

OPINION

FITCHBURG-LEOMINSTER, MASSACHUSETTS

Editorial

Fitchburg State's academic success a story worth spreading

We've previously mentioned that an educated workforce ranked among the top economic-development selling points for North Central Mass., as it seeks to position itself as a lower-cost alternative to higher-priced parts of the state.

And recent national studies praising the value of a Fitchburg State University education reinforces that point. According to the latest U. S. News & World Report findings, Fitchburg State University graduates experience strong social mobility and get high returns on their educational investment. Due to its emphasis on serving disadvantaged students, FSU was named a top performer on social mobility in the magazine's Best Colleges 2020 rankings, which placed it as the highest-rated public institution in Massachusetts relative to social mobility.

It's been proven that economically disadvantaged students are less likely than others to finish college. The lack of family resources — and lack of access to financial-assistance information — often prevent low-income individuals from furthering their education. But some colleges — including FSU — have demonstrated more success than others at advancing social mobility by enrolling and graduating large proportions of disadvantaged students awarded with Pell Grants, the majority of which go to students whose adjusted gross family incomes are under \$50,000.

That's also the conclusion of a recent report by the College Board. "Education Pays 2019: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society" found that college education increases the chance that adults will move up the socioeconomic ladder, and reduces the chance they will rely on public assistance.

That's why it's crucial that FSU provides the education opportunity for high-school grads who otherwise might not pursue a four-year degree. And that bachelor's degree makes a significant difference to the bottom line over the course of a working career. The College Board analysis indicates individuals with bachelor's degrees will earn \$400,000 more over the course of their life-

"FSU graduates experience strong social mobility and get high returns on their educational investment."

times than those with just high-school diplomas. That's how those with less socioeconomic advantages move up that ladder, which increases the likelihood of a financially independent existence. We realize that the cost of higher education constitutes a huge commitment — or barrier — to individuals of limited means. But another study, created by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, showed a strong return on investment for Fitchburg State University graduates, who pay in-state tuition and fees of \$10,410 and \$16,490 in out-of-state tuition and fees.

That study looked at federal data to estimate the "net present value" of a college education over time, and found FSU scored higher than most other public institutions in Massachusetts. In response to these kudos, FSU Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs Alberto J. F. Cardelle said the analyses reflect the university's commitment to quality pre-professional programs that are built upon solid liberal arts foundations.

These unsolicited words of praise prove this university lives up to its mission statement: A Fitchburg State University education does extend beyond its classrooms to include residential, professional, and co-curricular opportunities. And as a community resource, it provides leadership and support for the economic, environmental, social, and cultural needs of North Central Massachusetts and the commonwealth. We congratulate FSU President Richard S. Lapidus and his leadership team for providing the type of education that graduates the type of talent that businesses looking to relocate or expand need. That's the human capital that North-Central Massachusetts can offer.

FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Theater Block sets stage for construction manager



RENDERING COURTESY OF FSU

An artist's rendering of the Theater Block in downtown Fitchburg once it has been renovated.

Bids sought for company to renovate aging Main Street complex

By Daniel Monahan

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FITCHBURG » The Massachusetts State College Building Authority is seeking bids for construction management services to renovate the Theater Block, an aging Main Street complex with dreams of one day hosting student plays and off-Broadway productions.

Fitchburg State University sent out a request for proposals last month to find a construction manager who would work with the university on the next phase of de-

sign work.

“We’ve completed the schematic stage with our architects,” said Vice President of Finance and Administration Jay Bry. “The decision has been made to move forward into the design development stage, and that’s where we then make the decision to bring on the construction management firm to help us refine designs.”

Their insights in the design process will help create more accurate cost estimates in advance of this project going out to bid, Bry said.

FSU Director of Public Relations Mat-

thew Bruun said the university does not anticipate seeking actual construction bids on this project before the fall of 2021.

According to Bry, the current estimated project cost sits at \$35 million. He said rising construction costs are partly to blame for the big price tag, but that number could go down after the university finalizes plans.

Bry said a considerable amount of work needs to be done before the theater can get up and running again.

“It’s the restoration of the main theater,

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Theater

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but we also need to put a small addition onto the building to accommodate some of the support spaces needed for a new theater,” he said. “We also need additional space for stairwell towers and bathrooms that are required with new building code.”

While construction won’t be-

gin for some time, the university is hoping the theater project will be completed by 2023.

“It will serve as a catalyst for other economic development down there,” Bry said. “In addition to needing theater space to support the academic theater program, it would really serve as this catalyst for downtown revitalization.”

Bry said the university doesn’t currently have a theater on campus, so the project would be a

great benefit to students.

Once the theater opens, Bry anticipates it would host a variety of shows and performances including student productions, Broadway shows, comedians, community, or film series.

“It’s really being designed with the idea that it’s a community space as much as it is an academic space,” he said.

The Theater Block, 717 Main St., was vacant for nearly 30 years before Fitchburg State pur-

chased it in 2016 for \$350,000.

The first phase of renovations, a \$2.8 million project, included the second floor of the building, home to the IdeaLab, which houses the game studio where students in the university’s game design program complete their capstone semesters as well as small business development programs offered in partnership with NewVue Communities.

The next phase of the renovation will include the 28,235

square-foot, 1,200-seat theater, which closed in 1987. The university is working with a consultant on the theater’s redesign, with the goal being a fully operational space for theater students as well as professional performances.

The university also hopes to bring businesses to the building’s seven bays by recruiting outside businesses or possibly using some of the spaces as incubators for the entrepreneurship program upstairs.

POLICE PREP
AT FSUPact for
shared
training
renewed

Submitted Article

FITCHBURG » Fitchburg State University and the Massachusetts Municipal Police Training Committee (MPTC) have renewed the agreement governing the university's ground-breaking criminal justice program, whose graduates complete, in five years, bachelor's and master's degrees plus certification to work as police officers in municipal departments across the state.

Officials from the university and MPTC signed the renewed pact on Feb. 12.

The five-year program, believed to be the first of its kind in the nation, graduated its first cohort from the academy in 2018.

About 30 students will be completing their baccalaureate degrees in criminal justice this May and will begin their academy curriculum this summer, including firearms, defensive tactics and emergency vehicle operations. This fall they will start their master's degrees.

Graduates from the first

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Program

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two cohorts are already employed by police departments in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

"The police program is founded on the principle that better education and training creates better police officers," Fitchburg State President Richard S. Lapidus said. "This pro-

gram creates a clear path for dedicated students to pursue their ambitions to serve their communities in this vital, continually evolving profession."

"The graduates this program is producing are incredible," said interim MPTC Executive Director Robert J. Ferullo. "Leaders in this profession are buying into this program that is turning out well-educated, fully trained police officers."



COURTESY OF FSU

Interim Executive Director Robert J. Ferullo, left, of the Massachusetts Municipal Police Training Committee, shakes hands with Fitchburg State University President Richard S. Lapidus after renewing the training program.

LOCAL

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FSU to train teachers in LGBTQ support

‘Cultural competency’ in classroom is goal of graduate-level course

By Scott O’Connell
Telegram & Gazette Staff

FITCHBURG — A new course at Fitchburg State University will help educators learn how to support and teach to students identifying as LGBTQ or non-gender binary.

The graduate-level course, which will start in April, may be one of the first of its kind in the region, said Center for Professional Studies Assistant Director Dani Langdon, who helped create the program and will teach it.

“We talk a lot about teaching cultural competency; there’s a lot of conversation in education about being inclusive of folks of different ethnicities, or who speak different languages,” she said. “But we’re not looking a lot at gender diversity and orientation.”

Those students, who may be gay, transgender, or who identify as a nonbinary gender, face obstacles in the classroom too. The objective of Fitchburg State’s new class is to help educators become more familiar with terminology for LGBTQ students, tailor a more inclusive curriculum to them, and understand the state and federal laws and guidelines applying to them.

The course will also show teachers how to foster a more supportive environment for them in their classes.

“Because they may be experiencing microaggressions every day,” Langdon said, referring to the

FSU

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subtle slights people, sometimes inadvertently, direct at LGBTQ-identifying individuals in everyday life. “Things you wouldn’t pick up on (as a teacher).”

While some organizations provide one-time professional development training sessions for school staff related to LGBTQ students, Langdon she didn’t find any similar courses at the higher education level while doing research for Fitchburg State’s new program. The university’s course, which will run for just over a month, is a hybrid offering of in-person classes and online coursework.

Trenda Loftin, a representative of the state chapter of the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, said she also hadn’t heard of a course like Fitchburg State’s. She said any effort to help LGBTQ students be more comfortable in their classrooms was welcome, however.

“Any opportunity for folks to get a deeper understanding of identity, and how it impacts how they go through their world, is helpful,” she said, adding that support to LGBTQ students has been “proven to have health benefits for them, and benefit their works as students.”

Langdon said evidence around the type of training Fitchburg State’s new course will provide, meanwhile, is not so abundant. “There isn’t a lot of research on this, but there needs to be,” she said.

MILITARY MARK

FSU gets 'Friendly'

Staff Report

FITCHBURG» Fitchburg State University announced Tuesday that it has earned the 2020-21 Military Friendly School designation.

Institutions earning the Military Friendly School designation were evaluated using both public data sources and responses from a proprietary survey. More than 1,000 schools participated in the

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FSU

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1,000 schools participated in the 2020-21 survey with 695 earning the designation.

“We are honored to once again receive Military Friendly designation,” Fitchburg State President Richard S. Lapidus said. “Our campus community is committed to supporting those who served in achieving their academic goals, and we welcome the diverse life experiences that student veterans bring to our institution.”

The 2020-21 Military Friendly Schools list will be published in the May issue of G.I. Jobs magazine and can be found at militaryfriendly.com.

Methodology, criteria and weightings were determined by Viqtory with input from the Military Friendly Advisory Council of independent leaders in the higher education and military

recruitment communities.

Final ratings were determined by combining the institution's survey scores with the assessment of the institution's ability to meet thresholds for student retention, graduation, job placement, loan repayment, persistence (degree advancement or transfer) and loan default rates for all students and, specifically, for student veterans.

“Our ability to apply a clear, consistent standard to colleges creates a competitive atmosphere that encourages colleges to invest in programs to provide educational outcomes that are better for the military community as a whole,” said Military Friendly's National Director Josh Rosen.

For more information about Fitchburg State's student veteran programs, visit www.fitchburgstate.edu/offices-services-directory/veteran-services/.

Hoping for 'like' - and future alum

Worcester-area colleges pitch to prospective students via social media

By Julie Craven
Special to the Telegram & Gazette

Deciding on where to go to college can be a big decision for high school students. The information overload is tough to avoid. Besides input from parents and classmates, there's a rush of information from colleges that have sent acceptance letters and a series of follow-ups.

Admissions departments, eager to meet enrollment goals, are vying for the thumbs-up.

A tweet from Worcester State pitches, "Interested in joining the smart and talented #WooState community? #BeALancer"

Colleges eager to be the choice of high school seniors are all heading to a popular gathering spot - social media.

While students are in the midst of a stressful time wondering where to go, the way in which the school presents itself on social media could make or break a decision.

Central Massachusetts is home to more than a dozen colleges, each with a presence on social media that captures the essence of what their school has to offer. Admissions departments turn to Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook and other platforms to make their pitches to would-be students.

Clark University uses social media to connect with prospective students and what they have to offer.

The university itself maintains its own Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat, which engages with the student

A post from Clark's Facebook page says, "Never been to campus? Want a second look? Take a virtual tour of Clark, then come visit us this summer!"

Worcester State uses Twitter more than Instagram, as they post content a couple of times a day. Their Twitter page showcases pictures of students with the hashtag #WooState and also touches on recent graduates and how they used their education to further their careers.

Their Instagram page has more visuals and more of a creative way to capture an in-the-moment experience of the students, making it more of a community feel before prospective students even step foot onto campus.

Lydia Mann, director of admissions outreach at Clark University, highlights how social media is a way to tell a story and reinforces their mission as a school.

"Social media supports the authentic narrative we share with prospective students and families through all of our other mediums," Mann said. "It helps reinforce the fact that Clark is a mission-driven institution providing a top-tier education producing



"The use of social media is a comfortable place, so they go to our social media," said Fitchburg State University Admissions Director Jinawa McNeil. [T&G STAFF/ASHLEY GREEN]

enormous return on investment for individuals and our society as a whole."

The College of the Holy Cross uses Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

It also has a tour of the college on Facebook through a video stream, with a live chat to connect with students to answer any questions they might have.

It mainly highlights the many dimensions of the college experience such as places to get coffee on campus, the different dining options and also includes "A Week in the Life at Holy Cross."

A tweet says "90% of Holy Cross students live in one of 11 residence halls on campus - but how do they make those spaces feel like home? Five students invite you into their living spaces and share how they turn four bare walls into a campus home."

By giving potential students the inside scoop of what they are all about, colleges let them

envision how it would be like for them.

Clark feels that Instagram is a popular way for prospective students to engage. By creating user-generated content that tailors to how students are already using the app, the university makes it easier and less intimidating for the potential student.

"Our prospective students love Instagram. It allows them to see a glimpse of Clark in real time," said Mann.

Bridget Campolettano, director of strategic marketing at Holy Cross, also favors the idea of Instagram being a tool for students to engage with.

"Instagram is a really popular way for high school students as it helps the students to see what the community feels like and to also share voices and experiences," Campolettano said.

Fitchburg State also has a presence on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. The admissions

office has its own Instagram account that focuses on visuals of current students in their dorms, spotlight on students getting admitted, and prospective students on campus tours.

A tweet from Fitchburg State reads, "High school students often ask if they should take AP classes to get a head start on their college. In this video, some of our Falcons explain why it was the right decision for them."

Jinawa McNeil, Fitchburg State's director of admissions, showcases how social media is being used to target a variety of audiences through different platforms.

"The use of social media is a comfortable place, so they go to our social media," McNeil said. "The younger audience gravitates to the newer technology."

The tools and strategies to reach students differ through their social media platforms. McNeil said that Facebook,



A Feb. 10 post on Becker College Admissions Facebook page.

of course, is used to reach not only students but also parents. Since the younger generation is mostly on Instagram, the college culture is displayed through student stories and experiences, as parents don't consume information in that same way.

"If we post a statement about accepting students on Twitter and Facebook, on Instagram we might post a video of accept letters being put in the mail. It's all the same information, but a different way to share that information," said McNeil.

CORONAVIRUS FALLOUT

FSU suspending classes for one week



JOHN LOVE / SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE

Students walk past Fitchburg State University on Highland Avenue in this undated file photo. The campus will be largely empty next week as classes have been suspended a week over coronavirus concerns.

College is exploring remote instruction option

By Alana Melanson
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FITCHBURG » Fitchburg State University will suspend in-person classes for one week while it explores the possibility of remote instruction, President Richard Lapidus announced Wednesday.

“While Fitchburg State has received no confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 infection, we need to act now to slow the spread of the virus,” Lapidus said in a statement. “To further that goal, we are

preparing and planning for the possibility of temporarily delivering course material remotely for all face-to-face courses. Therefore, we are going to suspend classes until Monday, March 23 (except for accelerated online programs). Students should not return to campus the week of March 16-20.”

Residence halls will be closed for the week, he said. The campus will otherwise remain open and faculty and staff should continue their regular work schedules, Lapidus said. During the break, all frequently touched surfaces and common areas on campus will be cleaned.

Lapidus said all work-related travel would be discontinued until further no-

tice, and large gatherings would be canceled or postponed for the next 30 days.

Last Friday, FSU canceled planned spring break programs to Greece and Ireland, as well as another upcoming trip to Germany. Lapidus said then that FSU students who were already studying in Italy had left the country, and that the university was contacting other students already or planning to study abroad this spring to consider returning or stay home.

“We understand these developments are causing great disappointment, but the health of our students and campus population is our top priority and we are heeding the advice of state and national authorities

FSU

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in determining not to go forward with these programs at this time," Lapidus wrote.

Several higher education institutions, including Harvard University and Amherst College, announced this week they were canceling all in-person courses and events after spring break and would move to an online format for the remainder of the semester amid coronavirus concerns.

Gov. Charlie Baker declared a state of emergency Tuesday after the number of coronavirus cases in Massachusetts more than doubled, and imposed travel restrictions for many state employees. Wednesday afternoon, the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

The same day, UMass President Marty Meehan announced the entire system will at least temporarily cancel in-person instruction and move to a remote learning model.

"With the sudden arrival and spread of COVID-19, it has had a profound impact obviously on Massachusetts and the world, and given the uncertainties and risks of the moment, and keeping with our commitment to the health and safety of the members of the UMass community, the five chancellors and I have decided to implement a remote teaching and learning plan to help to protect our 75,000 students and 18,000 faculty and staff from the spread of the coronavirus," Meehan said in a phone interview just after noon Wednesday.

"This is a complex and fast-evolving challenge — and so we think that this virus requires decisive and proactive measures — and we have an obligation to do our part in mitigating the spread of the virus here in



JOHN LOVE / SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE

Fitchburg State University President Richard Lapidus addresses the crowd at graduation in 2018. Lapidus said the university will explore remote learning opportunities.

Massachusetts," he added.

Meehan said a remote learning model "must be part of that contribution."

Students at the Amherst and Boston campuses will be advised to bring all of the books, computers and other items they need with them to study remotely home when they leave for spring break this week, he said. At the Lowell and Dartmouth campuses, which were already on spring break this week, the campuses will be formulating plans to allow students back to their dorms to retrieve everything they will need, Meehan said.

Remote instruction will begin March 16 and be held at least through April 3, while the situation is reassessed, he said. A decision will be made by April 1 as to whether students can return to the campuses or continue to learn remotely, Meehan said.

At UMass Medical School in Worcester, students will begin remote learning Thursday, Meehan said. He said medical students working in hospitals will continue to do so.

He said the campuses will remain open despite the temporary cancellation of in-person instruction. International students and others who are unable to

return home will be allowed to stay in the dorms on a case by case basis, Meehan said.

Most large gatherings on all of the campuses will be canceled. Hockey East Championship Quarterfinals games scheduled to be held at the Lowell and Amherst campuses this weekend will be played without spectators. Only credentialed personnel, student-athlete family members, credentialed media crews and official team party members will be allowed to attend. Refunds will be issued for tickets already purchased.

In a Tuesday communication to the campus community, Mount Wachusett Community College President James Vander Hooven said MWCC would follow Baker's travel restriction guidelines and announced a ban of all international, domestic and in-state college-sponsored student travel. He said MWCC would also cancel its hosting of the annual Naturalization Ceremony scheduled for next week.

In a Wednesday update on its website, MWCC announced all public events would be canceled through April 10 "out of an abundance of caution."

"I am asking that we all

continue to consider alternatives and preparedness in our work should we come to a time where a college closure is required," Vander Hooven said in the Tuesday statement. "I want to emphasize that we are not at this point today. But it would be prudent for us to be considering the ramifications."

Middlesex Community College President James Mabry, in a statement late Wednesday, said all face-to-face classes will be suspended the week after next week's spring break.

Further, spokesman Patrick Cook said earlier in the day that MCC made the decision last week to cancel upcoming international trips to Greece, Portugal and Belize, and has since also decided to cancel college-sponsored domestic travel during next week's spring break. He said the college is working with unions and departments on campus to try to recoup the costs associated with these trips.

Last week MCC implemented a voluntary travel form for students to note where they are traveling during spring break — especially if they might be areas impacted by COVID-19 — so that targeted cleanings can be performed where necessary, Cook said. Increased cleanings are already occurring in shared use, high traffic areas, he said.

He said a number of social events on both the Lowell and Bedford campuses have been canceled or postponed.

MCC's emergency management team, deans and faculty and staff met all day Wednesday to discuss business and academic continuity planning, he said.

Members of the administration have been looking at options for online learning and making sure employees and students have the capacity to move to online instruction if required, Cook said.

COLLEGE TOWN

By Scott O'Connell

Telegram & Gazette Staff

Police academy pact renewed

Fitchburg State University and the Massachusetts Municipal Police Training Committee last week renewed their agreement governing the school's new criminal justice program.

The five-year program, which Fitchburg State said may be the first of its kind in the country, allows students to obtain bachelor's and master's degrees as well as certification to work as a municipal police officer in the state.

The first cohort of students in the academy graduated two years ago, and approximately 30 more will complete their baccalaureate degrees in criminal justice this spring.

"The police program is founded on the principle that better education and training creates better police officers," Fitchburg State President Richard S. Lapidus said. "This program creates a clear path for dedicated students to pursue their ambitions to serve their communities in this vital, continually evolving profession."

COLLEGE TOWN

Composers of color

Choirs from across Massachusetts will perform music by composers of color in a free concert at Fitchburg State University's Weston Auditorium at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 22.

It will be the first time the university hosts the Intercollegiate Choral Festival, according to the

school. Nearly 200 students from nine institutions will perform.

"This performance will feature beautiful music by composers of color who are chronically under-performed," said Jonathan Harvey, who directs Fitchburg State's vocal groups. "It's a chance to hear amazing music that you may not get the chance to hear again."

FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

College offers teachers gender diversity course

By Daniel Monahan

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andenterprise.com

FITCHBURG » In an effort to promote inclusion and support in education, Fitchburg State University is offering a new course this spring for educators and school staff on supporting LGBTQIA and gender-diverse students.

Center for Professional Studies Assistant Director Dani Langdon, who is teaching the new course, said it's important that educators for K-12 students are familiar with issues surrounding sexual orientation and gender.

"We want to be sure that these students aren't left behind and that they're included

in the work that they're doing," said Langdon. "An inclusive classroom is incredibly important for the student's own development, for them to feel part of the group and they don't feel isolated."

Langdon said the class is an introduction to the challenges that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual students face in schools on a daily basis.

The course will explore myths and perceptions, the prevalence and effects of bullying, unintended bias in schools and classrooms, and the laws and policies in place that affect these students.

"Everyone goes into their day with preconceived notions and

COURSE » 8A



JOHN LOVE / SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE

Dani Langdon, Fitchburg State University assistant director of the Center for Professional Studies, displays the book she will be using in her new class supporting LGBTQIA and gender-diverse students in a K-12 environment.

Course

FROM PAGE 1A

hopefully this course will help teachers to stop and think about those things for a moment," she said. "I'm hoping, with this course, that I can help teachers dig deeper inward so they can use that and reflect on it to influence their curriculum."

It's important that students can see themselves in the material that's being taught, she said. In an English class, she said, a teacher could choose novels written by women of color or people with varying sexual orientations rather than only books written by straight men.

Langdon said the course will give educators the tools to navigate conversations around gender and sexual orientation, and foster a respectful and engaging environment where all students can thrive.

She said Massachusetts is overall very welcoming to students in the LGBTQ community, but that there's always room for improvement.

By understanding terminology, historical context, and preconceived notions of the LGBTQ community, educators can begin to create intentional, inclusive, and supportive learning environments.

The course, which carries one graduate credit or 15 Department of Elementary and Secondary Education-approved professional development points, will run April 4 to May 9.

There will be in-person sessions from 9 a.m. to noon on April 4 and May 2 at the Center for Professional Studies, 150B Main St. There will also be an additional nine hours of online coursework.

LOCAL

COLLEGE TOWN

Fitchburg State student attends forum in Africa

By Scott O'Connell

Telegram & Gazette Staff

A Fitchburg State University senior earned a unique trip to Africa in December to take part in a math and science conference in Malawi.

Matthew Foster of Groton was invited by his professor, Benjamin Levy, to attend the Southern Africa Mathematical Sciences Association conference, which gathers experts from around the world. The program in particular is focused on creating mathematical models to help world officials deal with the spread of infectious disease.

"I was impressed by Matt's work ethic and the questions he asked in class," Levy said. "For his capstone project he's working on an Ebola model, so both of our classes during the semester were mathematical-modeling based. As a result, he was an obvious fit for the trip."

"It was eye-opening," Foster said of the trip. "Going to a different country is an amazing experience, one you can't imagine until you've experienced it. It's not something everyone's going to get to do in their life, so I feel very lucky."

Levy hopes to bring more students to the conference in future years as well. "It's an experience I wish everyone could get," he said.

LOCAL NEWS

UPDATES AT [FACEBOOK.COM / SENTINELANDENTERPRISE](https://www.facebook.com/sentinelandenterprise) AND [TWITTER.COM / SENTANDENT](https://twitter.com/sentandent)

FSU

REMEMBERING THE BIG CHEESE



COURTESY OF MASSMOMENTS.ORG

In this undated photo, Robert Cormier discusses his approach to writing.

Staff Report

FITCHBURG » Fitchburg State University will open its Robert E. Cormier archive in February for an exploration of themes in the celebrated local author's enduring works.

“Twisted Intimacy:

Disturbing Perversions and Genuine Warmth – A Symposium and Archive Exhibit on Robert E. Cormier’s Life and Work” will be held from noon to 3 p.m. Feb. 25 in the main lounge of Hammond Hall on the Fitchburg State campus; with a reception to follow in the university

archives. Admission is free and open to the public.

The keynote speaker will be Jarrett J. Krosoczka, author and illustrator of the acclaimed graphic memoir, “Hey, Kiddo: How I Lost My Mother, Found My Father, and Dealt with Family Addic-

tion.”

The symposium programming, sponsored with support from The University of Texas at Tyler, will also include two expert panel discussions. The first, featuring Deborah Stone (nursing), Kori Ryan (behavioral

CORMIER » 6A

Cormier

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sciences), and Lynne Kellner (behavioral sciences) will offer an exploration of theory, research and writing from their fields that will help shed light on some of the more subversive themes at the heart of the symposium.

In the second panel, faculty and librarians from di-

verse fields — including Laura Baker (EHPS), Annamary Consalvo (education at UT Tyler), Katharine Covino (English studies), and Asher Jackson (archivist) — will showcase a collection of pedagogic strategies and suggestions for those interested in using archives with students.

Undergraduate students from FSU, including Sarah Desiderio, Gregor Goodlett, Paul Kariuki, Brigid

McCue, Kelly Mansfield, Peter Morales-Gomez, Lucinda Orne, Kat Pellerin, Matthew Sadowski, Lauren Saunders, Nicole Snow, Courtney Soares and Maggie Woelfel will serve on two panels exploring engagement with the Cormier archives as part of honors English I, writing I and young adult literature.

Symposium organizers Covino, Consalvo, and Elise Takehana can be contacted for further details.

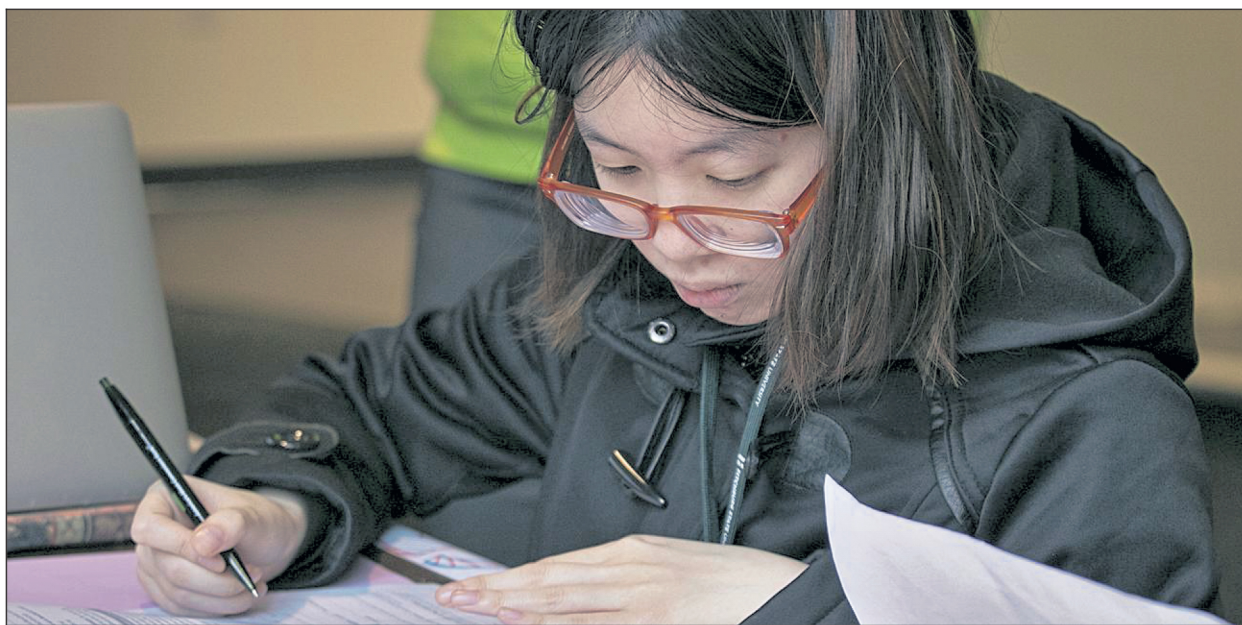
LOCAL NEWS

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VOTER ENGAGEMENT

STUDENTS GET READY FOR ELECTION SEASON



PHOTOS BY JOHN LOVE / SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE

The Massachusetts Student Public Interest Research Group was helping students register to vote in the March 3 primary at the dining hall at Fitchburg State University on Tuesday. MASSPIRG is a statewide student-directed, student-funded, nonpartisan organization engaging in research, education, service and action on environmental, consumer, higher education, voter registration and hunger relief issues. Catchy Nguyen, 23, from Malden registers to vote. Below right, Peter Sheppard, 19, from Ashland registers to vote.



Wade Williams, 19, from Warwick, gets some help from Emily Vitale, 19, the FSU chairman for MASSPIRG.



FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

FSU field hockey honored for academic excellence

Team earns 2019 Zag Field Hockey Team Academic award

By Submitted Article

The Fitchburg State field hockey team recently earned

the 2019 Zag Field Hockey/NFHCA Team Academic Award for achieving a cumulative team grade point average above 3.00.

The National Academic Squad recognizes those student-athletes who have achieved a cumulative GPA of 3.30 or higher through the first semester of the 2019-20 academic year, while also recognizing teams

who have cumulatively achieved a team GPA of 3.0 or higher.

In addition, eight Falcons were also named to the 2019 Zag Field Hockey/NFHCA Division III National Academic Squad for achieving a grade point average of 3.3 or high during the 2019 fall semester, with those players being senior Olivia Grant, junior Sophia Laperle

and freshmen Grace Kerr, Colleen Lamprey, Shelley Lielasus, Kayla Mathews, Lena Spadafore and Hannah Walters. Other members of the team were Sophia Sousa, Sarah Craig, Jordan Bartell, Sophia Morse, Yuleinny Salcedo, Joanna Ehnstrom, Chloe Gladu, Nicole Tocco, Maddison Arpano and Hannah Rivera.

NATIONAL COMPETITION

FSU students shine at Moot Court championship

Submitted Article

FITCHBURG » Fitchburg State University students earned three awards at this month's American Moot Court Association National Championship Tournament at the Southern University Law Center in Baton Rouge, La.

Fitchburg State seniors Matthew Murphy of Milton and Matthew Badagliacca of Fitchburg ranked 16th after the preliminary rounds of the national tournament, winning four of six possible ballots. They also placed seventh nationally in the brief-writing portion of the competition. Fitchburg State students Crystal Aneke of Boston and Samantha Beauchamp of Sutton placed ninth in brief writing.

This season, more than 500 teams competed in 15 regional tournaments for the right to advance to the 80-team national championship event. Fitchburg State hosted a regional match in November.

"The competition this year was as tough as I have ever seen," said Professor Paul Weizer, the longtime coach of the university's moot court teams.

"Yet, our students once again proved that they can compete with any school in the nation. This was an especially tight knit group who worked harder than any I have previously coached. It was nice to see that hard work rewarded before a national audience."



COURTESY OF FSU

Fitchburg State students Matthew Badagliacca, left, and Matthew Murphy at the American Moot Court Association National Championship this month in Louisiana.

LOCAL NEWS

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FITCHBURG HIGH

High school students drop by FSU



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FSU

Fitchburg High School students Cherish Racine, Joanne Moroney, Carter Allen and Verda Tetteh spent a day of winter break preparing for the AP Seminar exams at Fitchburg State University.

Submitted Article

FITCHBURG » More than a dozen students in Fitchburg High School's Honors Academy spent part of their February break hitting the books at Fitchburg State University.

Through the Honors Compact signed by the university and Fitchburg High, students in the Honors Academy are given university identification and access to institutional resources, including precollegiate advising and other benefits.

During the high school's February

break, English teacher Kathleen Hytinen brought 14 of her Advanced Placement Seminar students to Hammond Hall for a daylong session of preparation for upcoming multimedia presentations and oral defenses.

Students broke into teams to investigate the United Nations Global Goals and chose specific areas to explore in greater detail.

For example, Honors Academy student Emily Campbell explored medical issues in crowded cities, while Siena Armano focused on the environmental impacts of over-population. Jacob Guillemette was fo-

cus on social factors and transportation concerns, while Moet O'Donnell's research centered on economic aspects like affordable housing.

The campus visit was spent preparing for the first part of the AP Seminar exam, which is part of the school's AP capstone that is open to all Fitchburg High students.

The seminar students had decided to gather over the February break, but it was Hytinen's student teacher, Michaela Vick, a Fitchburg State senior majoring in secondary education with a concentration in

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FSU

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English, who suggested the students gather at Fitchburg State for the day.

The students enjoyed the change of scenery, as well as presentations on the university's Honors Program and lunch in its dining hall.

B.B. King's band brings the blues

FITCHBURG» The thrill lives on when Fitchburg State University's CenterStage arts and culture series welcomes The B.B. King Blues band featuring Michael Lee on Saturday, Feb. 8, starting at 8 p.m., in Weston Auditorium, 353 North St.

Tickets are \$28 for adults, \$25 for alumni and seniors, and \$5 for students, and can be ordered online at fitchburg-state.edu/centerstage.

For over half a century,

B.B. King and his band defined the blues to the world, averaging more than 250 sold-out concerts per year, with classics like "The Thrill Is Gone," "Every Day I Have The Blues," "How Blues Can You Get," and "Why I Sing The Blues."

Members of the original band have gotten together to continue touring in remembrance of B.B. King, now joined by Michael Lee, a contestant from the 2018 season of "The Voice" on

NBC.

The band has also added vocalist Claudette King, the youngest daughter of B.B. King and a member of the National Recording Academy. The band recently released their first album, "The Soul of the King," which features Taj Mahal, Kenny Wayne Sheppard, Joe Louis Walker and Kenny Neal, among others.

Call the Weston Auditorium box office at 978-665-3347.

B.B. King Blues Band at Fitchburg State

The thrill lives on when the B.B. King Blues Band featuring Michael Lee comes to Fitchburg State University Saturday. For over half a century, B.B. King and his band defined the blues to the world with classics such as “The Thrill Is Gone,” “Every Day I Have The Blues,” “How Blues Can You Get,” and “Why I Sing The Blues.” Members of the original band continue touring in remembrance of B.B. King, who passed away in 2015, joined by blues singer Michael Lee, who made it to the Live Playoffs in the 2018 season of “The Voice” on NBC, and vocalist Claudette King, the youngest daughter of B.B. King and a member of the National Recording Academy. Saturday’s show is part of the FSU CenterStage arts and culture series.

What: B.B. King Blues Band featuring Michael Lee

When: 8 p.m. Feb. 8

Where: Fitchburg State University, Weston Auditorium, 353 North St., Fitchburg.

How much: \$28; \$25 seniors and alumni; \$5 students. (978) 665-3347; www.fitchburgstate.edu/centerstage



FITCHBURG

A TASTE OF GREECE EXPANDS ON MAIN STREET



PHOTOS BY JOHN LOVE / SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE

Violet Labovitis brings out some pita bread to serve at the soft opening Friday of Bion, a restaurant serving authentic Greek food in Fitchburg at 356 Main St. The restaurant opened for delivery only in December.

Bion begins takeout service

By Daniel Monahan

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FITCHBURG » Opa! After a successful start to their business, owners of the Bion Greek Kitchen on Friday celebrated their triumph by unveiling a new sign for the store and inviting city officials to taste the authentic cuisine.

Bion's Chef Violet Labovitis carried several trays of baklava, spanakopita, fruit, and Greek

fries from the kitchen area to her guests.

"We started Bion to give everyone a taste of authentic Greek food by serving freshly prepared recipes," said Nicolas Labovitis, her son and general manager of the store.

Bion, located at 356 Main St., opened its doors to serve takeout meals on Dec. 19, and Nicolas says they've been having great success ever since.

"We're looking forward to

BION » 8A



Tyropita is a Greek pastry made with layers of buttered phyllo dough and filled with a cheese-egg mixture. It was served at Friday's event.

Bion

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the future,” he said.

Nicolas said the business started with just baklava in 2016 and quickly escalated to corporate catering before growing into their brick-and-mortar takeout counter.

Their baklava can still be found in stores like Market Basket, he added.

“We’re very excited about this next state of the business,” said owner Gregor Labovitis, Nicolas’s father.

Bion Greek Kitchen will be adding seating in the coming weeks and will have a grand opening when everything is set up for formal dining.

Nicolas said he moved to Fitchburg with his family in 2010, and has been here ever since.

City officials said they were happy to welcome the new business to Main Street, adding that they’ve been working closely with Bion to open its doors.

Bion has participated in the NewVue Community Small Business Assistance Program, received support from the ReImagine North of Main initiative, and received funding from the City’s Community Development Block Grant program.

“We couldn’t be happier,” said Mayor Stephen DiNatale. “The restaurant business is ever changing and it’s very difficult to get into and be successful (...) we always go out of our way to help out businesses like Bion to be successful.”

DiNatale said he was thrilled that Bion Greek Kitchen will be part of the rejuvenation of Main Street and the downtown area, adding that he’s been brushing up on the Greek language for the occasion.



JOHN LOVE / SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE

Bion owner Violet Labovitis makes up their Souvlaki platter in their new kitchen.



Bion is located at 356 Main St., Fitchburg.



JOHN LOVE / SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE

From left at the restaurant’s opening are owners Violet Labovitis, Nicolas Labovitis, Fitchburg Mayor Stephen DiNatale, Fitchburg State University President Richard Lapidus, Director of ReImagine North of Main Joe Ferguson, owner Gregor Labovitis and Executive Director of NewVue Marc Do-

Effort to keep pool open is sunk



JOHN LOVE / SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE

The Fitchburg State University pool at the Recreation Center on North Street in Fitchburg.

By Daniel Monahan

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FITCHBURG » Residents and state officials alike have been fighting to keep the Fitchburg State University Recreation Center Pool open for several months but the effort appears to be on its last leg following a Board of Trustees meeting Tuesday morning.

During the meeting, Fitchburg State University President Richard Lapidus said the Recreation Center is in need of some costly improvements and the university will likely be moving forward with plans that don't feature the pool.

"At this point, this has dragged on long enough," said Lapidus. "Barring something that we haven't considered or thought of, it's going to be my recommendation that we close the pool and ask Capital Planning to look into some architectural opportunities to sort of reimagine that space."

Lapidus said the closing of the pool was primarily a "resource allocation issue," adding that it's the university's responsi-

bility to spend money in areas that benefit its students.

"The university, in fulfilling its mission, has to think about our primary constituents first and those are our students," said Lapidus. "We'd love to be everything to everyone, but it's not always possible."

Members of the Preserve the Pool Committee, many of whom were in attendance for Tuesday's meeting, said they were disappointed in the outcome.

"We did the best we could with the situation," said committee chairwoman Nancy Foss-Yasko. "I am just outraged that they would make this kind of decision. I want the governor to step in and tell them to cease and desist until more investigation has been done."

Though she felt discouraged, Foss-Yasko said she was not giving up the fight.

"We're not going anywhere and this committee will continue to fight to save the pool," she said.

Francis Freel was the coach of the Leominster High swim team before the pool closed. The team of nearly 60 students co-

opted with Fitchburg, Lunenburg, Parker Charter, Monty Tech and North Middlesex.

Freel said the team officially canceled its season in mid-December after the pool's closing and a majority of the swimmers gave up on competing this year.

"Some of the kids were able to co-op with other teams at the last minute," said Freel. "Outside of a dozen or less kids, everybody lost their season."

Freel said the loss was extremely disappointing, especially considering the team went from being at "the bottom of the barrel" two years ago to being a top-five team in competitions.

Lapidus said the team had plenty of time to find a new home before the start of its season.

"They knew in mid-August, early September that we were having problems with the pool," said Lapidus. "There really was ample time for them to make that move if they so desired."

Freel said logistically the Fitchburg State pool was best suited to host a team of

Pool

FROM PAGE 1A

this size, and that going elsewhere meant losing a majority of the team.

Lapidus said the university is primarily concerned with declining attendance at the facility, ongoing mechanical issues, and increasing student interest in the Recreation Center.

Supporters of the pool deny those assertions and instead argue the pool has been mismanaged, under marketed, and has the potential to make additional revenue through offered programs or rentals.

When pool closed in early December, Fitchburg State University officials said the issue was with the main pump and a chemical imbalance.

"We have a compounding set of mechanical problems," said Lapidus. "The pump is part of it but there are a whole array of problems that have been starting to manifest themselves."

To repair the pool, said Lapidus, the university would need to shell out \$460,000 for parts and labor.

Foss-Yasko disagreed and later said the university hasn't been honest with students and the community.

She said several experts have explained to her that the repairs to the pool wouldn't cost nearly that much.

"This is just outrageous," she said, alleging the administration wasn't being truthful.

Lapidus said attendance at the Recreation Center as a whole has been declining over the past few years, which has been a cause for concern.

Just nine people will use the pool on a good day, he said, and about two people will use it on a bad one.

Foss-Yasko and her supporters would argue that the low turnout at the pool stems from the university's failure to advertise its availability or to offer more programs.

Lapidus said the Recreation Center has capacity for aerobic exercise and weight training, but students have long complained about the equipment.

"Students have regularly complained the space is crowded and wait times for equipment is long and have asked for alternative opportunities," he said.

Lapidus said the university is trying to move forward with a plan to utilize the space efficiently and in a way that supports the needs of students.

He said the cost of filling in the pool and preparing the space for an alternative use would be

about \$367,000.

The university would likely request input from students during the design process for the space, said Lapidus.

Dr. Nell Naideth, an optometry specialist in Fitchburg, said filling in the pool would take away a vital resource for her.

"It's outrageous," said Naideth, who uses the university's ALFA program, a swimming program for adults. "I've had cancer three times and it spread to my lungs. Water aerobics is the best form of exercise for people like me because being in the water helps build your lung capacity."

Lapidus said it costs about \$66,000 a year to operate the pool and the amount of revenue it generates is "very, very small."

Jacque Renwick, the aquatics director at Mount Wachusett Community College in Gardner, said the FSU pool is an asset to the community and could generate more income if handled properly.

"Fitchburg State University could do something to help children learn how to swim," said Renwick. "You have an opportunity to make a difference in your community. Don't let this precious resource fall by the wayside and don't let anyone tell you that it cannot be done — it can."

Renwick said the university could bolster its efforts if it hired an aquatics director.

Lapidus said the hiring process is done in a holistic fashion at the university, meaning it would assess what positions are the greatest need. He said that list would include mental health counselors or tutors.

Lapidus said the ALFA program would be moving to the YMCA in Fitchburg. Faculty and alumni currently utilizing the pool also had their memberships transferred there.

He said student employees staffing the pool were offered jobs in different areas of the Recreation Center.

Committee member Stephen Holt, an avid user of the pool, said he only wanted an opportunity to sit down with university officials and discuss ways to help the pool reopen.

Several state legislators recently threw their weight behind the issue by sending letters to Lapidus, offering him aid to keep the pool open, including Fitchburg state Sen. Dean Tran and state Rep. Natalie Higgins.

Leominster Recreation Director Judith Sumner addressed the committee during the meeting and told the board that Leominster's Mayor Dean Mazarella is in favor of the pool staying open.