane.org today!

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