

First Dual Language Business Certificate Cohort Nears End of Program

MWCC Planning to Shift to Early Education Option This Fall



Photo by Mayra Alaniz Andrade

By Elysian Alder
ASSISTANT EDITOR

This upcoming May, the first group of students to participate

in the MWCC’s Dual Language Business Administration Certification Program might be the last business-oriented cohort for the time being, according to Missi Sargent, Dean of Academic Affairs. While the current cohort piloted this program in 2021 and most have succeeded and benefited from it, the college will shift to a DLP offering in Early Education next fall, while the Business track will end.

The Dual Language Business Administration Certification Program is a way for Spanish-speaking students to pursue business certifications while

also advancing and improving their English language skills. This means different things to different students. For some, it’s a way for them to bridge the gap between themselves and the current workforce climate, to be able to get jobs without feeling hindered. Some also see it as a way to access education where it may not have been accessible to them before. For others, it’s a stepping stone to being able to open and run their own business.

“I found out about this program online. I was actually looking for a career, and I was very interested in business administration because I’m

interested in building my own business,” said Mayra Alaniz Andrade, one of the current students of the program. “But I wanted to be knowledgeable, and this was a great opportunity.”

Many of the current students studied at the undergraduate level in their former countries, and some already had Bachelor’s degrees from those institutions. For example, dual language student Carolina Montero has a degree in Industrial Psychology from the Dominican O&M University in the Dominican Republic. Carolina moved to the United States three years ago, and found

out about the business program from Facebook, stating, “The program has been an excellent platform for learning English and, above all, a springboard to start again.”

The program offers courses in their first language, Spanish. They take ones relevant to business, such as accounting, marketing, and management, while also taking core prerequisites like English 101. By having their business track structured in this way, they’re

continued on page 3
“DLP Business Cert.” >>>

‘This is Me Giving Back’

Assistant Dean of Students Sabine Dupoux Shines Light on Her Journey as a First-Generation Graduate

By Isabelle Mascary
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

In the midst of the pandemic two and a half years ago, Sabine Dupoux became the Assistant Dean of Students at the Leominster campus and has been a part of the Mount family ever since. She is a first generation Haitian-American graduate with her Master’s degree in Business Administration.

She oversees the food pantry in Gardner and Leominster and also oversees the management operations of the Leominster building to ensure safety for faculty, staff and students. “My role is to ensure that students are successful inside and outside of the classroom,” she said.

The Mount’s newly-renovated Leominster campus is a particular pride and joy for

Dupoux. After some setbacks (partially due to COVID-19), there was a limited number of students in the building and then during construction, the building was completely closed. But Dupoux was eager to share, “We just completed an eight-month renovation reconstruction project for this campus.”

Although she did not create the blueprint, she was still able to add components (such as water refill stations) to the design based on listening and knowing about the needs of the community college student. “I don’t have a background in construction or project management,” she said. “To see something on paper come to life is incredible.”

The primary focus for Dupoux has always been the

students, however. “Every component that one sees along the way, you will see that we were very thoughtful in the process of what it’s like to be a student here and what we want to offer our students,” shared Dupoux.

Before joining the Mount family, she was a recruitment counselor at Quinsigamond Community College. “I was always in high school talking to the student population, mainly sophomore juniors and seniors.” She recruited and worked closely with other departments within the community college to build the rapport of student needs. That role prepared her for the position she is in now.

A community college graduate herself, Dupoux considers her work as coming “full circle,” explaining, “This



Photo by Sabine Dupoux

Sabine Dupoux, Assistant Dean of Students

is me giving back what I received when I was a student. I was a single parent taking five classes per semester, working part time at the admissions

continued on page 2
“Sabine Dupoux” >>>

PREVIEWS

A Mess to Clean Up
Students and Faculty Share Thoughts on Environmental Crises After Ohio Spill
For the full article, see page 2

Profile: Gail Steele
Theater at the Mount Director Emphasizes the Importance of Community in Theater Arts
For the full article, see page 4

Profile: Kara Roche
Associate Professor of English and Speech Provides a Lesson on Chasing Your Passions
For the full article, see page 5

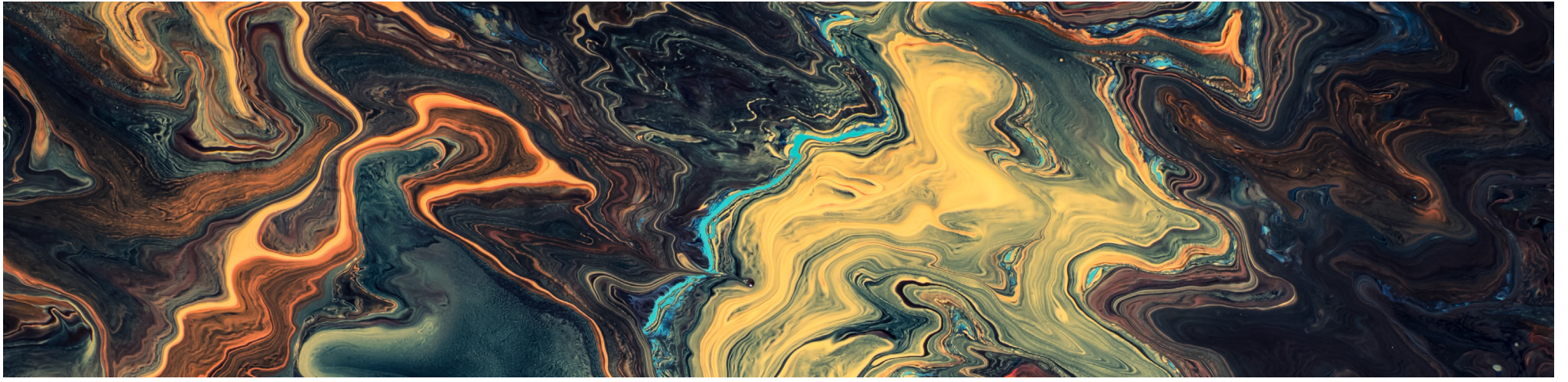
A Reflection on Transgender Day of Visibility
Fighting Erasure in a Social Climate Determined to Say “You Don’t Exist”
For the full article, see page 6

Reviews: see page 7

Events: see page 8

A Mess to Clean Up

Students and Faculty Share Thoughts on Environmental Crises after Ohio Spill



By **Katie Holgerson**
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Following a recent train derailment in Ohio, there are growing concerns over the potential health and environmental impacts caused by the spillage of hazardous chemicals such as vinyl chloride and butyl acetate into nearby rivers.

The incident occurred on February 3rd, 2023 in East Palestine, Ohio, causing all the town residents to evacuate due to the hazardous chemicals involved. In addition to public health concerns, the derailment caused an explosion and spillage of chemicals into nearby rivers, leading to the

death of several fish. Efforts to control the situation through a controlled burn resulted in several chemicals being released into the atmosphere. Concerns have risen as people on social media have reported that the air in the area smelled of chlorine and chemicals, although the government assured the area was safe to return. It is worth noting that studies show the younger generation, including 32% of Gen Z and 28% of Millennials, are more concerned about global warming and other environmental issues and have taken actions for the planet in 2021.

The Ohio chemical spill was a major environmental disaster

that had a significant impact on the local community and beyond. As students reflected on this event, many expressed their concerns about the long-term effects of the spill on human health and how the U.S handles such situations.

Gear Renton, an environmental science major at the Mount, chimed in on the topic while hanging out in the student center. “They should’ve been more cautious on what happened, and [they] put the whole nation at danger since the Ohio river is connected to a lot of the water sources.” Renton worried the chemicals could reach Massachusetts. She went on to say, “Once it’s in the river

it’s everywhere, plant life— everywhere.”

Another MWCC student Devon Gaughan showed his concern for how the U.S handles situations like this and how he is scared of what could happen in the future with other disasters like the chemical spill, saying, “It makes me wonder what we [as a society] depend on” for resources.

Gear shared the concern and wished that more precautions had been taken, pointing out a shift since observing the way the environment started to improve during COVID as a sharp contrast to feelings about the oil spill. She lamented the reported increase in pollution as people

started coming out of quarantine. “If everyone works together, it’s not hard to fix it... it was sad to see everything go back after.”

Associate Professor of Natural Sciences George LoCasio is not as concerned as some students are here because of the geographic distance. “The water there flows west, and for wind borne particles, I feel they would diffuse more than enough if they even got here at all,” he explained.

Regardless, the Ohio chemical spill serves as a reminder of the importance of responsible environmental stewardship and the need for continued efforts to protect our planet and its inhabitants.

Sabine Dupoux

>>> continued from page 1

office. I was a tour guide at the time at Quinsigamond.”

Dupoux majored in business administration and graduated with an associates degree from Quinsigamond before moving onto Bay Path University and Fitchburg State, receiving her bachelor’s and master’s respectively.

Coming from a family of educators, Dupoux believed that teaching wasn’t the career path for her, despite her parents’ wishes. Her father wanted her to be a teacher and her mother wanted her to be a nurse. “I’m a rebel, and my parents learned that when I was pretty young,” she explained. “I wanted to go into business and work in a corner pocket office at the center of State Street and do

accounting.” But after working in the admissions office part time at Quinsigamond, she received the insight that she needed to hone in on her purpose.

“I always thought education meant just teaching in the

so fulfilling by itself and it’s so powerful. That’s how I ended up right here.”

Dupoux is the youngest of the three and has two older brothers. She was born in Boston but raised in a couple of places.

“This is me giving back what I received when I was a student. I was a single parent taking five classes per semester, working part time.”

-Sabine Dupoux

classroom. I didn’t know there were different areas where you can just help people in higher ed,” she said while adding, “When you’re working as a team for the same goal for one student or for a thousand students, that’s

“I lived in New York, lived in Boston, lived in Florida and lived in Worcester for a couple of years and currently reside there.”

When asked what some of the obstacles are surrounding her position, Dupoux shared,

“Since the generation changes every academic school year, there’s a new challenge that a student presents to you that you think could never happen,” she said. Being that she is “solution driven,” she admitted, “If I can’t

solve it right then and there, that’s a challenge for me, and also understanding that it may not be something that needs to be solved,” adding that “It’s the challenge of growing in my position by helping students

grow as well.”

Her hobbies include reading, swimming, coloring, and music. “I am a music junkie. I love music.” As busy as she is with people all day long, Dupoux needs her time to decompress just like anyone else. “I love my quiet time and my alone time. Those are the things I enjoy the most,” she admitted.

For Dupoux, communication is key, and she advises students to always voice their concerns and problems. “A person doesn’t know what you’re going through until you say something,” said Dupoux. Sometimes talking about it might be all a student needs to do.

Sincerity is another value of hers, and it’s part of what she loves about being at the Mount. “We’re very genuine in what >>>

Sabine Dupoux Cont.

>>> we say to our students,” she said, adding, “If a staff person asks a student, ‘how are you doing today?’ We’re asking because we care, we’re asking because we want to know.”

Dupoux also emphasized two crucial pieces of advice she has for students, “Have fun by getting involved in what’s happening on campus. You don’t know what you like until you really try it,” and lastly, “Define your own success; don’t let others determine what that success is.”

Her culture is something that has influenced her in many ways. She shared an old saying, “If a goat has a goat in a pigsty, what is it? It’s still a goat.” With this in mind, Dupoux parent’s stance was, “Even though you were born in America, you’re Haitian and we’re going to raise you as a Haitian.”

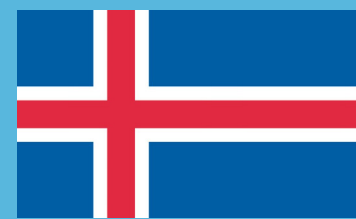
During her highschool years, her parents realized she was going to do what she wanted to do as long as it made her happy. “As an adult I’m more conscious of the decisions I make, what I do and what direction I go in, especially having a fifteen year

old daughter,” said Dupoux.

In a Haitian community, the feelings and thoughts of the children don’t matter as much because the parents pay the bills. That mindset has influenced Dupoux’s parenting style a great deal. “If we were moving to another state,” she said, “I would ask my daughter how she feels about it because I need to know how it affects my child. Unlike in my time: if we moved, we moved,” she said. Reflecting on her path and her relationship with her parents, she said, “They’re proud of the work that I have done, and they see the progress because they know what I have been through and to be able to give back I think that brings them a significant amount of joy, as well. They make sure they remind me of that every day.”

Resisting “Americanization” while dealing with high expectations from her parents and culture was a challenge for her. “That Haitian mentality gets to you, and it can limit you,” she said, “It’s hard. I’m in the culture. But you have to live for you. It took me a long time to get there.”

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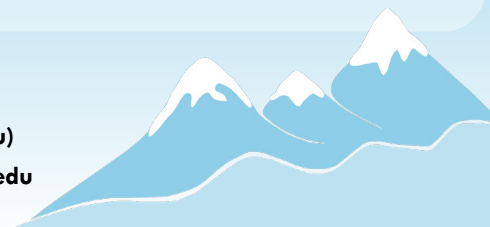
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DLP Business Cert.

>>> continued from page 1

able to expand their working knowledge of the business world, including developing general business language skills while learning English as a second language. An additional perk of this program is that it allows students to put the credits they earn towards an Associate’s in business administration. “I thought it was a good program and gives students an opportunity to jump start their degree,” said Elmer Eubanks, department chair of business at the Mount.

Offering such a program falls right in line with the priority that the Mount places on offering as many services and programs as possible to cater to diversity, equity, and inclusion within its community. With consideration to the large Hispanic population in the Fitchburg-Gardner-Leominster area, dual language

programs for Spanish-speaking students at the Mount are incredibly valuable, not only for the students involved, but for the faculty and the people these students will go on to meet in their professional and personal lives. “If you are meeting someone who speaks a different language, then it’s likely that you’re meeting someone who could teach you about a different culture,” explained Katie Fuller, English 101 professor for the business certificate program, “and I feel like it’s important for the world to learn to work towards understanding each other in the most basic way, which is finding a way to understand each other, using whatever language skills you can.”

The students in the program all seem to agree: just as they learn from their professors, they learn from each other. Although

they share the same language, they come from different backgrounds and cultures, and they bring to the table unique experiences that they’re able to teach their classmates and professors about. “Our class was in person last week, and we shared things about our cultures. Mayra cooked food from her country and told us about it, shared how she made it, so now we know about her culture,” said Natalia Oliver, another dual language student. “We are more than classmates now. We are friends, and we count on each other all the time.”

Despite the program having high value and positive reception, it has suffered setbacks. In order to run a cohort for a program, there needs to be a certain number of students enrolled and interested, typically around 15-18 of them. According to



Photo by Mayra Alaniz Andrade

The Dual Language Program Business Cohort hold a mid-semester get-together.

the Dean of Academic Affairs, Missi Sargent, “We did not start a cohort last year because there were not enough students who were interested and met the prerequisites. Unfortunately, this year we received even fewer applications.” As a result, the dual language business program is not set to renew next year.

When asked if their class size has impacted their ability to learn, Natalia Oliver

commented, “We would love to have more classmates, you know, and share stories, share experiences, because we learn from each other. I would love to have more people involved in this program.”

Oliver continued by reflecting on what the reason may have been for the dwindling numbers and low interest and said, “We have a Spanish-speaking population that is so enormous, >>>

DLP Business Cert. Cont.

>>> so it's very disappointing that this program will not continue. Maybe they're missing a way to advertise; maybe they're doing the advertising, but not to the right channels. People like us, we have groups on social media. We can tell them the ways and the channels to promote this program, but if we don't get told, we can't help."

Her classmate, Mayra Alaniz Andrade, echoed the sentiment, hoping they can offer their

thoughts on how the entire program can be run in the future, especially having first-hand experience as a student in it. "The program is great, but if I could recommend something, it would be that we should be able to give feedback [about the overall program]. It's important to talk about for the future of the program."

As stated before, however, the dual language program for the business track is currently

not set to renew. But that doesn't mean the Mount has no plans of continuing dual language programs as a whole. On the subject, Missi Sargent commented, "There is great need for bilingual employees in the early childhood field. So this year we will be focusing on a dual language pathway for Early Childhood Education, which is tentative to begin this fall. Hopefully in the future, we can revisit the business certificate."

Have your own opinions on current events, hot-button issues, or events on campus? Write an opinion piece and send it to mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu It may just end up in our next issue!

Profile: Gail Steele

Theater at the Mount Director Emphasizes the Importance of Community in Theater Arts



Photo courtesy of MWCC

Gail Steele, Theater Director

By **Isabelle Mascary**
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Gail Steele has been a part of the Mount community since 1977. She grew up in Lawrence, Massachusetts and received her undergraduate degree at Bridgewater State College.

She got her master's at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

Although she has always had a love for theater arts, it isn't where she began her journey. "I was more towards communications because I wasn't confident that I could have a career in theater," she explained. "So I hedged my bets to focus more on communications. But I always had my hand in theater. I'm a good organizer. That's what running a theater is all about."

During her first couple of years working at the Mount, Steele did not run the theater. In fact, Steele was originally

hired to teach speech. From the outside looking in, Steele knew that if she was ever going to be a part of theater, she knew that she needed to "carve a niche and make a statement."

Her determination gave birth to a children's production called *The Pink Pale Dragon*. It was a starting point that ended up a sold-out success and ultimately helped her step into her role as Theater Director. "I had already made my mark so I can say that I am the person to take over this theater."

During the past forty-five years, Steele says that the Theater at the Mount has had many great successes. "We have done close to three hundred different theater productions and many of them I'm very proud of," she said. Steele herself also made a surprise appearance in the Christmas show last year called *Silver Bells*.

When asked to share her proudest accomplishments during her career, her face lit up with a smile, and she said, "The Tammy Awards."

Steele developed the idea of the Tammy Awards fifteen years ago after reading about the sports banquet in the *Fitchburg Sentinel* for all local athletes. "I thought to myself, 'There should be an evening like this for kids who do theater,'" she said. The Tammy Awards is a program

competition for high school musicals, where each year, there are typically twenty-two to twenty-five local high schools (within fifty miles of Gardner) that enter the competition.

"We send a team of judges to their musicals, and we give awards just like the Tony awards for best actor, best actress, best choreography," she said and added "The kids come in the prom dresses, and it's just like walking the red carpet; it's a big

resolved.

Steele noted another hurdle revolves around the lack of diversity within the theater. "We do not have a real diverse talent here and we want to," she delicately shared. "Little Shop of Horrors involved three backup singers that are black," she said, "We didn't do the show because we didn't have a diverse group. If we can develop our talent pool so it's more diverse, then that opens up opportunities for

To destress from theater, she plays golf. "I'm terrible at it, but I like to play," she said, "My husband and I would play together, and we are equally bad, but we have fun playing it."

Steele imparted a few words of advice for students interested in theater arts. "Always be the kind of person other people want to be around. Because people remember. If you're in a show and you're bitchy, people don't forget that. And the next time you show up they are going to say, 'Oh, she's bitchy,'" she explained with a chuckle.

Her next piece of advice? Don't hesitate to put yourself out there. "Get involved in any way that you can," she encouraged, "Try out for a show, audition; if you get a part that's wonderful. If you don't, volunteer to be on stage crew or help make costumes or work in some other aspect of it because you will learn a lot by doing a lot of those things. The more exposure you have to theater the better your background is."

In conclusion, "I want people to leave here with a positive experience and a positive memory. Not all community theaters provide that," she said, "We call ourselves the TAM Fam, Theater At the Mount Family. We try to treat people with the kind of respect we would our family."

"I want people to leave here with a positive experience and a positive memory."

- Gail Steele

deal event for high school kids. I am really proud of that."

Steele shared that there had been several hurdles throughout the years. The most recent incident revolved around the hacking of their ticketing service called Audience View. This occurred right before a show and caused a temporary interruption in financial transactions, seating charts and customer records. The temporary solution was to accept only cash or check payments. "It was like going back to the stone ages," she admitted, but added that the situation has been

everyone."

Outside of the theater, Salisbury beach is another happy place for her, and it's where she loves to spend time with her family. "We have a house right on the water, and I like to escape there whenever I have the opportunity. It's a family home," said Steele.

While pointing to a family photo, she expressed how much she loves to bake, and this can be evidenced by her husband's belly. "If you saw his belly, you would know that I'm a good baker," she stated, smiling.

Profile: Kara Roche

MWCC Associate Professor of English and Speech Provides a Lesson in Chasing Your Passions



Photo by Kara Roche

Kara Roche,
Associate Professor of
English and Speech

By *Elysian Alder*
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Associate Professor of English and Speech Kara Roche has been working at the Mount since 2007, and although English and teaching are two of her greatest passions, it's the people - the community - that fill her with so much love for the college. Reflecting back on the journey she's had to get to this point, Roche said, "Now I get to teach my two loves here: English classes filled with poetry and Shakespeare and speech classes. How lucky am I? My road taken turned out pretty well."

After high school, Roche initially pursued her undergraduate degree in speech communications from Northeastern University. The onset of her path to higher education is one that may sound familiar to some. "I honestly had no idea what I wanted to do when it was time to go off to college," she said. "I just knew I wanted to shed my high school skin and read and learn and meet

engaging people to challenge me, close enough to home to visit."

Roche confessed that it was love at first sight when it came to Northeastern, despite not having her precise trajectory mapped out right away. "The good news is that I LOVED college and really found myself there," she enthused. "I loved philosophy, and it was actually a particular philosophy class (not English) that introduced me to E.E. Cummings and "Since Feeling Is First..." and pea-soup-crossed-legged nights where I fell in love with debating and reading and writing poetry myself with professors and classmates alike."

In addition to her extracurricular activities, hobbies, passions, and studies, Roche also had her own late-late-night

radio show, making full use of her speech communications undergraduate degree and its concentration in radio and TV before deciding that another degree was calling her name. She went on to pursue English with a Secondary Education Certificate at Fitchburg State University, recalling the words of a high school English teacher and citing them as part of the reasoning behind her choice: "She said: 'When you grow up and get your English degree, you can teach the way you want.'" And that is exactly what happened. Roche taught for 13 years at two high schools—Oakmont Regional High School and Nashoba Regional High School—wherein she created and helped implement a speech and debate curriculum. However, after having her two children,

Roche began her career at the Mount in a part-time position working in the Visions program, as an adjunct professor and an advisor until September of 2012, when her position became a full-time gig, leading to where she is today.

"I get to know my students so well in speech classes. They become vulnerable and honest and sincere. They grow like crazy. They are overwhelmingly kind. But beyond all that, they have REAL things to say. They have voices they

she said, "I traveled the whole state and vlogged about several different poets, read their poetry, met locals who knew their poetry, and visited their gravesites and childhood homes, from P-Town to Great Barrington. I can't believe how many treasures

"I get to know my students so well in speech classes. They become vulnerable and honest and sincere. They grow like crazy. They are overwhelmingly kind. But beyond all that, they have REAL things to say."

- Kara Roche

As for what has made her time at the Mount most fulfilling and enjoyable, Roche says it's simple: the people. "Not only my colleagues, but my students. The way everyone really cares," she said. "How it's not just a job. It's a community."

And although she's exceedingly well-versed in the art of speechcraft, enjoys Button Poets, and has a particular love of spectating spoken verse poetry slams, Roche takes any chance she can get to continue to gush about her students. When asked about public speakers that she finds inspiring, she said, "My students are my favorite speakers and forever surprise me." While familiar names such as Maya Angelou, Amanda Gorman, and Rudy Francisco also make the list, nothing tops her enthusiasm for her students.

might have been afraid to use. I get to listen. And I've had students make me cry, laugh out loud, challenge my point of view, and CHANGE me."

These days, Roche has added yoga to her list of passions, which include supporting her children's hobbies (her son's sports and her daughter's singing), traveling with her husband and family, and living it up to the fullest in the summertime. She still enjoys reading and writing, of course, and considers herself a lifelong learner—to the point that she participates in trivia nights. "Bet you didn't know that it used to be forbidden for couples to kiss at train stations?" she imparted. "Yup. You're welcome."

A recent undertaking has her learning more about Massachusetts poets for a new virtual course. On the subject,

were hiding in a state I've been in my whole life, never mind the treasure of poets."

Kara Roche has inarguably had quite the journey to get where she is today. When asked if she'd give her past self any advice, none of it is academic—which comes as no surprise after hearing her enthusiasm for learning. Instead, she said, "Don't be afraid to do those things you were too afraid to do. Try out for Lady Macbeth. Do every audition. Read your poetry aloud. Kiss that boy under the stars. Stay up late with your friends and catch snowflakes on your tongue. Jump into the Boston Common Frog Pond with your sneakers still on in summer. Raise your hand more in class. Don't rush it. Live every moment, even the ones that ended in heartbreak. It goes too fast. And regret lasts too long."

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A Reflection on Transgender Day of Visibility

Fighting Erasure in a Social Climate Determined to Say “You Don’t Exist”



Photo by Karollyne Hubert from Unsplash

By **Elysian Alder**
ASSISTANT EDITOR

I am none of these things: a monster, a predator, a plague, a groomer, a pedophile, a villain, a snowflake, an attention-seeker, a liar, a danger to children, an eyesore. I am none of the other dehumanizing and stigmatizing labels that staunch conservatives are insistent on placing on me and my community. I am a lot of other things, though: a writer, a Pisces, a friend, a sibling, a nature-lover, a QA specialist, a student— and, according to TikTok, a “geriatric Gen-Zer.” This year, it’s difficult to reflect on all of the other things that I am because one part of my identity has been on trial since the beginning of 2023. I am queer, I am transgender, and I am spending this Transgender Day of Visibility with mixed emotions about everything that my community has had to endure just to be able to exist.

To provide some context: International Transgender Day of Visibility (sometimes referred to as TDOV) was founded by transgender activist and licensed psychotherapist Rachel Crandall-Crocker (she/her). A transgender woman herself, Crandall-Crocker created the event on March 31, 2009 to celebrate trans existence and bring the community closer. Since its inception, TDOV has become a way for the trans community and our allies to raise awareness for the challenges, discrimination, and inequities faced by transgender people while continuing to recognize and celebrate our successes and contributions.

Prior to the inception of TDOV, the only annual event centralized around the transgender community was Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR), observed on November 20th since its establishment in 1999. TDOR was founded to honor and memorialize those who have been murdered as a result of transphobia and to draw necessary attention to the rampant and endless violence directed towards trans people as a result of anti-trans bigotry. TDOR and TDOV both speak to the same sentiments as far as the transgender community goes: we exist, we are proud, and we will not be silenced.

Trans people have always

day of celebration should not be swallowed up by the harrowing number of bills and legislation that have been passed around the House of Representatives and statehouses throughout the United States that attack our community.

Many LGBTQ+ and trans individuals and advocacy groups have been tracking this nightmarish legal and political hellscape. The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) in particular has found that a staggering “340 anti-LGBTQ+ bills have been introduced in statehouses across the country,” with 150 of those specifically restricting and targeting the rights of transgender people—the most of their

similar bills introduced and engrossed, bringing these threats uncomfortably close to home.

When I stumble upon facts like these, all I can think about is the 2021 poll that was done by the Trevor Project that found that “85% of trans and non-binary youth say that seeing debates around anti-trans bills has negatively impacted their mental health.” All I can think about is how these constant, public attacks to the identities of already confused and struggling youths must feel. Just imagining the blows this must be dealing to the affected youth today is wildly upsetting.

I didn’t start my transition until I was 24 years old. My

that’s out there for problems like his.” My father had only heard of conversion therapy from a few brief news clips he’d happened to spend a cursory moment on. He didn’t actually know what it meant, he was just touting what he’d heard without actually dissecting it. But that’s a perfect example of what makes the things that conservatives are saying about transgender people so dangerous— people like Michael Knowles, conservative commentator at The Daily Wire, using casually genocidal, call-to-action language like, “eradicating transgenderism from public life” at conservative political conventions and then garnering media attention thereafter poses the same threat of exposing otherwise unaware individuals to malicious rhetoric by encouraging bigotry and potentially inciting further violence to the transgender community.

Language like that demonizes us, just like the language used in at least 26 of the other bills proposed does. Bills that aim to censor LGBTQ+ expression coupled with “eradicating transgenderism” for the greater good imply that our communities and everything that comes from them are not fit for society. They suggest that we are the threat and not the threatened, despite all evidence of the contrary. Transgender Day of Visibility should be a celebration of the love and acceptance shown both by people within the community and allies outside of it. It’s bittersweet that the biggest thing that I can think of to celebrate this year is the tremendous bravery and strength shown by transgender individuals who have shown up on the stand in courtrooms, participated in die-ins in the state houses of the legislative sessions, and who have worked tirelessly to prove that we are not monsters, predators, plagues, groomers, pedophiles, villains, snowflakes, attention-seekers, liars, dangers to children, eyesores, or any of the other labels that baseless bigots have decided to place on us. We are transgender— but most importantly, we are human.

“We want our rights, we want our respect, and we want to be acknowledged as human beings just like anyone else.”

- Elysian Alder

existed. While the terminology has evolved since the founding of Rome in 625 BC, recent excavations of burial sites that date back to the Roman era have unearthed potential evidence of gender non-conforming (or potentially trans) individuals. Archaic chronicles, depictions and texts that have been similarly discovered provide the same evidence. There are even theories that suggest that the French saint, Joan of Arc, was transgender. Leslie Feinberg (she/zie, her/hir), revolutionary transgender author and activist, covers that and more transgender history far better than I ever could in her book, *Transgender Warriors*. Hundreds of diverse cultures around the world have their own belief in genders beyond the binary, and some of them even revere these individuals as sacred.

None of the transgender people that I know want to be revered. I know I don’t. For the most part, we just want to be left alone. We want our rights, we want our respect, and we want to be acknowledged as human beings just like anyone else. This

kind ever seen in a single year. Some sources have reported a number as high as 492 total anti-LGBTQ+ bills proposed in this legislative session alone. And if the quantity wasn’t bad enough, the content of these bills is grim, too. Over 90 are aimed at banning transgender youths under the age of 18 from accessing any gender-affirming care; others endeavor to classify parental approval of gender-affirming care as “child abuse.” Some attempt to ban books from schools if they mention or discuss gender fluidity or identity; others allow teachers to misgender a student even if the student expresses a pronoun preference. While Massachusetts is considered one of the most protective states for transgender individuals, it’s vital to be cognizant of the threats the transgender community faces nationwide. Advocacy groups like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the HRC, and GLAAD estimate that of the bills proposed in 47 states, around 36 of them have already passed in states like Arkansas, Idaho, and Utah. Even New Hampshire, our neighboring state, has had

experience is nothing like that of younger generations discovering their trans identities in the current social climate. The closest experience I have that can compare to the weight of today’s environment is being one of the only sort-of-openly queer people in my high school at a time when same-sex legislation was still in-progress. I remember holding my breath whenever a topic tip-toed near LGBTQ+ issues because it meant I’d only have a split-second to discern whether it was okay to be who I was in whatever space I was in. I remember being torn between keeping the television on during gay rights debates to stay informed, or turning it off to preserve my mental well-being. I remember feeling like people would have accepted me more if I just stifled “that” part of my identity. I remember the alienation.

I remember hearing it said that if “those people prayed the gay away,” we would “finally be free” of the gay agenda, just like I remember my father asking one of my only gay friends if he’d “looked into the therapy

Review: *Scream VI*

A Killer Addition to the Classic Franchise

By Elysian Alder
ASSISTANT EDITOR

After much anticipation, the slasher film *Scream VI* hit theaters on March 10th, 2023. The film saw the reprisal of Jenna Ortega, Melissa Barrera, Mason Gooding, and Jasmine Savoy Brown in their roles from the previous film. Starring alongside these familiar faces were Samara Weaving, Dermot Mulroney, Courteney Cox, and to the delight of many *Scream* series fans— Hayden Panettiere. Cox and Panettiere do a phenomenal job filling the roles of legacy characters in the series' sixth installment: Cox as the sharp-witted journalist Gale Weathers, and Panettiere as Kirby Reed, the multi-faceted sole survivor of the Ghostface attacks in *Scream IV* who previously filled the role of the “horror movie nerd.” This role is now filled by the wry, sapphic icon that is Mindy Meeks-Martin (Savoy Brown).

While introducing an openly sapphic recurring character in the main cast of a cult classic slasher franchise is already as iconic as the character herself, *Scream VI* doesn't stop there. Delivering fans an exceptional viewing experience from start to finish, screenwriters James Vanderbilt and Guy Busick prove yet again that they know how to give their loyal audience exactly what they want. *Scream VI* brings us a helluva whodunit, complete with clever and satirical dialogue, campy acknowledgment of the formulaic tropes that make the franchise meta to the degree it's renowned for, and of course, we cannot forget the unique brutality of slasher superstar; Ghostface.

Scream VI takes the four surviving lead characters out of the classic setting of Woodsboro, Michigan, and brings the action to the Big Apple. Naturally, horror/slasher buffs may shudder

upon hearing that. It's easy to have the knee-jerk reflex to draw a comparison to the two-star film *Friday the 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan*, which did a similar move back in 1989, but *Scream VI* executes the change in a way that's both captivating and seamless. Jason Voorhees could never dream of tearing his way through a Manhattan bodega with the harrowing finesse that Ghostface does in one of the early scenes of this installment of *Scream*. Truthfully, it would be easy to go on and on about *Scream VI*'s masked slayer. Something about this Ghostface is enthralling, rife with so much unobserved rage, and each gory murder is planned expertly despite the raw emotions plainly motivating and, at times, causing them to backfire. Admittedly, for viewers who watched the predecessor *Scream V*, the revelation of Ghostface's identity might seem a little bit weak and unsupported. However, the delivery alone almost makes up for it. There's certainly a reason for that smoothly choreographed bloody knife swipe earning a swell of whooping from audiences. If you get it, you get it; if you don't, you don't.

But while Ghostface does deserve the praise, so too does the film's leading lady, Sam Carpenter, portrayed by Melissa Barrera. Sam begins the film by exploring an aspect of the horror/slasher genre that is scarcely depicted: dealing with the trauma of being a “final girl.” In a modern world, there's something refreshing about being able to see and hear about characters navigating therapy, even if it's to deal with issues that very few people can relate to (such as a targeted slaughter in one's hometown, for example). The normalization of mental

health treatment isn't the only thing Sam excels at, however. Her character in *Scream V* felt flat and somewhat annoying at times, but between that film and this one, taking the time to flesh out her character made being along for the ride so much more enjoyable. Barrera's depiction of the misunderstood ice queen, whose loyalty to both her blood family and her found family—the other survivors, dubbed the “Core Four” by lovable himbo Chad Meeks-Martin (Gooding)— is a force to be reckoned with all on its own. She's compelling, she's fierce, and just like the other leading characters in the film, she's undeniably likable. Even alongside current pop culture favorite, Jenna Ortega (who recently portrayed Wednesday Addams in Netflix's *Wednesday* and now portrays Tara Carpenter, Sam's half-sister, in *Scream V* and *VI*), Barrera steals the scene every time.

Were there scenes that felt completely unnecessary? Sure. The filler scenes of Mindy repeatedly explaining requals, sequels, and horror rules, and reiterating the general meta over and over again did feel like beating a dead horse. It was already established and obvious that her character was the horror geek, so having entire scenes dedicated to reminding us of that fact was redundant. Although it was nice to have the “Core Four” characters flesh themselves out on screen, some of the in-between drama and intended tear-jerkers didn't quite land in the context of the film and felt awkward while keeping in mind the genre. As always when it comes to a *Scream* film, suspension of disbelief is certainly required. Some of the surviving characters should *definitely* have died of their injuries by the end of the



Image from IMDB, copyright Paramount Pictures

film, and that's being generous. If we're being realistic then some of them should probably have died in the previous one, but what fun is it to be concerned with hyperrealism while watching a *Scream* film?

Unnecessary scenes aside, a particular scene set in the subway system of Manhattan was elite in every way. The usage of flickering lighting as the subway passed in and out of tunnels, the cheeky references to other slasher and horror antagonists, and the tense build-up while our “Core Four” were split up and in anxiety-inducing peril made it the most memorable scene of the entire film. Words cannot describe how stellar that scene in particular was.

As a final thought, *Scream VI* was thoroughly enjoyable. As far

as whether one needs to watch any of the preceding films to enjoy the full experience of the film, the original *Scream* is a no-brainer. It's also recommended to watch *Scream V* as well to get the best grasp of just how good the character development is in *Scream VI*. With all of the references to the series in its entirety, however, it couldn't hurt to watch the rest of them for the sake of full immersion and understanding.

To answer the question posed by Ghostface at the beginning of the film, “Who gives a f-ck about movies?,” well... the franchise's record-breaking \$44.5 million box office earnings in the opening weekend of *Scream VI* would say: a lot of people do.

Have your own thoughts on a TV show, film, book, or video game?
Write a review and send it to mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu
It may just end up in our next issue!

Creative

Writing

Sorry You Had to Go, Joe

By William A. Lefrancois

Throughout the Mount, many have come and gone;
Administrators, faculty, staff; each giving with a heart that knows not slow.
From amongst these masses, arose a leader who was second to none!
Pure, pleasant, particular, patient; these words describe Joe Stiso.

A man of indomitable character; a natural leader in all things education.
A master of the written word, true eloquence his mighty virtue.
Joe could attain any grant, could accomplish any expectation;
Loving, learning, listening, laudable each day with Joe would start anew.

The role of vice-president, demanding and taking its toll;
Planning, development and research done to improve student life.
A weaker person would shrink away, but Joe's stamina suited his role.
Caringly, conscientiously, capably, calmly VP Stiso faced the strife.

The gift of kindness abounding, Joe would help anyone in need;
No problem too big, no effort too great; Joe brought relief manifold.
Generously giving of himself, wanting nothing in return for any deed;
Humble, heartfelt, heroic, honest; these words the truth of Joe do hold.

He entered and left this world, celebrating the green of St. Patrick's Day!
Joe's friendship and passion, deeply treasured by all in the know;
Heartfelt, unbearable sorrow felt by all when Joe went away;
Tears, trepidation, terror tantamount; sorry you had to go, Joe!

Game Starts

By Daniel Mullane

The land of the free and home of the brave,
Honey can be found here in many ways.

It takes some sacrifice.

Mine was found by taking the biggest risk.

However, a golden ticket was given in round one.

College wasn't it yet,

Could not pay the bundle.

Doesn't guarantee a river of gold.

My eyes weren't open to vocational.

9 to 5 would have kept me poor.

Wasn't yet ready to be a businessman.

Being an entrepreneur would have rubbed me off.

Came to an end in secondary school.

The future wasn't looking too bright.

With a poor education, what can I brush?

Could not see the end of the tunnel.

Willing to die for the nation in return for the bundle was the take-off road.

Now, let's really play the college game without backing up.

Black Dress

By Isabelle Mascary

Swirling violins viola & cello
repeating symmetries lifting, the room.
This is where hyper-quantization

From the night I took my very first breathe,
my childhood has been hectic.
A product of my own environment

condemned before I can crawl, walk, or speak,
unable to reject the many vices;
I was forced to accept and protect.

Using my imagination to escape this reality
and to illuminate my dreams because
my mind is the only room that can't be taken away from
me.

My imagination keeps me from becoming weary.
My thoughts and visions allow me to divulge
in the endless possibilities, despite the present
conditions before me.

History is such a delicacy, but I would hate for it to
repeat.
To break a generational curse, or to allow it to continue,
I'm at the bottom of the barrel, can it become any
worse?

Grandfather was a grand sorcerer, he can disappear.
Grandmother danced with the spirits, she grew
strength.
Father made deals with the devil; his children were
sacrificial lambs.

Mother tried to play God but never wanted to be held
accountable.
I paid the price of those who came before me but
now it's my turn to conjure up the change I want to see.

This foolishness ends with me, I want a life of serenity!
The father of above and below, keep the chaos and the
pain.
Washing these invisible wounds, while dancing in the
rain.

From the night I took my very first breathe,
my life has been hectic, but I always made sure to
wear a nice black dress.

Send your finished works of 1,000 words or less to
mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu.

InvolveMOUNT April Events:

April 13: "eSports Tournament."

10:00AM–2:00PM. South Cafe.

April 14: "CATS Programming Group Meeting."

12:30PM–1:30PM. Room W101 and Zoom.

April 17: "The Mount Observer Staff Meeting."

5:15PM–6:30PM. Zoom.

April 18: "Holocaust Remembrance Day."

9:00AM. LaChance Library.

April 18: "Reptile Show - Family Friendly."

12:30PM–1:30PM. South Cafe.

April 18: "SGA Biweekly Meeting."

4:30PM–5:30PM. Room S105 and Zoom.

April 18: "JINDO - Musical BINGO."

7:00PM–8:00PM. Zoom.

April 19: "Farmers Market & Plant Sale."

10:00AM. Commons Area.

April 20: "THRIVE Coffee Conversations."

10:00AM–11:00AM. Room H106 – THRIVE Center.

April 20: "Film Screening: *On Sacred Ground*."

12:30PM–2:00PM. Room H104 - North Cafe.

April 21: "CATS Programming Meeting."

12:30PM–1:30PM. Room W101 and Zoom.

April 24 - April 28: "An Empty Place at the Table: Domestic Violence Memorial."

8:00AM–4:00PM. Commons Area Hallway.

April 24: "The Mount Observer Staff Meeting."

5:15PM–6:30PM. Zoom.

April 25: "JINDO - Musical BINGO."

12:30PM–1:30PM. Student Center and Zoom.

April 26: "Pickle Ball."

10:30AM. Mount Fitness.

April 26: "Relationship Jeopardy."

12:30PM–1:30PM. Student Center.

April 27: "Personal Safety with Campus Police."

12:30PM–1:30PM. Room H171 - Multipurpose Room.

April 28: "CATS Programming Meeting."

12:30PM–1:30PM. Room W101 and Zoom.

Auditions HELLO DOLLY

CASTING CALL

Dolly Levi is a widow, matchmaker, and a professional meddler who 'arranges things.' Everything changes when she decides that the next match, she needs to make is to find someone for herself! Set in New York City at the turn of the century, Hello Dolly! is boisterous and charming from start to finish, featuring such memorable songs as "Before the Parade Passes By," "It Only Takes a Moment," "It Takes a Woman," and—of course—the title number. "It's nice to have you back where you belong!"



Director – Joel Seger

Music Director – John Leslie

Choreographer – Alison Hall

CAST REQUIREMENTS – 12 principal adult roles and ensemble

Where? Mount Wachusett Community College, room A110

When? Tuesday, May 23 and Thursday, May 25 at 7PM sharp. All auditions are by appointment only.

TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT, CALL THE THEATRE AT THE MOUNT BOX OFFICE AT 978 630-9388, MONDAY THROUGH THURSDAY, 9AM to 2PM, OR E-MAIL YOUR APPOINTMENT REQUEST TO box-office@mwcc.mass.edu

FOR FULL CASTING INFORMATION, VISIT:
<https://mwcc.edu/campus-life/tam/auditions/>

PROOF OF COVID VACCINATION REQUIRED TO AUDITION

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