

NATIONAL MOOT COURT TOURNAMENT

FSU students take second at tourney

Submitted Article

FITCHBURG » Fitchburg State University's storied history in the American Moot Court Association's national tournament continued Jan. 21-23 when the team of students including Benjamin Hill and Maylynn Velazquez scored second in the country in the brief-writing competition, according to a press release from the university.

In the moot court competition, teams of students argue opposing sides of a hypothetical legal case, as in an appellate court proceeding. This year's hypothetical case concerned whether a presidential vaccine requirement violated the U.S. Constitution. Students in the competition had to prepare arguments for both sides of the case, according to the university.

"I am very proud of this

group of students," said professor Paul Weizer of the university's Economics, History and Political Science Department, and the founder of the university's moot court program. "They worked hard, supported one another through a very difficult semester, and produced great results. I continue to be in awe of the resiliency of our students. They competed against some of the most prestigious programs in the country and

made Fitchburg State proud."

In addition to making oral arguments on the legal issues at hand, team members submitted written briefs. Hill, a senior majoring in political science and history, and Vazquez, a senior majoring in political science, scored second in the country in that portion of the competition.

Hill said he relished the chance to compete against big-

FSU » 8A



COURTESY FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Fitchburg State University's moot court teams competed in the national tournament Jan 21-23. From left, Benjamin Hill, Maylynn Velazquez, Miranda Gustin and Anthony Marcella. Hill and Velazquez scored second in the nation in the brief-writing portion of the competition.

FSU

FROM PAGE 1A

name schools, especially those with larger pre-law programs.

"I take that to mean I'm competing against the brightest students in the country," he said. "Public speaking makes me nervous, but once a round begins and I'm going head-to-head against someone from one of these schools, the nerves disappear."

Hill, in his second year on the moot court team, credited the preparation by Weizer and coaches Christine Brigham and Alyne Butland for Fitchburg State's continued strong showing year after year. Brigham and Butland are both Fitchburg State alumni and participated in moot court as undergraduate students, and now work as attorneys. Fitchburg State's program has been nationally ranked by the moot court association, ahead of institutions including Michigan State, Duke University, Holy Cross and Morehouse College.

"Competing against some of the most brilliant individuals from throughout the nation was an intimidating experience, but

I had no doubt that my partner and I were capable of performing at an equal if not better level," Velazquez said. "Our coaches spent hours preparing us, and that paid off immensely throughout every argument."

"I've always wanted to pursue some form of a legal career, but I wasn't sure if I'd be cut out for it," Hill said. "My time in moot court has shown me that I do have what it takes to pursue that dream. I can proudly say that my coaches and my effort put me in a position to write better than students from Yale, USC, the Air Force Academy, Vanderbilt, University of Chicago, etc., and I utilized that opportunity and beat all those teams. There aren't words to describe how that feels."

Hill said he's still not a fan of public speaking, but has learned how to compartmentalize his fears when he needs to achieve an objective.

"I'd like to thank Dr. Weizer and the coaches for taking the time to guide us through this experience; my history adviser, Dr. Christine Dee, for convincing me to try moot court that first year; my parents for putting such a large emphasis on academic excellence my whole life; and

my moot court partner, Maylynn Velazquez, for her excellent first-year performance, allowing me to end my final year of moot court with a podium finish."

Velazquez said she and Hill spent many long nights in the library honing their arguments for the written briefs, looking to create a document that would pass muster with the highest court in the land.

"My moot court experience has affirmed my decision to pursue law school and one day become an attorney," she said. "I never imagined I would be so interested in appellate law but moot court has opened a new realm and a possible future career path."

She added she was mindful of the responsibility of keeping up Fitchburg State's history of success in the competition.

"I am honored to have been able to contribute to that success and I hope to do the same thing next year," she said.

Fitchburg State students Miranda Gustin of Leicester and Anthony Marcella of Boxboro also advanced to the national competition after a strong showing in the regional tournament last November.

OPINION

Kevin Corrado, Regional Publisher
Bruce Castleberry, Senior Editor

Michael Sheehan, Regional VP of Circulation
Dennis West, Circulation Director

FITCHBURG-LEOMINSTER, MASSACHUSETTS

FITCHBURG SENTINEL, 1838 LEOMINSTER-ENTERPRISE, 1873 INCORPORATED 1973

sentinelandenterprise.com

Not up for debate: FSU team excels

And speaking of education excellence, Fitchburg State University's record of success in the American Moot Court Association's national tournament continued last month when the team of students including Benjamin Hill and Maylynn Velazquez placed second nationally in the brief-writing competition, according to a press release from the university.

In the moot court competition, student teams argue opposing sides of a hypothetical legal case.

This year, that case sought to determine whether a presidential vaccine requirement violated the U. S. Constitution. Students in the competition had to prepare for both sides of the argument.

"I am very proud of this group of students," said Professor Paul Weizer of the university's Economics, History and Political Science Department, and founder of the university's moot court program.

In addition to making oral arguments, team members submitted written briefs. Hill, a senior majoring in political science and history, and Vazquez, a senior majoring in political science, scored second in that portion of the competition.

Hill said he relished the chance to compete against big-name name schools, especially those with larger prelaw programs.

Hill, in his second year on the moot court team, credited the preparation by Weizer and coaches Christine Brigham and Alyne Butland for FSU's strong showing year after year.

FSU's program has been nationally ranked by the moot court association, ahead of institutions including Michigan State, Duke University, Holy Cross and Morehouse College.

There's no debate: FSU's moot court team is a force to be reckoned with.

Editorial

FSU-Lowell *program gives a needed boost*

It's not every day when two public-education systems collaborate to create beneficial career opportunities.

But that's what Lowell Public Schools and Fitchburg State University have accomplished.

And now, according to a joint press release, they're expanding that longstanding relationship of nurturing future education leaders.

In 2005, Lowell Public Schools and the United Teachers of Lowell created the Lowell Teacher Academy to support new and experienced educators through mentorship and professional-development opportunities.

Since its creation, the LTA has partnered with FSU to provide a Master's in Curriculum and Teaching program to qualified staff in Lowell Public Schools.

This nonlicensure online program prepares enrollees to apply educational theory, research and curriculum to improve teaching skills, enhance student performance and/or transition to school leadership roles.

As part of the curriculum, participants examine and evaluate emerging research, learn to apply appropriate educational curricula, establish inclusive learning environments for all students, and foster educational partnerships with families and members of the community.

Since then, surveys and discussions with staff have revealed a desire for a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies Program offered through the LTA.

This spring, FSU will debut a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in Educational Leadership and Management. A nonlicensure program, it's available to Lowell Public School staff interested in becoming administrators.

"We are grateful to Fitchburg State for this opportunity to allow staff to prepare themselves for future leadership roles within our district," said Lowell Teacher Academy Director Pina Maggio.

"This program marks another important milestone in our continuing collabora-

tion with the Lowell Public Schools," said FSU Dean of Education and Business Nancy Murray.

"The educators who take advantage of this opportunity will be well-prepared for leadership roles within the district and beyond," Murray said.

The two-year program will start this spring, and the other in the fall.

"I was so excited when Lowell said they had finally partnered with Fitchburg State to offer a CAGS program in house," said Rogers STEM Academy special education teacher Liz Borrelli, who has been accepted into the program.

"Ultimately, I would love to become an assistant principal in Lowell."

Through the program, FSU applies a special rate for LPS staff members, who are also eligible for tuition reimbursement from the school district. Courses are taught in Lowell, by Lowell administrators.

One of those instructors, Lowell Public Schools Chief Financial Officer Billie Jo Turner, said she's looking forward to providing insight into the day-to-day workings of a school district business office.

"I thought this was an opportunity to teach our district leaders more about school finance in a fashion that would be most beneficial to them," Turner said. "... I want to mirror the instruction to what a true-life business office does and how it impacts the district leaders and their roles."

Both the Master's in Curriculum and Teaching, and Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in Educational Leadership and Management programs give Lowell educators an in-house opportunity for advancement likely not available in other school districts.

Fitchburg State University and Lowell Public Schools should be commended for making these forward-thinking programs available.

FITCHBURG

DANIELLE RAY / SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE

U.S. Rep. Lori Trahan stands under the Theater Block marquee on Tuesday for the presentation of \$3 million in American Rescue Plan Act grant funding for the renovation of the block. She's flanked by Rep. Michael Kushmerek, Fitchburg Mayor Stephen DiNatale, Fitchburg State University President Richard Lapidus and state Sen. John Cronin.

ARPA grant will fund Theater Block reno

FSU gets \$3M for project

By Danielle Ray

dray@sentinelandenterprise.com

FITCHBURG » Local and state officials and interested parties gathered downtown on Tues-

day morning for the presentation of \$3 million in American Rescue Plan Act grant funding to Fitchburg State University that will be used to renovate the historic Theater Block on

Main Street.

State Sen. John Cronin, Mayor Stephen DiNatale, state Rep. Michael Kushmerek and U.S. Rep. Lori Trahan all spoke at the event representing the city, joining FSU President Richard Lapidus and other officials and interested parties for the grant presentation ceremony, which

was filmed by Fitchburg Access Television under the Theater Block marquee at 721 Main St.

"It feels like momentum," Cronin said of the realization of the much-anticipated project. "Today is truly in every sense of the word a team effort. It's going to have a huge impact."

GRANT » 8A

Grant

FROM PAGE 1A

Cronin went on to thank DiNatale “for investing in the city,” beginning with the City Hall renovation project last year, and Lapidus and FSU for having a “shared belief and vision.”

The Theater Block, a long-vacant section of Main Street that FSU purchased in 2016, is slated for a multiphase, multimillion project that will feature an interdisciplinary learning space that will include a theater to benefit both students and community members. The long-term plan for the Theater Block includes the game design studio and ideaLab that are already in place, with future phases to include a black box theater and the restoration of the main theater space.

Trahan praised Cronin, DiNatale and Kushmerek for their roles in helping to secure the funding and their ongoing dedication to the long-awaited project.

“I am so excited to join my colleagues,” Trahan said, adding that the theater will house 1,200 seats and serve as an arts and culture center in addition to creating dozens of permanent jobs as well as many construction jobs.

“This is precisely the kind of projects Congress envisioned,” she said of the ARPA funding that came about because of the COVID-19 pandemic. “I look forward to working with everyone to maximize this funding. This investment will continue right down Main Street.”

DiNatale said he is thrilled to have the funding for the project, but that he knows “that this is not enough.”

“We must continue with this partnership ... with a shared vision,” he said.

He said the city has “always had great support at the State House,” and thanked Cronin, Kushmerek and Trahan for their “unrivaled commitment” to Fitchburg, which he envisions becoming “the North Central hub of arts and culture.”

“We are investing in our future, together as a team,” DiNatale said.



DANIELLE RAY PHOTOS / SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE

The multiphase Fitchburg State University Theater Block project being funded by a \$3 million American Rescue Plan Act grant will feature a 1,200-seat theater, interdisciplinary learning space and more.



Fitchburg Mayor Stephen DiNatale speaks to those gathered downtown Tuesday morning.

Kushmerek said the presentation of the funding “culminates a decade long effort,” and that “there is no better partner we have than Congressman Trahan.”

He commended Cronin for “really taking

the lead” on the project funding and thanked the mayor for “advocating for the revival” of downtown.

“Here we are, this is the point of no return,” Kushmerek said of the Main Street project that “starts



Fitchburg State University President Richard Lapidus said community leaders are ‘really excited’ about the historic Theater Block renovation project.

at Morin Square and goes to the Upper Common,” noting that the theater is “one of the most historic buildings in Fitchburg.”

“We hope this will be a symbol of the next gilded age of Fitchburg,” he said.

Lapidus said FSU is

“really excited” about the project finally coming to fruition and that they “pride ourselves on arts.” He referred to DiNatale being an FSU alumnus and said that the educational institution has “bought into the reality of creative

arts and community.”

“We look forward to future announcements about this project,” Lapidus said, with Cronin adding that there will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony in the future as the project progresses.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Fitchburg State to celebrate Black History Month with a slate of events

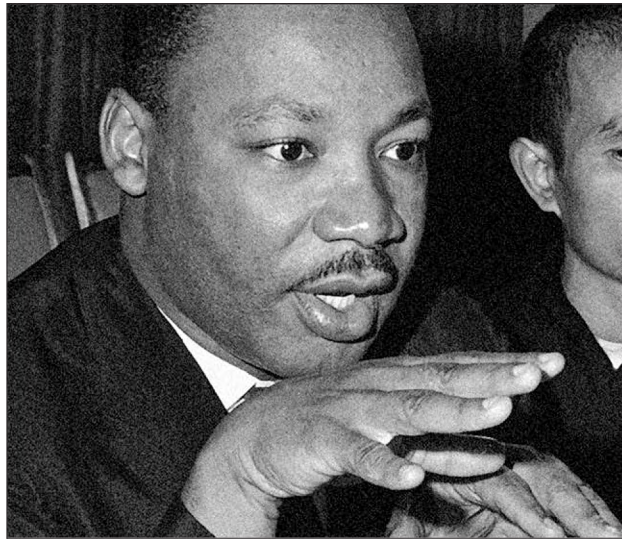
Submitted Article

FITCHBURG » Fitchburg State University celebrates Black History Month in February with a series of virtual and in-person events organized around the theme of Black health and wellness, according to an announcement from the university.

The events are free and open to the public. Face coverings are required inside campus buildings, and visitors will be asked to attest they are free of COVID-19 symptoms.

The theme for this year's observance was inspired by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. This theme acknowledges the legacy of not only Black scholars and medical practitioners in Western medicine, but also other ways of knowing (e.g., birth workers, doulas, midwives, naturopaths, herbalists, etc.) throughout the African diaspora. The 2022 theme considers activities, rituals and initiatives that Black communities have done to be well.

Programming begins this month, with events celebrating the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The campus will host a screening of the film "King in the Wilderness" at



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

6:30 p.m. Wednesday in Ellis White Lecture Hall in Hammond Hall. The documentary focuses on the final two years of King's life, leading up to his assassination on April 4, 1968. The film highlights events in King's life and the Civil Rights movement including the Chicago Freedom Movement, the James Meredith march, the anti-Vietnam War protests and King's "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence" speech, the 1967 riots, preparation for the Poor People's Campaign, the Memphis sanitation strike, the "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech, and King's assassination and funeral.

The campus begins its celebration of Black History Month with "Radical Self Love," a virtual presentation by Porsha Olayiwola, at 6:30 p.m. Feb. 1. This workshop teaches and beckons for participants to glorify themselves. Using writings from Nikki Giovanni, Toni Morrison and Kendrick Lamar, this writing workshop seeks to establish a safe space within ourselves and use radical self-love to explore art in a way that offers up praise to the people we are and the people we are becoming.

Porsha Olayiwola is a writer, performer, educator and curator, originally from Chicago and now a resident of Boston. She is an Individual World Poetry Slam Champion and the artistic director at MassLEAP, a literary youth organization. Olayiwola is an master's in fine arts degree candidate at Emerson College. She is the author of "I Shimmer Sometimes, Too," forthcoming from Button Poetry, and is the current poet laureate for the city of Boston. Register to join the virtual event at bit.ly/3AjDiKc.

Also in February, the campus will host a screening of the Academy Award-winning film "Judas and the Black Messiah" at 6:30 p.m.



Porsha Olayiwola

Feb. 8, in Ellis White Lecture Hall in Hammond Hall. The biographical crime drama depicts the betrayal of Fred Hampton (played in an Oscar-winning performance by Daniel Kaluuya), chairman of the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party in late 1960s Chicago, by William O'Neal (played by an Oscar-nominated Lakeith Stanfield), an FBI informant. The film was lauded by critics, who praised King's direction, the performances and its timely themes. The film earned six Oscar nominations at last year's Academy Awards.

The campus will host a screening of the film "Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools" at 6:30 p.m. Feb. 22, in Ellis White Lecture Hall in Hammond Hall. Inspired by the groundbreaking book of the same name by Monique W. Morris, "Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools" takes a deep dive into the lives of Black girls and the practices, cultural beliefs and policies that disrupt one of the most important factors in their lives — education. Alarming, African-American girls are the fastest-growing population in the juvenile justice system and the only group of girls to disproportionately experience criminalization at every education level.

A full list of programs can be found online at fitchburgstate.edu/bhm.

LOCAL NEWS

UPDATES AT FACEBOOK.COM / SENTINELANDENTERPRISE AND TWITTER.COM / SENTANDENT

sentinelandenterprise.com

FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

On mental wellness

Future Educators Academy spotlights being well

Submitted article

FITCHBURG » The Future Educator Academy at Fitchburg State University recently welcomed a cohort of local high school students to campus for a day of programming, with more than 20 students completing a badge focused on mental wellness in the classroom and a badge on performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation to adults and infants, according to a university press release.

The academy is designed to address ongoing demographic shifts by recruiting and training future educators from traditionally underrepresented populations. According to the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, about 40% of the state's public school students are of color, but only 10% of their teachers

WELLNESS » 4A



COURTESY OF FSU

Local high school students learned how to perform CPR as part of the recent training they received at Fitchburg State University through its Future Educator Academy. The program is designed to address ongoing demographic shifts by recruiting and training future educators from traditionally underrepresented populations.



COURTESY OF FSU

Local high school students learned about mental wellness in the classroom during a session at Fitchburg State University's Future Educator Academy.

Wellness

FROM PAGE 3A

come from minority groups, said Lourdes Ramirez, coordinator of field placements, partnerships and recruitment for Fitchburg State's School of Education.

"We want to offer relevant programming that will provide high school students with marketable skills, while seeing themselves as future educators and change makers," Ramirez said. "This is a very exciting initiative and we have received strong support from the high schools and district-level administrators."

The program's future educators participate in workshops that allow them to earn badges that will ultimately result in leadership

certificates from Fitchburg State. The program participants also get access to free, credit-bearing university courses they can apply toward their degree as part of early college engagement. The academy's programs focus on culturally relevant education that values students' cultural, linguistic and ethnic contributions as future teachers.

Students from Fitchburg High School and Leominster High School recently visited the university campus for training on supporting student mental wellness in the classroom. The 4.5-hour program, led by Fitchburg State Professor Megan Krell from the Behavioral Sciences Department, included strategies to support student learning, universal design for learning, trauma-

informed teaching, and the growth mindset.

Leominster High School student Janelis Delgado found the presentation informative.

"I learned how to keep everyone's feelings and home life in mind when dealing with each, and also learned how to promote growth," Delgado said.

Another group of students, meanwhile, received certification to perform CPR at a session led by Fitchburg State University Police Officer Timothy C. Grant. The training showed these future educators how to evaluate an emergency situation, and how to perform CPR, and how to use an automated external defibrillator if needed.

The academy will continue in the spring with additional programming.

LOCAL NEWS

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

sentinel

FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Study of Italian colonialism continues

Submitted Article

FITCHBURG » The Center for Italian Culture at Fitchburg State University continues its look at the legacy of Italian colonialism with a virtual guest lecture that will put Italy's imperial march to Ethiopia into context as the campus community continues its discussion of author Maaza Mengiste's acclaimed novel "The Shadow King" at 3:30 p.m. Jan. 25, according to a press release from the university.

The virtual event features professor Roy Domenico for a guest lecture on "Italy's Imperial March to Ethiopia." Domenico, chair of the Department of History at the University of Scranton, will look at the history of fascism in Italy and lay the historical groundwork for "The Shadow King."

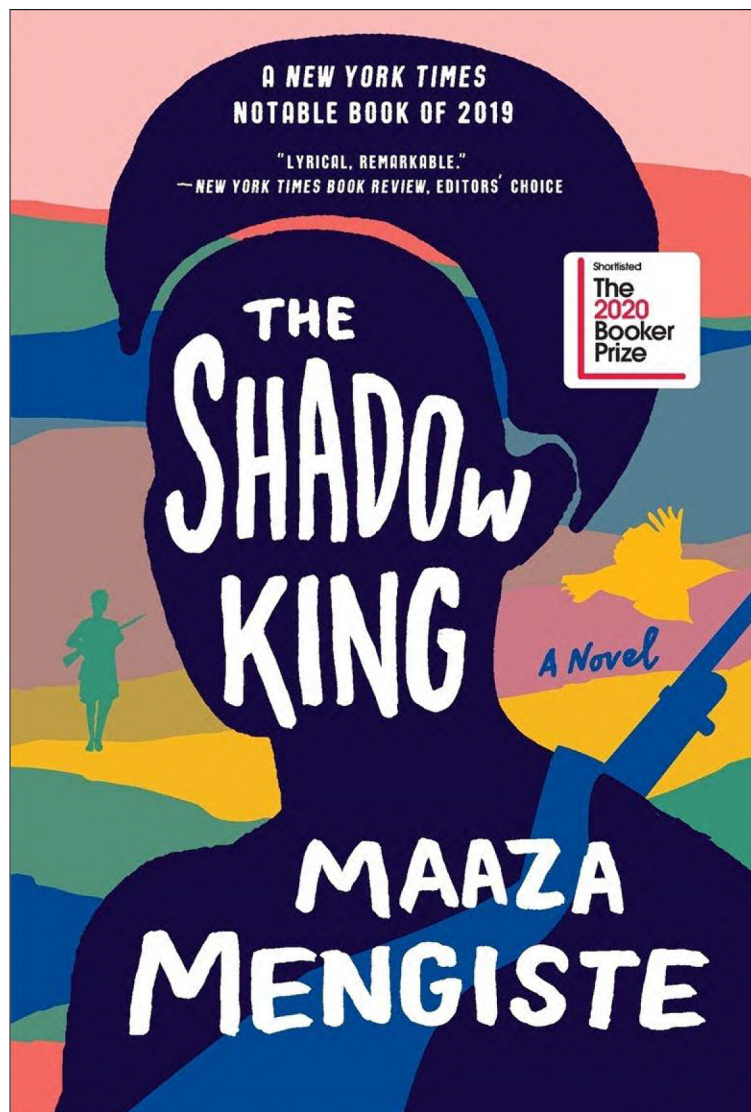
To join the video discussion, visit <https://meet.google.com/edg-vren-jpr>. Or join by phone at 567-250-1611 and enter PIN: 200 754 892 #. The talk can also be viewed as a livestream at tinyurl.com/9uperx94.

The lecture is part of the Center for Italian Culture's series "Confronting Italian Colonialism," a deep dive into Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in the 1930s. A read-

The series concludes with a virtual keynote address by 'Shadow King' author Maaza Mengiste at 3:30 p.m. Feb. 15. Born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Mengiste was a Fulbright Scholar and professor in the MFA in Creative Writing & Literary Translation program at Queens College.

ing group discussion of the novel originally scheduled for today has been postponed and will be rescheduled.

The series concludes with a virtual keynote address by "Shadow King" author Maaza Mengiste at 3:30 p.m. Feb. 15. Details on how to view the event will be posted to the university website at fitchburgstate.edu in



COURTESY FSU

The Fitchburg State University campus community continues its discussion of author Maaza Mengiste's acclaimed novel "The Shadow King" at 3:30 p.m. Jan. 25.

advance of the discussion.

Born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Mengiste was a Fulbright Scholar and professor in the MFA in Creative Writing & Literary Translation program at Queens College. Her novels include "The Shadow King," which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and the HWA Gold Crown, and "Beneath the

Lion's Gaze," named one of the Guardian's Ten Best Contemporary African Books. Her work can be found in The New Yorker, Granta and The New York Times, among other publications. She lives in New York City.

Learn more about the Center for Italian Culture's series at fitchburgstate.edu/cic.