

Editorial

UML, FSU offer innovative course options

Two of our region’s major universities have recently unveiled innovative programs designed to help students make the best of academic and real-world opportunities awaiting them.

Along with their classroom teacher, students from Billerica, Dracut and Methuen high schools will have the opportunity to access another academic resource — UMass Lowell professors teaching a variety of subjects, including ethics, economics, business law, environmental science, accounting and forensics.

And Fitchburg State University will soon offer a new bachelor’s degree program in Digital Media Innovation, providing students with a state-of-the-art, interdisciplinary education on topics of emerging importance.

The UMass Lowell initiative’s part of the University of Massachusetts’ Commonwealth Collegiate Academy, an early college pilot program funded by a renewable Incubator Grant from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

“By exposing high school students to college level courses and faculty, we can empower students who may not have considered a college education possible,” said Joseph C. Hartman, the university’s provost and vice chancellor for academic and student affairs, who disclosed the program will begin this fall.

According to Francine Coston, who leads the university’s early college initiatives, UMass Lowell hopes to expand course options and the number of high schools participating in the coming years.

The university’s goal is to eventually offer students different curricula — in STEM, business, liberal arts — to focus toward a specific degree. However, Coston noted that many of the courses offered will fill the general course requirements of multiple disciplines.

That in turn could save incoming students a full year of college costs, including tuition, fees, plus room and board.

“We want to get to a place where, by the time a student graduates high school, they can enter college as a sophomore,” said Coston, emphasizing that while the hope is they choose to become a UML River Hawk, the credits can seamlessly transfer anywhere in Massachusetts and out of state.

Hartman praised the advantages of pairing a familiar high school teacher with the college professor.

“... We’re so grateful to partner with them and with high school guidance counselors to ease the transition to college, minimize costs and launch these students into their careers as college graduates,” he said.

According to Fitchburg State University’s website, degree participants will “develop a wide range of new digital skills that span social media, multimedia storytelling, information design, data studies, and coding to meet the needs of a flexible and changing global economy.”

Matthew Bruun, director of communications and public affairs at FSU, said this novel initiative “offers students an innovative and adaptive pathway model that provides cutting-edge digital skills through hands-on experiential learning.”

Students choose a course of study worth 33 credits, which may include a semester overseas in Greece or Japan and internships.

In addition to integrating academic work with community engagement, students also must complete a capstone project, which will be community-oriented and geared around both scholarship and professional development, giving students the ability to develop a portfolio for future employment.

Although the program will be housed in the Communications Media department, faculty members span multiple university departments, including computer science, earth and geographic sciences, English studies, and humanities.

The degree is federally STEM-designated, which means the coursework includes subject matter in science, technology, engineering, and math, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education’s classification of instructional programs.

Graduates’ skills will allow an entrée into a variety of careers, including journalism, social media management, web development, digital media startups, data analytics, and multimedia production.

Digital Media Innovation graduates will receive a bachelor of science degree unless the student has advanced intermediate proficiency in a world language; in which case a bachelor of arts will be awarded.



COURTESY FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Digital Media Innovation students at Fitchburg State University.

Have your say: Letters and comments up to 250 words will be considered for publication. All letters must include a full name, address and daytime phone number, plus any affiliations that would place your opinion in context. Letter policy and additional letters are available at SENTINELANDENTERPRISE.COM

FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Facilitating international collaboration, negotiation skills

By Matthew Bruun

Fitchburg State University

FITCHBURG » Students at Fitchburg State University pursuing careers in education will be able to enhance their creative negotiation skills through a new international partnership launching this fall.

Dean of Education Nancy

Murray learned about the Game Changers in Education program and immediately saw the value for teacher-candidates in learning how to interact with people of different cultural backgrounds — including colleagues, parents, and students.

“All of these skills will benefit our teacher candidates as they develop the skills to be leaders

in the field of education,” Murray said.

The Game Changers in Education program, conducted by the non-profit PATHWAYS Institute for Negotiation Education, brings together education majors and pre-service teachers from the U.S. and diverse communities in Israel for interactive joint learning and facilitated on-

line exchange focused on developing and applying creative negotiation skills in their schools and communities.

Starting this month as a pilot program, four junior-year Fitchburg State teacher candidates will take part in a one-credit series of virtual seminars in which they will interact with other fu-

SKILLS » PAGE 9

Skills

FROM PAGE 1

ture educators from the U.S. and Israel.

“This provides an outstanding opportunity for our students to develop and master creative problem solving and negotiation skills that they otherwise would not have,” said Professor Karen DeAngelis of the university’s Education Department. “The opportunity to work with a diverse group of students in the U.S. and abroad developing critical negotiation skills will both improve their teaching practices and afford them an opportunity to collaborate with students from diverse backgrounds.”

The rigors and prerequisites of the Education program can make study abroad a challenging fit for some students, DeAngelis said. This program will give them that experience of international exchange without having to leave campus.

The Game Changers in Education program is supported by the Stevens Initiative, which is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, with funding provided by the U.S. government and administered by the Aspen Institute.

Avi Goldstein, the founder and international executive director of PATHWAYS, said the program curriculum fosters skills that will make today’s students future leaders and problem-solvers.

In paired exercises, group dialogues, and team-based project work, participants develop intercultural understanding and global awareness while acquiring practical, research-based pedagogical and professional tools, Goldstein explained. Through the experiential curriculum, participants build their skills and self-confidence while exploring how the vital mind-

sets and skills of cooperative, interest-based negotiation can be incorporated into their roles as change-makers in education.

Murray, the dean of education, and Goldstein first connected in 2021 and discussions about Fitchburg State partnering with PATHWAYS began soon thereafter. “This opportunity was so unique in how it

enables our undergraduate teacher-candidates to interact with other teacher candidates from other cultural backgrounds,” she said.

“I’m really excited and I’m grateful to Nancy for connecting the dots,” Goldstein added.

The pilot program on Fitchburg State’s campus launches with its first cohort in October.

FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Grant will help combat food insecurity

University awarded \$3,000 by nonprofit Swipe Out Hunger

By **Matthew Bruun**

Fitchburg State University

FITCHBURG » A \$3,000 grant from the nonprofit Swipe Out Hunger will help Fitchburg State University increase its efforts to combat food insecurity.

The grant was announced at the ribbon-cutting for Fitchburg State's new community outreach center in Hammond Hall. The center includes the Falcon Bazaar, which has for years supported campus community members with food insecurity, and the professional clothing closet that serves students preparing for careers. The Bazaar, open daily for members of the campus community, is supported by the university and donations.

The grant will support the purchase of software for inventory management and visit tracking.

Associate Director of Student Development Shane Franzen said the Bazaar has already served more than 60 students this academic year.

"The Fitchburg State Community has once again embraced our students," Franzen said. "I have never seen a program have such a response. Everyone from the Trustees

to our students have come together to assist students who may be experiencing some type of food insecurity. The Bazaar has served as a free food source for many students over the past few years who would have gone hungry."

"Unfortunately, these are the realities of the times," FSU President Richard Lapidus said during a ceremony re-dedicating the expanded center. "We strive to put students in a position where they can be successful. The campus community has really stepped up and supported this important initiative."

"College students' lives are extremely complicated," added Vice President for Student Affairs Laura Bayless, noting local and statewide statistics that show food insecurity is a concern for many students. "Addressing these concerns lets our students be engaged the way we want them to be."

Swipe Out Hunger is the leading nonprofit addressing hunger among college students. Founded by a group of friends at UCLA in 2010, it has grown campus-by-campus into a national movement across all 50 states.

CLIMATE

Acting for a greener, cleaner future

Lori Trahan, regional leaders discuss impact of recent laws

By Shane Rhodes
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FITCHBURG » With the passage of recent climate-related legislation, several federal, state and local leaders have a reason to celebrate and are optimistic for a greener, cleaner future.

That's what brought U.S. Rep Lori Trahan, state Undersecretary of Energy Judy Chang and the Environmental League of Massachusetts' Legislative Director David Melly together for a conversation in the Kent Recital Hall at Fitchburg State University on Wednesday night.

Throughout the evening, the trio spoke about the environmental impact of recent federal and state bills including the Inflation Reduction Act and the Massachusetts Act Driving Clean Energy and Offshore Wind. The event was hosted by the North Central Massachusetts chapter of the Citizens Climate Lobby, a grassroots, non-profit and non-partisan organization focused on climate policy.

Chang referred to the aforementioned pieces of legislation as "transformative" in how they can enable further climate-related action in Massachusetts and across the country. Likewise, Trahan celebrated the "years of work by activists and our partners in the fight against climate change" while Milly stressed the need for continued action from the federal and state legislatures.

"It's tremendous to see legislative action like this, given how long overdue climate-related action has been," Trahan said. "And, of course, we're excited — we're launching these programs with unbelievable anticipation — but we know, at the local, state and federal level, that this is just the first step of what's to come in order to mitigate climate change and accelerate our transition away from fossil fuels."

"(Legislative action) is critical," Milly said. "Right now, as a nation, we aren't on track to reach a lot of our climate goals and, to get there, we need continual progress, we need to continue to prioritize environmental advocacy at all levels of government."

The legislation, as well as other acts mentioned throughout the informational forum, have dedicated billions of dollars in recent months to fight climate change, promote a "green economy" and create incentives to promote the adoption of clean energy across the country.

The Inflation Reduction Act, signed into law back in August and described as historic action in regard to climate change, offers numerous rebates and credits to families to reduce the cost of the transition to clean energy. Further, the act is set to lower energy costs, promote environmental justice — protection of public spaces, environmental restoration and conservation, etc. — and reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants.

Meanwhile, Massachusetts' Act Driving Clean Energy and Offshore Wind, which built on 2021's Act Creating a Next Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy, will invest in wind,

CLIMATE » PAGE 4

Climate

FROM PAGE 1

solar and other sources of carbon-free energy, expand access to electric vehicles and further decrease the state's reliance on fossil fuels.

Other legislation mentioned included the CHIPS and Science Act, also signed into law back in August, has prioritized the domestic research and manufacturing of semiconductors, strengthening supply chains and creating jobs in the manufacturing field.

Both Trahan and Chang made note of the economic impact of each piece of legislation in terms of future job creation and stressed the importance of a properly trained workforce for the future.

"With a longer-term goal or plan in mind, we know we can't get there without people to do the actual work," Chang said. "So we need to start with our education system, create career pathways for younger generations into clean energy and technology to ensure a consistent, dependable future workforce."

Trahan said it was "hard to overstate" the "incredible potential" for job creation as she touted labor provisions and protections included in the various pieces of legislation as a "pipeline to green energy jobs" and a display of the Biden administration's "dedication" to a dependable workforce in the energy, environmental and manufacturing fields.

Later, Trahan, Chang and Milly each referred to Massachusetts as a "leader" in those fields and the fight



SHANE RHODES — SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE

Lori Trahan at the Massachusetts Citizens' Climate Forum at Fitchburg State University's Kent Recital Hall on Wednesday, Oct. 19, 2022. Trahan and other local and state officials gathered to celebrate recent federal and state climate legislation, such as the Inflation Reduction Act, the Build Back Better Act and the Massachusetts Act Driving Clean Energy and Offshore Wind.

against climate change. Melly said the state has made it clear that the climate and environmental issues are a priority and simply "not partisan," while Chang described the state's efforts as "our contribution to the world."

"I think the state has shown that climate change and clean energy are not partisan issues," Melly said. "They are areas where we can work together, where everyone is committed to meeting the gravity and urgency of the moment with bold and thoughtful action."

"If we can recreate that at the federal level, if we can dedicate ourselves and show the world that the climate and the future are a top priority, I think that could make a huge difference," he said.

"Being a leader, it's not only about past policies or programs and recognizing the seriousness of climate change," Chang said. "It's about looking to and investing in our collective future on this planet."

In closing, the panel made it clear that, despite significant progress at every level of government,

the work is far from over. Chang said the "necessary" transition ahead "won't be easy for anyone," while Trahan made it clear that the country "can't afford to backslide" at such a critical juncture.

"We're already behind and we're trying to play catch up, so we have to keep that momentum going — at this point, we can't take anything for granted," she said. "These policies matter and they're going to thrust us into the future and ensure the planet is vibrant and healthy for generations to come."

Sentinel & Enterprise

Monday, October 24, 2022

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FITCHBURG

Morcaldi's dream now a reality

Fitchburg High grad becomes a Fitchburg police officer

By Chad Garner

Special to the Sentinel & Enterprise

FITCHBURG » Some people struggled their entire lives to find their passion.

Not Travis Morcaldi.

The Fitchburg native knew since he could walk and talk what he wanted to be when he

grew up.

Morcaldi always envisioned becoming a police officer because he “always loved to help people out in any way that I possibly could.”

Through hard work, determination and a belief that he could dream and achieve, the Fitchburg Public Schools’ product made being a police offi-

cer a reality when he officially graduated from the Fitchburg State University Police Program/Academy and was sworn into the Fitchburg Police Department on Sept. 16.

“I’ve had this goal for a very long time,” said Morcaldi, a 2018 Fitchburg High School graduate. “I remember that I did a project back in second grade at Reingold Elementary School for Mrs. Chalifoux that was aimed at the question, ‘What do you want to do when you grow up?’. With-

DREAM » PAGE 8



COURTESY FITCHBURG PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Officer Travis Morcaldi chose his brother, Jared, to pin him at his Police Academy graduation.

Dream

FROM PAGE 1

out hesitation, I prepared a poster board that had a Fitchburg Police pin on my shirt as I sat on the front hood of a cruiser and the poster stated, 'I want to be a Police Officer.'

Education has been Morcaldi's key to success.

The 22-year-old knows how much attending Fitchburg Public Schools set him on the right path to reach his goals.

"As an alumni from Fitchburg High School and a member of the Honors Academy, the structure within that program helped me incredibly," Morcaldi said. "The Honors Academy is full of vigorous classes with a workload that is challenging and shaped around Honors, (advanced placement), and Pre-AP classes. This program taught me the most valuable lessons in life of developing the skills of work management and time management.

"The Honors Academy is filled with staff that is always pushing you to your limits to get you to strive for academic excellence. I can assure you that without the staff from FHS that have helped me, I would not have the skills in life that built the foundation for me to excel to where I am today."

Morcaldi is also a 2022 Fitchburg State University graduate and is enrolled in the Criminal Justice Master's program — a 4-and-1 program — at FSU.

"Throughout the academy, each day I would think of the reason why I started this journey, the ones I love and everyone that had given me support," Morcaldi said.

Morcaldi will be a trivia question forever, as he's the first junior recruit in the Junior Police Academy to become a Fitchburg Police Officer.

"It feels like a dream come true looking down to see that 'Fitchburg Police' pin had turned into a badge," Morcaldi said. "This means the world to me. The other day I walked past a picture of the 1st Recruit Class for the Junior Police Academy and I got to see myself in the picture. After observing it, I was filled with awe with how I have come that far and turned a dream into reality."

Morcaldi says that the Junior Police Academy is an excellent program that he would highly recommend to anyone that has an interest in policing.

"This program provided an insight into what the structure is like in a real police academy and teaches you the important skills of teamwork and communicating with one another," he said. "It is by far one of my fondest memories of being a part of that program. That program assured me that becoming a Police Officer was what I wanted to do for a career."

Fitchburg Police Chief Ernie Martineau says that Officer Morcaldi, like all the recent hires, brings something special to the department.

"Having life experience growing up in our community creates an ownership in their new role as peace officers," Martineau said. "The fact that Officer Mor-

caldi is the first employee to have come from our JR Police Academy is the icing on the cake. The premise behind our JR Academy, along with the role of our SRO's, is to create bridges and foster trust with the youth of our city. We created the bridge, which Officer Morcaldi crossed, and now it's time for him to foster the same types of relationships."

Motivation has never been an issue for Morcaldi, who has a tremendous support system at home, led by his parents Jay and MaryEllen.

"Ever since I was a child, I always loved to help people out in any way that I possibly could," Morcaldi said. "Over the course of many years, I have had numerous police officers as coaches and mentors that have been influential role models that motivated me to pursue more of an interest in a career of law enforcement. Each one of these mentors has taught me different skills and lessons that have led me to where I am today."

"Throughout this process of becoming a Fitchburg Police Officer, I was motivated by all the love and support that my family, friends, and girlfriend have given me. I was inspired to make my dreams come true and to work with the people that I idolize."

Morcaldi says he wanted to become a police officer because he "wanted to stand up for those that did not have a voice and to be the one that can try to be the change that others want to see."

He added: "One of my mentors at Fitchburg State University that is involved with the Police Program instilled this powerful quote to me that I look back on each day. He went on to say to me that it is not about trying to change the whole world at once, it's about being the change in someone's life. If I can provide help to at least one person a day, then I know that I am doing the right thing. That is why I want to become a police officer. I want to become a mentor to others that I encounter and motivate them as my idols had done for me."

Now, he gets to protect, serve and hopefully inspire others in his community to want to pursue a career in law enforcement.

"This city is where I established my roots," Morcaldi said. "If I can provide a service and help out the city that I love, then by all means I will do whatever it takes to accomplish that."

Morcaldi has some advice for anyone that may want to follow in his footsteps of becoming a police officer.

"My advice is to always give it your all and don't stop until you have proven others wrong," he said. "My favorite quote is 'The saddest thing in life is wasted talent and the choices you make will shape your life forever'. Take the talent that you have and use it to go make a change in the world."

Now that's passion.

FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY



COURTESY FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Fitchburg State University faculty members Amy McGlothlin, on saxophone, and Jane Fiske, on piano, both of whom are performing at the recital.

Faculty to perform music recital Oct. 25

By Matthew Bruun

Fitchburg State University

FITCHBURG » Members of the Fitchburg State University Humanities Department faculty will perform at a free recital at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 25 in Weston Auditorium, 353 North St.

“The recital will be an opportunity for the community to experience Fitchburg State’s new, nine-foot Steinway Model D concert grand piano — an incredible instrument, especially for the luscious French Romantic piano music on the program,” said Professor Jonathan Harvey, who will be among

the performers at the recital.

In addition to Harvey, Professor Jane Fiske and Assistant Professor Amy McGlothlin will perform, joined by guests Alanna Rantala, Kris Layton and Triage Woodwinds to perform music by the French composers Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, and Francis Poulenc; little-known Romantic composer Johanna Kinkel; and contemporary composers Chelsea Williamson, Kincaid Rabb, and Stephen Lias.

Learn more about the university’s music programs at [fitchburgstate.edu/music](https://www.fitchburgstate.edu/music).