

Reflecting on DEI Initiatives with Chief Diversity Executive Stephanie Williams

‘The need is always going to be there.’

By Cody Nathanson
ASSISTANT EDITOR

The Mount’s continued ambition to make students feel included and develop a sense of campus belonging is still an ongoing process. Like many colleges during COVID-19, MWCC followed in the greatly renewed wave of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) initiatives by hiring for a new position: Chief Diversity Executive. A position Stephanie Williams has held since April of 2022.

“When we’re talking about creating inclusive environments and breaking down systems that serve a dominant group and culture and not the rest, the need is always going to be

there,” Williams explained. Her position provides a top-down oversight of MWCC’s policies and programs through the lens of DEIA principles, but when it comes to fostering a front-facing sense of belonging, it remains a part of a larger need. In a 2022 research survey, 64% of college students acknowledged their campus’ support of DEIA principles but shared the sentiment that there was still room for improvement.

One development that Williams emphasized as being very much needed is the construction of a multicultural center at the Mount. “When [we] walk into a space as a human being, what do we do? We look for cues to say, ‘do we belong here? Am

I safe here?’ And when I don’t see people that look like me...or I don’t even feel comfortable to ask the questions...I tend to be more transient and it’s more of a come and go. You’re on campus, you go to your classes, then you leave.”

“There’s a space for LGBTQ+ students. There’s a space for our veteran students. We have a space for our parenting students. We have space for our working adults. But we don’t have anything for students of color specifically,” said Williams. Of the fifteen community colleges in the state of Massachusetts, the Mount is one of seven that does not yet offer a dedicated space for people of color. Some colleges



Photo by Tim Mossholder from Unsplash

lacking a physical location, like Quinsigamond community college in Worcester, have created a digital space instead.

The construction of a multicultural center would be a valuable addition to campus, alongside other DEIA initiatives

like the International Center for the Promotion of Diversity and

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Beyond He and She: Accommodating Gender Pronoun Inclusivity and the Rising Enrollment of Trans and Nonbinary Students in Higher Education



Photo by Alexander Grey from Unsplash

By Elysian Alder
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Across the United States, high school and college students

are increasingly identifying as transgender or nonbinary, with studies revealing that approximately 2% of high

school students and nearly 6% of college students fall somewhere within these identities. About 3% of students specify using pronouns that challenge the traditional binary perspective, like the singular “they/them” and “neopronouns”—a category of new pronouns such as “xe/xem” and “ze/zir” that are used in place of conventional identifiers. This increasing diversity in gender identity among students raises the question of how colleges and universities can effectively accommodate and promote inclusivity for individuals in these communities.

“I think that knowledge is power,” said Wren Stoddard. Stoddard has been president of the Sexuality and Gender Alliance club at Mount Wachusett Community College for the past two years, in addition to being the first openly trans-identifying president of the student government. “Teaching our staff members and our faculty how to relate and how to interact with people who are different from them in any form is only going to help our community and help our students feel more accepted at

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PREVIEWS

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You Can't Read That

The Mount Explores the Controversy and Impact of Banned Books

By **Katie Holgerson**
ASSISTANT EDITOR

On October 3rd, MWCC held a banned book event at the Brewer Center in the library, free for all students to attend. The event was organized by Michel Cocuzza, the Civic Engagement Coordinator; Shelley Nicholson, Director of the Brewer Center; and Robert Koch, Assistant Dean of Collaborative Learning Commons. A handful of students participated in the 2021-event, enjoying complimentary pizza and engaging in group discussion with their peers to help raise student awareness about the issue of banned books, as October 1 – 7, 2023 was Banned Books Week. Banned books are becoming a growing concern, as many schools in the

U.S. continue to ban certain texts in their curriculums and libraries. One of the main reasons for this, Nicholson stated, is that these books are perceived to be “... counter to the ‘norm.’ To what society dictates is how they should be.” Why would reading books that promote critical thinking be banned? Well, it seems to be the parents making these decisions for their children: 60% of all challenges in the 2021-2022 school year came from adults who objected to dozens of books in their districts, some even reaching close to 100 objections. Most often, these books are banned for being sexually explicit, unsuited for the target age group, or containing offensive language. Sometimes,

the books are described with an “other” category, which Cocuzza explained is most likely LGBTQ+ content.

The public has faced this issue for some time. Koch went on to explain, “It started here, like so many other things. Boston

parts of the country. Discussing this topic can help students promote their intellectual freedom. As Cocuzza explained, “We’re also hoping that it sparks some community engagement in the respect where they’re thinking more locally now. And that’s where it starts. And then hopefully it builds and they become nationally engaged, globally engaged.”

Furthermore, it gives students permission to read what they desire, despite what others deem as unfit for them to learn or discover. Emma Morse, a liberal arts major who attended the event out of pure interest, stated, “I think banned books provide a different perspective, like LGBTQ+ and racism, things that are controversial and [can] spread awareness.”

Allowing students the freedom to choose what they read removes limitations. Once the door is opened for them to explore what they’re interested in, they can shape how they perceive societal issues and the world itself.

Research shows that around 3,923 titles have been banned in public schools and libraries in other parts of the country.

was the beginning.” Although the banning of books is not as prevalent in Massachusetts today, research shows that around 3,923 titles have been banned in public schools and libraries in other

Diversity Initiatives

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Inclusion—a student and faculty resource that has been promoting equity on campus since 2021 and has sponsored multiple events, such as the Mount’s Tea Time Speaker Series.

Despite the many areas of improvement that remain, Williams believes that the LaChance Library on campus has had an effective and positive impact on students. She was appreciative of not just their

handling of the growing issue of banned books, but also stated, “In terms of really inclusive resources and making sure that they’re always there and ... that they’re visible and they’re accessible: our library does a great job [of that].”

A multicultural center would not be an end-all solution to engaging the underserved, but its construction would be an easily accessible and visible part of the Mount’s ongoing DEIA strategy.

GET INVOLVED!

Want to join a club or participate in a community event? Then visit InvolveMOUNT at <https://mwcc.campuslabs.com/engage/>

Mountain Lions, Alpacas, and Reptiles! Oh my!

Plain View Farms and Reptile Shows of New England Come to the Mount



Top Row: Photos by Elysian Alder; Bottom Row: Photos by Cenedra Graham

By **Elysian Alder**
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

On September 21st, the Gardner campus of Mount Wachusett Community College even weeks later. “My favorite part was simply experiencing something new,” said Cenedra Graham, a Liberal Arts & Sciences major. “Petting a llama and an alpaca and having them lick at my hand, and having the opportunity to freely touch and examine the reptiles was so amazing!” The alpacas and reptiles were originally scheduled to appear at the Mount’s annual Fall Reptile Shows of New England: a four-foot red iguana, a ball python, bearded dragons, and more.

The enthusiasm and excitement carried on throughout the day, with students posting photos and

sharing their joy on the student app—and some students were still feeling the excitement even weeks later. “My favorite part was simply experiencing something new,” said Cenedra Graham, a Liberal Arts & Sciences major. “Petting a llama and an alpaca and having them lick at my hand, and having the opportunity to freely touch and examine the reptiles was so amazing!”

The alpacas and reptiles were originally scheduled to appear at the Mount’s annual Fall Reptile Shows of New England: a four-foot red iguana, a ball python, bearded dragons, and more. According to Kathy Matson, Director of Student Life, the delay was something of a

blessing in disguise. “We had a great turnout, and I plan to host them separate from the BBQ in the future,” said Matson. “I think it was better that way. The students loved the event.” “I was able to attend the event after my class was over, and had ample time to pet the alpacas and llama,” shared Justina Johnson, an Interdisciplinary Studies and Business Administration major. “My son attends the preschool on campus, and his class was also able to attend. The kids had such a great time, too.”

If the chance to spend time with furry and scaly companions wasn’t remarkable enough, the added opportunity to learn about each animal from the knowledgeable staff of the respective vendors made the experience even more enriching.

“They can make over 32 different vocalizations, and each alpaca has their own voice, just like people,” explained one of the handlers from Plain View Farm, their website, they state, “We can help you conquer your fear while sharing fascinating, lesser-known facts about these remarkable creatures.”

Although Johnson herself admitted that she may not have enjoyed the snakes as much as the alpacas, the crowd gathered around the reptile pens proved that there were plenty of students who did. This isn’t surprising, considering that Reptile Shows of New England specializes in various occasions, including birthday parties, BBQs, and corporate events. Their presentations are conducted in a secure environment with

utmost care, and they even accommodate individuals with reptile phobias, particularly when it comes to snakes. On their website, they state, “We can help you conquer your fear while sharing fascinating, lesser-known facts about these remarkable creatures.” The visit of alpacas, llamas, and reptiles to the Mount wasn’t just a fun day; it captured the core of college life: unexpected, enriching, and exciting experiences. “We have future events scheduled for therapy dogs on the last Monday of October, November, and December,” said Matson. “And student feedback definitely drives what we book in the future.”



Profile: Khygann Hobbs

Student, Writer, Self-Advocate, Lover of Halloween



Photo by Lukasz Nieścioruk from Unsplash

By Desiree Leader
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Khygann Hobbs, a 23-year-old student from Holden, Massachusetts, studies professional writing at Mount Wachusett Community College. With an interest in creative writing, especially the horror genre, there are many things that set Hobbs apart from the average student—not the least of which is her candor regarding her journey with autism. Hobbs relays how neurodiversity need not hinder you from following your dreams and is a living example of what can be achieved with an incredible attitude, a supportive family, and a lot of hard work.

Having autism has made some things challenging for Hobbs. For instance, she needs to rely on her mother for transportation. While this limits her classes to the Gardner campus only, it has also made her personal freedom that much more important to her. “It is very hard to go from place to place,

especially in [a] very walkable city like Holden,” said Hobbs.

Hobbs loves to be able to get out and go to the dollar store, but in the city of Holden, the lack of sidewalks and public transportation makes that difficult. As a self-advocate, Hobbs explained that it “can be frustrating when there’s a lot of stuff to deal with. Having to go to school meetings and such. I do need to be dropped off by someone.”

Hobbs also discusses some of the strengths that come from her autism, stating that it “helps with my perseverance in some aspects; I don’t know if I would write as much if I was neurotypical.”

Beyond embracing her neurodivergence, another important part of what makes Hobbs unique is that she loves all things Halloween. When asked about any costume ideas she has, she explained, “I don’t have a specific costume picked out...I can just watch Halloween themed stuff

in a Halloween themed blanket.” Although she did also admit that she is hoping that the Mount has a Halloween party again this year.

“I am very interested in the horror genre; it just fascinates me. Especially seeing designs for supernatural monsters,” she said. When asked about her influences, she referenced Junji Ito, a Japanese horror manga artist, which may be where she draws some of her inspiration, especially for the science fiction she likes to write in her spare time.

Hobbs, who has been a student since 2020, is taking two courses a semester and has a few things she’s looking forward to. “Short term...I am looking forward to Halloween,” she shared. In the long term? “Probably the day I finally graduate!” That will be a sweet day indeed, especially given her perseverance and all that she has overcome.

Beyond He and She

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Prior to the start of the fall 2023 semester, faculty and staff members at the Mount were invited to a professional development seminar presented by Dr. Julie Elkins, an educator and prominent figure in LGBTQ+ issues for over two decades, and co-founder of the Gender and Sexuality Knowledge Community for the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). The focus of the seminar was on how to create an inclusive learning environment while educating faculty and staff about the importance of pronouns, gender identity, and chosen names. Elkins shared tools, strategies, and resources to equip attendees with the knowledge and skills needed to create a sense of belonging and provide a more supportive educational environment for all students at the Mount.

Associate Professor Kara Roche attended the seminar and found that the biggest takeaway for her was actually more simple than one might think. “Dr. Elkins shared a strategy for this of simply asking and making a notation of the student’s preferred pronouns right on our class member rosters,” explained Roche. “So this year, I made a concerted effort to ask each student to write their preferred pronouns directly on the roster themselves next to their name, along with any names they’d prefer. This ensured I’d learn their names with the pronouns right off the bat.”

“I feel as though professors who introduce themselves with their pronouns [also] show an understanding of just how important it is to individuals to use gender-affirming language such as pronouns,” said Stoddard. “It helps students see that our college is working to be a more inclusive environment to everyone.”

While Massachusetts doesn’t mandate LGBTQ-inclusive curricular standards, the state is one of the 20 in the country where state law explicitly forbids discrimination and exclusion in schools based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The existence of legal frameworks like these shows the vital role college faculty and staff play in upholding an inclusive environment through their interactions with students.

“As educators, if we want respect, we have to give it,” said Roche. “I always thought I was doing a sterling job at that. But [Dr. Julie Elkins’] presentation showed me that there was much more I could and SHOULD be doing. A student who feels safe and accepted can celebrate their best selves, and that, in turn, allows them to learn, to open, to take chances. Normalizing individuality gives us permission to be ourselves. And there’s nothing more important.”



A Double-Edged Sword

Balancing the Benefits and Ethical Dilemmas of AI

By Kent Yang
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Artificial Intelligence and applications of AI, such as Machine Learning, have ushered in a new era of technological advancement, transforming industries and enhancing our daily lives. However, this enhancement also comes with an ethical double-edged sword. While AI offers tremendous benefits, it also raises ethical concerns that demand thoughtful consideration.

AI technologies offer the potential to revolutionize the workplace by automating tasks, thereby enhancing efficiency, productivity, and reducing on-the-job injuries. However, this advancement also brings forth concerns related to job displacement. According to a report from the World Economic Forum, by the year 2025, AI may lead to the displacement of approximately 85 million jobs. But it’s also expected to create 97 million new roles as well, which perfectly illustrates

Professions consist of barbers, firefighters, and pipelayers. AI will ultimately have varying impacts on different industries and occupations which means that the labor market and workforce will need to adapt and potentially allow for reskilling of workers.

AI learns by using historical data, and those data sets may include racial attributes which can lead to biased results. Predictive Policing, for example, is a form of AI that analyzes datasets like police reports, locations, and events to predict future criminal activity and attempt to identify individuals or groups with a higher likelihood of involvement in criminal behavior. Studies have shown that predictive policing algorithms were twice as likely to flag Black defendants compared to white defendants. In addressing this prevailing bias, conducting manual audits remains paramount. Undoubtedly, AI researchers are diligently enhancing these

defenses in real-time. In some AI-driven surveillance systems, they can be equipped with facial recognition technology which captures a snapshot of the faces and voices of ongoing passers-by to be entered into a database. The ethical dilemma centers on how to strike the right balance between improving the way that we safeguard society from harm and respecting the fundamental rights of individuals to privacy.

Using AI, platforms like Facebook and Instagram can offer a personalized experience based on the user’s history and other factors. There are situations where AI decisions can impact individuals, and a lack of transparency can undermine trust and accountability. In 2018, it was reported that 50 million Facebook profiles had their personal data collected without users’ consent. The data was subsequently sold to political campaigns for the use of political advertising. This was the largest Facebook leak at the time.

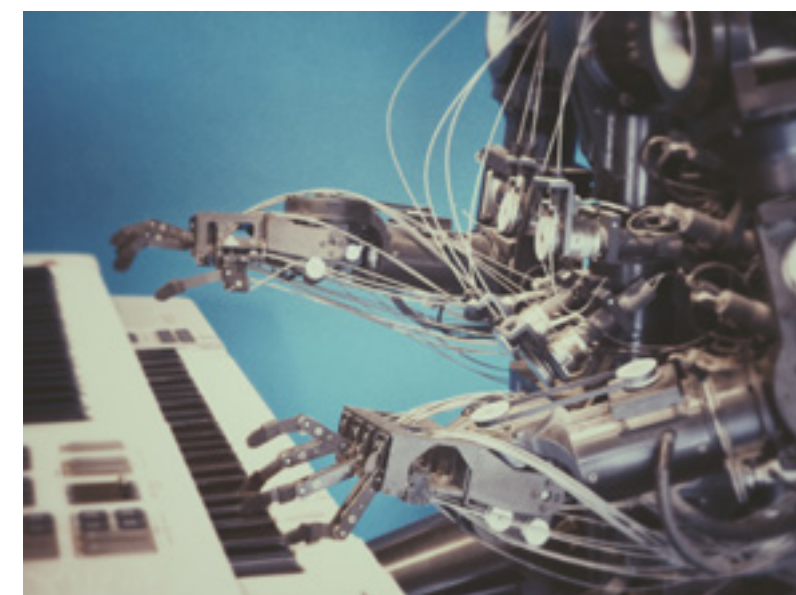


Photo by Possessed Photography from Unsplash

However, US Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks, an advocate in favor of the implementation of AI in warfare, emphasizes that it will allow the United States military to “gain military advantage faster.”

There’s also the very real potential that AI can revolutionize healthcare systems. This could range from creating personalized treatments, early disease detection, and critical risk assessments. A notable example of this is the way that scientists from Stanford’s Folding@home were able to understand how proteins fold into a three-dimensional structure, identify potential drug targets, and develop new compounds to treat diseases more effectively by simulating protein molecules through the combination of machine-learning and distributed computation—the efforts of multiple computer systems.

Most relevantly, the integration of AI in education is rapidly expanding, too. AI in a classroom setting can adapt to the unique needs, strengths, and weaknesses of individual students, optimizing their educational journey through personalized learning. AI can streamline grading processes, and offering detailed feedback to

students as well as generally enhancing writing skills by offering grammar correction, word recommendations, and plagiarism detection. AI has the capacity to assist with administrative tasks, from electronic monitoring to appointment scheduling and managing budgets, which can allow educators to focus on their other teaching responsibilities instead. Kim Colangelo, Director of Learning Design and Technology and Adjunct at Mount Wachusett Community College, emphasized the importance of being proactive with how AI is used in a classroom setting, stating: “In my opinion, policies need to provide protection and outline ethical behavior ... we need to design a creative approach to how we will incorporate AI into our use in education.”

Overall, AI can offer immense benefits, but it is essentially a double-edged blade due to the abundance of ethical challenges that may come along with it. To use AI responsibly, we must acknowledge both the pros and cons of what it can do. We also must follow the proper guidelines dictated by its developers and how the AI program was intended to be used.

To use AI responsibly, we must acknowledge both the pros and cons of what it can do.

the double-edged nature of AI’s impact on employment.

Certain occupations are often categorized into varying risk levels when discussing AI job displacement. High-Risk Professions include budget analysts, data entry keyers, tax preparers, technical writers, and web developers. Medium-Risk Professions include chief executives, fundraisers, interior designers, sales managers, and veterinarians. Low-Risk

datasets and formulating sophisticated logic to rectify the imperfections that may have arisen in early AI technologies. The rise of AI has also presented a significant ethical conundrum concerning privacy vs security. AI technologies have the obvious ability to manage enormous volumes of data in unfounded ways. Through data analysis and enhanced surveillance, AI can proactively detect and respond to threats, fortifying digital

The idea of using AI in warfare is another that raises some concerns, though. Machines that can make life or death decisions without human intervention have been both praised and criticized by certain groups. Human rights organizations like the Human Rights Watch have opposed the usage of AI machinery and tools in these fields, stating that they would, “threaten the fundamental right to life and principle of human dignity.”

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!



PAWSITIVE VIBES

Pet Wellness Month at the Mount



"This is Hank. He is 2 years old, and his favorite activity is playing fetch with my dad. After my other dog, Daly Alley, passed away due to hip complications, my dad, who loves dogs, was heartbroken as Alley was one of his favorites. So, my siblings, my mom, and I decided to surprise my dad on Father's Day by driving to Fredericksburg, Pennsylvania, to get him a new dog that he could be buddies with. We surprised him in the late afternoon on Father's Day, and that's when Hank became a part of our life. He's the most special dog ever: the kindest, sweetest, and gentlest dog you could imagine." — Abigail Randall, Art major

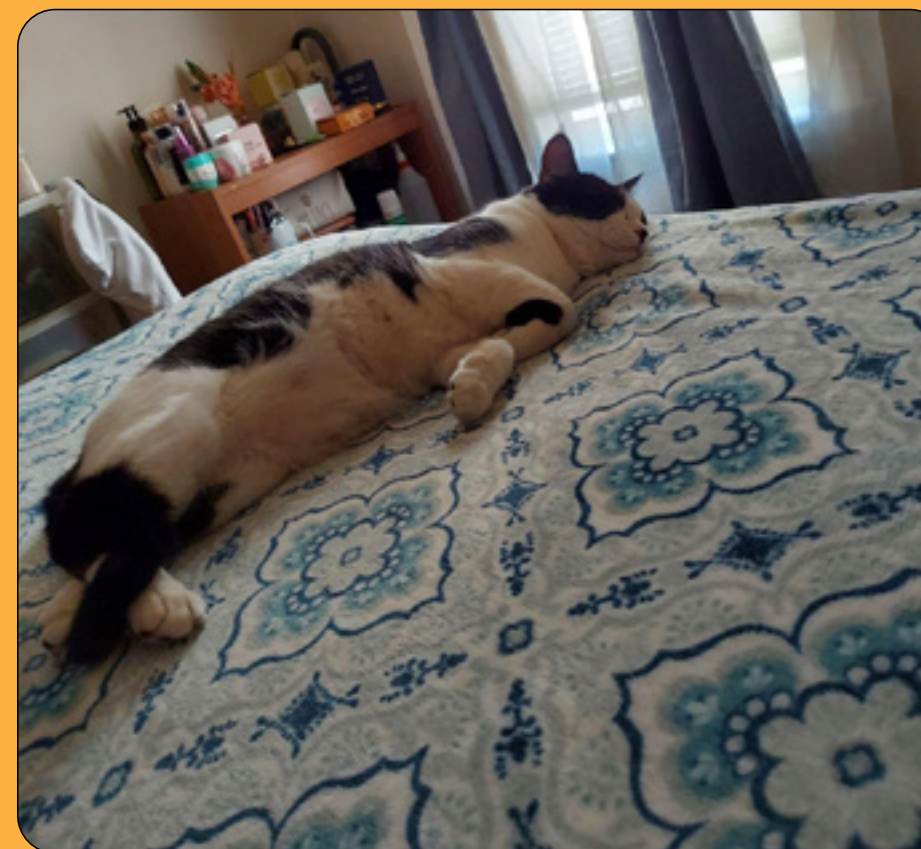
"This is Rosy. She's my two-and-a-half-year-old Pomsky (half Pomeranian, half Husky). Rosy is super sweet, and she loves to play and eat." — Kent Yang, Computer Information Systems major



"I have a 16 year old Pekingese. His name is Teddy. Teddy has been there for me before I started using, the 7 years I was in non-stop active addiction, and the 4 years of watching me become the person he ALWAYS knew was in my soul all along. Teddy has been through hell and back himself, but most of all he has ALWAYS been there for me. He is one of the strongest best friends I've ever had." — Amanda LeBlanc



"My best friend's name is Misaki. He's about 8 years old, and we've been through quite a lot together! He's qualified as my emotional support animal, and he does a great job at it. Although meeting new people makes him extremely (and nonsensically) angry, once he warms up to someone, he becomes unstopably obsessed with getting them to snuggle with him or giving affectionate headbutts. I tell him everyday that he's 'cute, sweet, and soft' but he's also ridiculous and falls very much into the stereotype of orange cats only having one brain cell." — Elysian Alder, Professional Writing major, Editor-in-Chief



"This is Momo; he is one and a half years old. He came into our lives at two months old and loves waking me up every day at 3:45 AM, as if he were my daily alarm. Although there are days when I hate that he wakes me up so early, I love him very much." — Ana Antunez



"My pet's name is Oreo! She is 2 years old. I was blessed with Oreo when a friend of mine needed to find a new home for her. And ever since then, Oreo became my fur baby! Her favorite thing to do is to sunbathe and play with a laser pointer. She also goes crazy for treats!" — Sabrina Alonso, Human Services major



"This is my fur-son, Mitt. Short for Mittens, but he doesn't like his full name. Mitt is 13, but I got him from Craigslist when he was 10. He was shy at first, but over the years, he has gotten more comfortable meeting new people. Mitt enjoys lounging in the sun and the occasional catnip. We both enjoy snuggling and watching movies. Mitt had a hard life before he found his forever home, but he's so happy to be the king of the castle." — Mina Girouard



Creative Writing

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

The Palace of Marvelous Demons

By Cody Nathanson

One foot off the bar stool, he begins to pace back and forth between the wooden tables sprawled out in front of him. Smearing the sweat from the palm of his hand onto his leather vest, he glances over at the crowd moving in and out of the building. Turning back to check the clock just above the bar, he takes a deep breath before approaching three men sitting at the bar next to him. His military boots thump against the floor, and he passes a stool, then another, before placing his elbow onto the counter next to them.

Their jaws go still as they turn to the man looming over them. A small crowd of people carrying trays and drinks pass through the front door as they continue to look up at the vested man before them.

After the front door opens and closes again, one of the shirted men looks up and asks, "We good?"

Lifting his arm off the table and giving his vest an eager pat, he lets out a quick smile toward the three men before giving an excited response, "Lets rock!"

Standing up together, the three men hop from their stools and follow the vested man into the room by the bar. As the door closes behind them, the clang of pans spills out towards the entrance.

A moment passes, then the vested fellow leaves the room carrying a giant tray filled with cupcakes and cookies. Moving across the room, he takes a few steps outside, with the three other men close behind him.

Tents and cars fill the dirt parking space in front of the bar. Men wearing leather vests pass out hamburgers. Others hand out water bottles and post signs reading, "Demons Charity Drive."

Duality

The author would like to provide a few content warnings for any potential readers. The following passage of text contains: death & mentions of death, blood, and violence.

What was perhaps most surprising to him was how long it was taking to die this time. It was nothing like before, when he was fourteen years old and his pitiable, ailment-riddled body finally gave out in the dark peace of slumber. The circumstances being what they'd been, his memories of it were shrouded in a hazy fog, fragments of awareness amid the frantic efforts to revive him. Galino, decisive even in adolescence, forced air back into his lungs while Raksha sent jolts of electricity surging into his chest. Beside the bed, his mother sat in shambles, her grip firm on another's hand, her body shaken by repressed sobs. Later, he learned that his father had excused himself posthaste to fetch the physician—a pinch-faced, balding man who consistently delivered grim prognoses and stern counsel, all of which Briar managed to dismiss with alarming ease, a talent entirely at odds with his worsening condition. In his father's absence then, the hand his mother crushed within her own belonged to the estate cook who chastised him the next morning, claiming that she'd never cast so many prayers into the aether before that day, when she'd begged the forces that be to return his body and soul to those who loved him, only for him to revive with even less gratitude than he had possessed before. Who would have known, he'd said then, that the forces that be were an adolescent curmudgeon with rudimentary emergency medicine skills and an elementally-charged familiar?

On that dying day over ten years ago, he recalled no blood, nor did he remember pain, and days later, with the same characteristically dry, morbid amusement that didn't find favor with Galino, either, he remarked that it had almost been a disappointment.

Everything was different this time. There was nothing peaceful about this agonizing crawl towards death, and there was no solace to be found beneath the shroud of night he had always cherished. There were no resolute friends, no furry-footed familiars; there was no one sobbing beside him, and there was no breath being wasted on desperate, directionless prayers. His bedroom—with its towering bookshelves lining the walls, each shelf burdened with volumes that had witnessed countless late-night musings and moments of epiphany; with its clutter of manuscripts and cacophony of leaflets and sheet music strewn about in early morning frustration; with its ridiculously grand, imposing canopy bed, the dark, wooden frame of which was accentuated by four marble posts, each hand-carved with an artisan's precision; with the grab bars fastened into the walls here and there, a cane or two placed within arm's reach, cushions, emergency service bells, the endless list of proactive precautions that he'd argued against when his father had suggested them, but conceded when his mother did; with the resplendent window stretching from wooden floor to high ceiling, bathing the oft-used reading nook nestled below it in the light of the moons and the stars—was replaced by the dreary, deadened boulevard leading to Moray Manor. The only light was the occasional flicker of moonlight through the skeletal canopy of dead oak trees, but it was cold and unfamiliar, struggling to permeate the gnarled, barren tree limbs—not at all like the soft glow of it cast freely through the panes of his window. Instead of oil paintings, charcoal sketches, marble and bronze busts, and the beginnings of his beloved antiques collection, his surroundings were decorated in scarlet and soot. His blood—and the blood of those who had been assailed by the other creatures that had been terrorizing the boulevard for weeks—splashed across the hard ground and the decaying trunks of the oaks around him, painting the crumbling stones of the low walls lining the path as it flowed from the open wounds on his neck, on his chest.

His awareness was still fragmented—and with his head being slammed into the ground, the walls, the trees, how could it not be? But the adrenaline and delight coursing through his body as he endured the onslaught of pain kept him more grounded than before. The only sounds he could hear were the distant groans of recently reanimated beings meandering through the corpses of trees, his own choking, gurgling, gasping breaths, and a sound he found to be curious—albeit deeply tragic—once he deduced what it was.

In between erratic snarls and inhuman grumbles, with their fangs sinking into his flesh, the vampire feeding from him... was sobbing.

- A work-in-progress by Elysian Alder

COMICS

CREATED BY TOM HILL JR.

MONSTER TALES
FLATWOODS MONSTER

LOCATION: Flatwoods, West Virginia
DATE: September 12, 1952

At 7:15 PM, Edward and Fred May and Tommy Myer saw a bright light cross the sky. They went to investigate where it landed, followed by the May boys' mother, Kathleen, and a National Guardsman, Eugene Lemon.

As the group approached a small wooded hill, they noticed a pulsating red light.

When they crested the hill, they were faced with a strange figure standing near a tree.

The creature reportedly hissed and glided at the group, causing Lemon to drop his flashlight as they ran away.

The possible identity of the "Flatwoods Monster" ranges widely, from some kind of mechanical alien visitor...

...to a barn owl, illuminated by a pulsating red aircraft hazard beacon and startled by the arrival of the group. The light in the sky is thought to most likely have been a meteor.

In the years since, the strange being has become a sort of unofficial mascot of Flatwoods.

Despite its celebrity status, the Flatwoods Monster's true nature may forever remain a mystery...

Copyright Tom Hill Jr.

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TAUGHT BY KARA ROCHE

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W.E.B. DuBois
Born in Great Barrington, MA, Du Bois penned poems that spoke of his unique experiences as a Black American. He wrote of not only injustices at home but also abroad. DuBois' writing and beliefs prove just how ahead of his time he was.

Emily Dickinson
Born in Amherst, MA, Dickinson had to wait until her death to be fully discovered. Dickinson's unorthodox poetry with unusual rhyme, capitalization, and punctuation make her an intriguing and relevant poet for modern readers.

Sylvia Plath
Born in Jamaica Plain, outside of Boston, Plath is best known for mastering the art of confessional poetry that pierces the heart. Her poignant writing was all penned before she took her own life at the age of 30.

AND MORE!

Henry David Thoreau
Mary Oliver
Jack Kerouac

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and get your writing, photography, artwork, or reviews out into the world! Or maybe take on a behind-the-scenes role and help run the *Observer's* website or social media. Whatever your interests, you can find a place on our team!



Involvement MOUNT Events

Thursday, October 19 2023 at 10:30 AM to Thursday, October 19 2023 at 1:30 PM -
Let's Taco about Transfer! (Annual Transfer Fair)
@ South Cafe, Gardner Campus

Monday, October 23 2023 at 10:00 AM to Monday, October 23 2023 at 1:00 PM -
Literary Book Fair Event @ South Cafe, Gardner Campus

Monday, October 23 2023 at 12:00 PM to Monday, October 23 2023 at 1:30 PM -
Highest Peak Halloween Concert @ Gardner Campus

Monday, October 23 2023 at 12:30 PM to Monday, October 23 2023 at 1:30 PM -
CATS Programming Group Meeting @ W110

Monday, October 23 2023 at 4:00 PM to Monday, October 23 2023 at 5:00 PM -
SGA Biweekly Meeting @ Zoom

Monday, October 23 2023 at 5:00 PM to Monday, October 23 2023 at 6:00 PM -
Mount Observer Weekly Meeting @ Zoom

Tuesday, October 24 2023 at 12:30 PM to Tuesday, October 24 2023 at 1:30 PM -
JINDO- BINGO with a Beat @ Zoom

Wednesday, October 25 2023 at 12:30 PM to Wednesday, October 25 2023 at 1:30 PM -
Building Community & Appreciating Differences
@ H171 Multi-Purpose Room

Wednesday, October 25 2023 at 12:45 PM to Wednesday, October 25 2023 at 1:45 PM -
Weekly Art Club Meeting @ Room 104 (Studio One)

Wednesday, October 25 2023 at 3:15 PM to Wednesday, October 25 2023 at 4:15 PM -
Hike at Perley Brook Reservoir @ Perley Brook Reservoir -
110 Clark Street, Gardner

Thursday, October 26 2023 at 10:00 AM to Thursday, October 26 2023 at 11:00 AM EDT -
THRIVE: Coffee Conversation Hour @ THRIVE CENTER - Room H106

Thursday, October 26 2023 at 3:00 PM to Thursday, October 26 2023 at 5:00 PM -
Halloween Stroll @ Gardner Campus

Thursday, October 26 2023 at 5:00 PM to Thursday, October 26 2023 at 9:00 PM -
Scaryoke @ South Cafe

Friday, October 27 2023 at 9:15 AM to Friday, October 27 2023 at 10:15 AM -
Sh'Bam Dance @ Mount Fitness

Monday, October 30 2023 at 12:30 PM to Monday, October 30 2023 at 1:30 PM -
SAGA Bi-Weekly Meetings @ Room H361 and Zoom

Monday, October 30 2023 at 12:30 PM to Monday, October 30 2023 at 1:30 PM -
Therapy Dogs on Campus @ Student Center

Monday, October 30 2023 at 11:00 AM to Monday, October 30 2023 at 2:00 PM -
Halloween Bake Sale @ Student Center

Monday, October 30 2023 at 2:30 PM to Monday, October 30 2023 at 3:30 PM -
Life Management Workshops @ Advising, Career & Transfer Room H107A

Monday, October 30 2023 at 5:00 PM to Monday, October 30 2023 at 6:00 PM -
Mount Observer Weekly Meeting @ Zoom

Tuesday, October 31 2023 at 11:30 AM to Tuesday, October 31 2023 at 1:30 PM -
Student Trick or Treat @ Gardner Campus

Tuesday, October 31 2023 at 1:30 PM to Tuesday, October 31 2023 at 2:30 PM -
JINDO- BINGO with a Beat @ Zoom

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