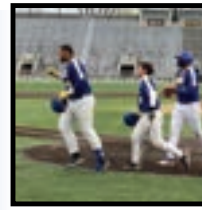




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in national standings  
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# Observer

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Spring 2024 • Volume 88 • Issue Number 5 Feb. 16, 2024

## News Bytes

“Hurricane Diane” returns. Revival of the NECC production of the play by Madeleine George after its entry into the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival. Feb. 23 and 24 at 7 p.m. and Feb. 25, at 2 p.m. in the Hawrylcw Theater, third floor of Spurk building, Building C. General admission is \$20. Seniors and students are \$10.

Prep for Success Online Course. This free one-week online course will prepare students with the tools needed for online learning. The course will be offered within NECC’s Blackboard platform. It is facilitated by Sue Tashjian, Coordinator of Instructional Technology. Feb. 19 to Feb. 25.

Who Was Edmonia Lewis? A Black History Month event. Join us and hear Sociology Professor Gypsy Murphy speak about this important historical figure who pursued art in Massachusetts and internationally. Tuesday Feb 20, from 10-11 a.m. Center for Liberal Arts (C 209) Spurk Building.

UMass Transfer Fair, Feb. 27 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Lawrence Campus L-Dimitry Atrium

## Thinking globally



Photo by Rosa Conn

On left, Rosa Conn, business major at NECC, takes a selfie with Ailyn Diaz Torres, an MBA student from Universidad Autonoma De Ciudad de Juarez, Mexico, in Boston. Diaz Torres visited Conn in the summer after they connected through the IVE/COIL program.

## Courses connect with students abroad

By DANIELA VALDIVIA-TERRES  
News Editor

NECC students are connected with international peers virtually to team up on projects together. There are around seven courses with a special component, the International Virtual Experience IVE and Collaborative Online International Learning COIL where NECC students are paired with students at universities from Canada, France, Mexico or Palestine, to work as a team on an assigned project.

NECC students, the same

as their international peers, consider these courses as highly valuable and open-door to thinking globally.

### Learning globally from class

Courses like Physiological Chemistry and Anatomy and Physiology are required courses for most AS programs in Health Sciences. Professor Emily Gonzalez is the leader of both. She is leading this spring her third cohort of NECC students in a project with UIT Cachan of the Université Paris Saclay in Cachan, in the south-

western of France.

Also, Professor Gonzalez currently is teaching Anatomy and Physiology I collaborating with medical students at An Najah National University of Palestine in a discussion on environmental toxins. This collaboration was repeated with students in Physiological Chemistry in fall of 2023.

On the other side, Professor Lis Espinoza also teaches courses Spanish SPAN111 and

Continued on  
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## Upcoming events:

Monday February 19  
Presidents Day. No School

Dating Violence Workshop Online. Feb 12:30-1:30 p.m.

Book Talk and Reading Party. Thursday Feb 22 12:30-1:30 p.m. In the Center for Liberal Arts C-209

Tax Preparation Available. Feb 23 @ 12:00. Off Campus. Email lsmerdon@necc.mass.edu for details

Last Day to Withdraw with “W” for Session 1 Classes Friday Feb 23 9:00-5:00 p.m.

MassReconnect Information Session-Virtual Online. February 24 9:00-10:00 a.m.

### How to find security around each campus:

**Haverhill Campus**  
100 Elliott St., Spurk Building, Room 110C

**Lawrence Campus**  
45 Franklin St. main lobby

Call 978.556.3333 from a cell phone. Extension 3333 from any campus phone on either campus.



## Thinking globally continued from Page 1

English Composition ENG102 with COIL projects with peers in Mexico.

Professor Sheila Muller who teaches Principles of Marketing MKT210 and Entrepreneurship BUS102 with the IVE component, says “these exchanges give our business students a first-hand glimpse into working with diverse and international teams once they start their career paths in the global marketplace. It is a perfect microcosm for them to navigate their cultural profile, values, norms, and beliefs to better communicate with other cultures.”

Indeed, one of Muller’s students, Rosa Conn who will soon be graduating and transferring to a 4-year university, and was paired with students from Mexico confirmed “as a business major, I truly believe that this connection that we do with other (international) students is going to train us for the business world. For example, if we have a meeting in China or Mexico, in this program (IVE), we learn to understand that everybody works in a different way. We learn how other people do meetings, how they handle work/life differently like we do here, in the States.”

Professor Judith Pollock-Ciampi teaches managerial business communications with the IVE component which is a capstone course that provides global awareness to students. Students learn about multicultural and generational communications. She said that it aligned with the college’s Strategic Plan, and helped students become more informed global citizens for the 21st century workforce.

### International teamwork

Students are exposed to teamwork with peers from universities overseas and learn about the other student culture, about others countries points of view, and adjust each other timetable to come out with the assignment results. According to the feedback from the Center of Business, NECC business students and their French peers had exceptional team collaboration.

Managerial Business Communication students were

paired with computer science students from Polytech Nancy, Université de Lorraine in France. One student emailed the professor this review after the course was finished. “It was helpful to have experience working with people on the other side of the world. The French students gave us a wonderful first experience with working with people from different cultures and this is sure to help me in the future.”

Another student of the same class, DS, emailed the professor that it was like opening a window to the world. “You get to chat with and collaborate with students from different countries... We’re not just learning about cultures in a textbook; we’re living it, working with people who see things from a totally different angle... It’s a journey that broadens our mind and connects us with awesome students from around the world.”

As professor Gonzalez said “students at NECC will be working with a diverse population with many cultural backgrounds and while we have much in common, there is much we can learn to understand at the verbal and non-verbal level when we communicate with each other. This can lead to efficiency and a better atmosphere in the workplace.”

### Improving your resume

Professor Muller and Professor Ciampi provide a paragraph for students to use on their resumes. Other professors teaching similar IVE courses provide a special certificate. In both cases, this extra international component differentiate them for having worked/study with students abroad and successfully achieved their assignments. This may lead their names up to the top list for a job position or promotion.

### Connections that transcend the classroom

Probably, the most important for Rosa Conn, NECC business student and Ailyn Diaz Torres, a master’s in business administration student from the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad de Juarez, was the friendship beyond classes.



Photo by Rosa Conn

**On left, Rosa Conn, business major at NECC, takes a selfie with Ailyn Diaz Torres, an MBA student from Universidad Autonoma De Ciudad de Juarez, Mexico, in Boston this summer. Diaz Torres visited Conn in the summer after they connected through the IVE/COIL program.**

Diaz Torres said “I think it was great to be in contact with international students and learn about their points of view on the same topics. It was interesting to find similarities and contrasts between both countries. We found things that happen in the south of the USA and could happen in the north of Mexico.”

From Ciudad de Juarez, Diaz Torres added “I loved to meet Rosita, as I learned about her story, a Mexican girl who is studying and managing her own business at the same time. We continued being in touch after the course ended, and I told her I was interested in her business experience. I told her I would love to travel to Boston and visit her someday to learn more about her business. During last summer, I asked her if my son and I could visit her, and Rosita happily agreed. Once there, Rosita took me to all her business processes, marketing, logistics, management. I learned a lot about her entrepreneurship but beyond that, I met an amazing human being. So, what I liked the most about this course was the connection with another student from another part of the world.”

As Diaz Torres is an MBA student, working as a high school teacher, and with four kids, her possibilities to study abroad are limited. However, having the opportunity to be paired with international students virtually to teamwork on a study project and making friendship beyond classroom, “that only happened, that only could happen, through this course,” said Diaz Torres.

They have built a lifelong relationship. Conn is planning to return the visit and travel to Ciudad de Juarez, Mexico, to visit Diaz Torres soon.

These courses are a great opportunity to broad students’ way of thinking and give different perspectives about the world. It is fascinating to meet people from different cultures and backgrounds, finding similarities and challenges between both and most importantly, having the chance to work with an international cohort from your NECC classroom.

Furthermore, the Director, Instructional Technology & Online Education at NECC, Melba Acevedo, explains that IVE/COIL courses “give the students the opportunity to exchange experiences with students outside of the not just

the local community, but even outside the country. By these opportunities, students will be able to expand their perspective, see things from other people’s point of view, and outside of the U.S. bubble.”

Acevedo points out these courses are not “cookie cutter” as they vary from semester to semester even with the same faculty members. When asked about how students manage the communications across borders considering different time zones, she explained it’s different per case. “It’s the beauty of the faculty when they put (it) together ... and they do it according to what they feel comfortable with technology and what is feasible,” she said.

Students use different communication tools to talk to each other, including emails, Google Meet, Zoom, Discord, WhatsApp and even Face Time.

A call for students eager to check which courses are available for next semester with the International Virtual Experience component, same as faculty willing to collaborate with professionals all around the world, please contact Melba Acevedo at [macevedo@necc.mass.edu](mailto:macevedo@necc.mass.edu)



# What skis and snowboards can teach you

## *Life lessons in the snow mountain*

BY DANIELA  
VALDIVIA-TERRES  
News Editor

Students Lauren Rafferty, this reporter Daniela Valdivia-Terres and alum Chris Drew had fun during the Ski Trip which was organized and lead by Engineering Professor Doug Leaffer. About 1.5 hours away from NECC Haverhill campus, Mount Sunapee in Newbury in western New Hampshire was the chosen place to spend a full day trip in contact with nature March 13.

Rafferty, NECC student of mechanical engineering, said she started snowboarding when she was 10 years old and since then, she has not stopped.

She descended smoothly the snow mountain, like riding a kind of levitating carpet and landed with a graceful 360° spinning in front of my camera. Not wanting to show off, she just went downhill with great confidence and wide experience. Indeed, she said she took private and group lessons when younger for about six years and spent time with her family in North Conway, a touristic winter spot in north New Hampshire where she used to practice snowboarding.

Rafferty, now 26, said her dad took her skiing a couple of times when she was 5 years old, but she did not like it. After she learned how to snowboard, she tried skiing again but after the first ride she was convinced snowboarding is “her thing.”

By contrast “my thing” is enjoying the beach. I was born in Callao, a port in Lima, Perú. The lowest coastal weather in winter is about 65 °F and the highest in summer is around 90 °F.

Sometimes in winter, it drizzles so the feeling goes down to 55 °F and we dress warm wearing heavy winter jackets, but the good news is that winter is not that long. Summer is from mid-December to mid-March, but I used to go to the beach as soon as it got warm in November until late April. I

grew up swimming and playing with the waves and enjoying the ocean breeze, along with a book when taking a break on the shore.

When I moved to New England, the shortage of natural daylight crushed me. The harsh freezing cold made me feel that there was no more option just to truly hibernate like a hedgehog. It made me feel isolated, homesick, and blue. The doctor diagnosed me with seasonal affective disorder. Vitamin D was prescribed; however, I knew as Latina, I only needed “vitamin Sea.”

When I saw the Ski Trip flyer on campus, I decided to give myself a chance to experience the snow in an unusual way. What is “the thing” about going up to the mountains to feel even colder and wearing heavy gear to throw oneself down from the top of the hill? With skepticism I asked if someone who knows nothing about skiing could go. Leaffer told me “No problem,” so I signed up.

Dressed in Peruvian baby alpaca wool vest, merino sheep wool socks, three layers of 100% Peruvian Pima cotton t-shirts, a – 50 °F snow pants, and a double layer – 50 °F winter jacket, looking like I was going to climb the Everest, I dared to face the snow mountain.

When facing the snow mountain with her snowboard, Rafferty assured me there is a sense of freedom. “I can put my headphones on, don’t have to hear people just see them... just be able to go fast. And even if I fall, I know it’s not that bad, so I take the risk, but try not to fall.”

“It’s hard the first few times you do it but as soon as you get that one run you don’t fall at all, you wanna do it again!” emphasized Rafferty.

The base elevation of Mount Sunapee is 1,233 feet and the highest elevation is 2,743 feet. Rafferty, Drew and Leaffer took the lift to the top and went downhill one right after the other one. I was video recording and admiring their confidence in riding down the

snow mountain. So fearless, I thought.

Drew, an NECC alumni who graduated in 2023, majored in chemistry, physics, and environmental science, and currently he is a peer tutor at NECC. Drew said he tried snowboarding when he was 13 years old but then stopped. Years later, he went back to it, and he loved it. In contrast to Rafferty, Drew said he likes the social aspect of it. He likes to ride downhill with his friends and enjoys seeing his friends doing something funny or a trick, race them down the mountain, and take the lift to the top again talking together. “The whole vibe of it is a lot of fun,” he said.

With a sunny 55 °F, Drew got 37 miles per hour, beating for a few miles Rafferty’s speed. Drew’s forte is speed. He recommends staying straight and not to move to much if going too fast. He sees Mount Sunapee as a good place to enjoy skiing or snowboarding, and even the advanced terrains “are not unbearable.”

Falling is part of the learning process. Drew is fully convinced about it, he stated “I learn best from my mistakes, the more I fell the more I say ‘all right I’m not going to do that.’”

However, when I was trying to go down the “Bunny Hill,” a slope with a teeny-tiny elevation, a couple of inches tall, I was petrified.

Standing up on my boots attached to the skies, I felt like I was standing on soap. It was so slippery that I thought I would crash against the pine trees at the end of the slope two miles away. Just before to step on the belt that would take me up to the top of the minuscule hill, Leaffer told me two instructions, “do pizza” which means making a triangle with the skies, putting the top front together and opening the heels back; and “do French fries” which means set the skies parallel straight. Still, his food instructions reminded me of my animadversion to cook and did not help me to move



Photo courtesy of Daniela Valdivia-Terres

**Daniela Valdivia-Terres skis at Mount Sunapee in New Hampshire on March 13.**

forward. The senior man at the end of the belt saw me in desperation, he walked to me and gently explained how I could stop and encourage me to try. I breathed in and out and I tried. Leaffer waited for me down the slope just in case I needed a hand.

I went downhill screaming so loud that I could cause an avalanche and just moved a couple of feet and I fell. So, Leaffer took the belt up the hill to meet me and helped me go down the slope and strongly suggested I take a professional lesson. So, I did.

A snow-avid friend of mine lent me her equipment: gloves, face polar fleece, helmet, snow goggles, skies, skies boots, and poles. However, my right calf got bruised as the boot was too tight, so I had to rent boots and therefore, the skies (\$59).

After paying for a one-hour private lesson (\$159), the assigned instructor helped me to find the right size of boots. I learned that it is not only about the shoe size but the comfort and size of the calves are important.

Once the boots were appropriate, a ski specialist sized my height and asked for my weight, then he gave me shorter skies than the ones from my friend, saying, “as a

beginner, you need skies that are not taller than your chin height and the boots elevation need to be adjusted according to your weight.” That was the “ah-ha” moment.

Back on the snow, the instructor was outstanding. He was patient, funny, and cheerful. I fell a couple of times, but he was taking every opportunity to teach me something, even how to fall avoiding major harm. By the end of the lesson, I conquered my fears. I asked for “permission” to the mountain, and for a few nano seconds, like Rafferty said, I enjoyed “freedom” and I felt like I flew. What a joy!

I encountered a sense of liberty but from my prejudice, fear, and stress. Thinking that because I was not born nor grown up with it, I would not get it and that there was a reason no Spanish-speaking people were up there in the mountain, or thinking that I would break my leg, therefore I would not be able to take care of my young child, and an array of other contradictions were left behind once I briefly did ski.

Tips to not perishing in the attempt

Rafferty’s tips: spread the butter with your board, go slow until you are ready, always wear a helmet, always!

*Story continued on Page 9*



## News

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And (the most importantly for her) “always wear your Crocs” so after taking your snow boots off it will be easy to walk around or go back to your car. She carried her Crocs in a light backpack.

Drew seconded Rafferty on “always wear a helmet” and added “have fun, practice getting on and off the chair before going to a big mountain. If you fall it’s a little scattering collect yourself and trying to get off and if the person [the lift operator] is not paying attention it can be a nightmare!”

With a smile on his face, Leaffer shared his top-tip for beginners: “start young!” Then, for kids/parent, he suggested renting equipment until they stop growing. In general, he suggested taking one or two lessons.

“When you are on a very steep mountain looking down, don’t look to the bottom of the mountain when you are skiing. Only think about the patch of snow directly in front of you. If you only focus on the patch of snow directly in front of

you, it won’t be as intimidating and before you know it, you will be down the mountain,” recommended Leaffer.

From my end, my suggestion is that it is never too late to try something new. Hence, here I am studying in my mid-40s. Take some lessons from instructors who work “in situ” as they know very well the slopes. Save money; it is true it is not cheap but it worth it.

For the first time, I enjoyed being outdoors in winter. The view up in the snow mountain is beautiful, the reflection of the sunny sky on the snow is blindingly resplendent. Skiing can be challenging but as my peers said “falling is part of the process” and “once you get it, you’ll want to do it again.” For me, my big lesson from the mountain was being resilient and trusting more in myself.

Thanks to NECC and Professor Leaffer for making it possible. Hopefully next year, more students will join the “vibe” of skiing. I definitely will.



Photo courtesy of Daniela Valdivia-Terres

From left to right, Daniela Valdivia-Terres, Chris Drew, James Higgins, Lauren Rafferty, and Engineering Professor Doug Leaffer.

## Professional Photo + LinkedIn Workshop with Interview Tips

Get a professional photo, learn more about LinkedIn, and hear interview tips from a Talent Acquisition expert!

**APRIL 10, HAVERHILL**

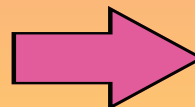
**Wednesday, April 10 | Spurrk, Lobby & Auditorium**

Workshop @ 12:30pm-1:30pm

Photos @ 11am-2pm + 5pm-7pm

Walk-in LinkedIn feedback + tips @ 5pm-7pm

We are hosting events in Lawrence too! See our upcoming events here.



We welcome requests for sign language interpreting and other access requests (i.e. Computer Aided Real Time (CART), food allergies, etc.). Please contact the host of this event for requests, questions or event information.  
careerservices@necc.mass.edu

**Northern Essex  
Community College**  
**CAREER SERVICES**



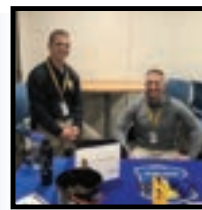


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# Observer

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Fall 2023 • Volume 88 • Issue Number 3 Nov. 17, 2023

## News Bytes

**Life Advice From a Therapist with Kelley Binette, LICSW, MCADC, SSW and Jeanine Kaatz MS, MA, LMHC Thursday December 14th Haverhill Spurk Building**

**NECC Winter Choir Concert.** The NECC choir will perform their Winter Concert on Sunday, Dec 3 at 2:00 in the Tech Center. Admission is \$5. Please contact Professor Alise Bucchiere for event info. #NECCMusicThrives

**Spring class: Quest for the presidency.** Learn about the history of presidential campaigns and elections and explore the issues and candidates in the 2024 race. Mon/Wed 12:30-1:45 Haverhill Campus.

**PW 1,11,111,1V Final Performance Exam.** 1:30-3:30 Duet and Quartet Performances.

**NECC Music- A Christmas Carol Auditions. Haverhill Campus.** NECC Music will stage the annual production of A Christmas Carol from December 8-10 in the NECC Theater.

## Advocates for 'fair pay'



Photo courtesy of Tom Greene

Faculty and staff hold an informational picket, with signs that say "Fair Pay for Community College Educators" outside the TC building at the NECC Haverhill campus on Nov. 1.

## Professors and staff speak out

By DANIELA VALDIVIA-TERRES  
News Editor

Professors and staff are under "Work to Rule," as of press time for the Observer, on Tuesday, Nov. 14.

They say they are protesting being underpaid, not receiving a raise since 2021 and currently working without a contract.

Faculty and staff members of the Massachusetts Community College Council – MCCC Union held signs that read "Work to Rule" on Nov. 1 at President Lane Glenn's pizza meeting, in front of the TC building at the Haverhill campus. A similar group stood under the rain, in front of the Dimitry building on the Lawrence campus on Nov. 9.

**What is Work to Rule**

“

I think the public doesn't know that we're so poorly paid. I would hope that the public would support a fair wage for their educators.

- NECC English Professor Patricia Portanova

”

Faculty and staff members of the MCCC Union are not allowed to strike.

"We are stuck. All we can do is Work to Rule," said English Professor Tom Greene, who is the day grievance coordinator for the NECC union.

Work to Rule means that they will follow only what is in their job descriptions, which is, besides teaching and grad-

ing students' papers, working according to their office hours and attending some meetings.

Any email or students' questions after hours, or their participation in events or committees as volunteer advisers

Continued on  
Page 6

## Upcoming events:

NECC Art Club Weekly Meeting. Learn more about NECC Art Club by attending their weekly on Wednesdays at 7:00 pm on Zoom

NECC Music- Boomwhackers! Prof. Alise Bucchiere and the new percussion instructor, Professor Abe Finch will present a FUN and Loud boomwhacker and drums event on Monday 11/20 at noon in TC103

NECC Music- A Christmas Carol Auditions. Haverhill Campus. NECC Music will stage the annual production of A Christmas Carol from December 8-10 in the NECC Theater.

JAZZ/ROCK Ensemble Concert. December 14 6:00 pm TC-103

The Jingle Bell Half Marathon. & 5K Sunday December 10. 11 am-5 pm @ NECC

### How to find security around each campus:

**Haverhill Campus**  
100 Elliott St., Spurk Building, Room 110C

**Lawrence Campus**  
45 Franklin St. main lobby

Call 978.556.3333 from a cell phone. Extension 3333 from any campus phone on either campus.



## 'Fair pay' continued from Page 1

or mentors would be avoided. These extra tasks are done voluntarily as they work above and beyond on behalf of students. They have adopted this measure since Oct. 24.

They have also held informational pickets, which they hope help to draw the legislators' attention to find a solution to their problems.

"Our hope through Work to Rule is to not hurt the students because it's not the student's fault that we're in this predicament," said English Professor Patricia Portanova, the vice president of the NECC union.

They have also held informational pickets, which they hope help to draw the legislators' attention to find a solution to their problems.

"Our hope through Work to Rule is to not hurt the students because it's not the student's fault that we're in this predicament," said English Professor Patricia Portanova.

### Why are faculty and staff "stuck"

"I think the public doesn't know that we're so poorly paid. I would hope that the public would support a fair wage for their educators," stated Portanova.

Most of the faculty and staff at NECC and 14 other community colleges across the state are part of the MCCC Union.

The board of the union and the board of Higher Education negotiate raises and contracts. The governor submits a proposed budget to the state Legislature. That needs to be ratified by legislators, it must be approved by both the House and Senate, when the money should then be distributed to faculty and staff through their paychecks.

Glenn, NECC president, said he has communicated with legislators to encourage them to pass the budget.

Their last contract, 2021-2023, has been negotiated since 2021 with an increase of 2%, until last February when it was approved, but had already expired last June. They have been waiting for retroactive pay for those raises from 2021 and 2022.

In addition to that, "we started negotiating our 2023 contract over the summer and

already the state has not put together a strong negotiating team. So, we're already behind on negotiating our next contract," explained Portanova. Faculty and staff are working without a contract at this moment. "However, we have worked many, many years without a contract," emphasized Business Professor Sheila Muller.

On top of it, "we are still waiting for a COVID bonus of \$1,500" noted English Professor Ginger Hurajt.

On Nov 9, the House of Representatives sent the supplemental budget with MCCC contract to the Senate for passage. Hopefully, they will take action as soon as possible.

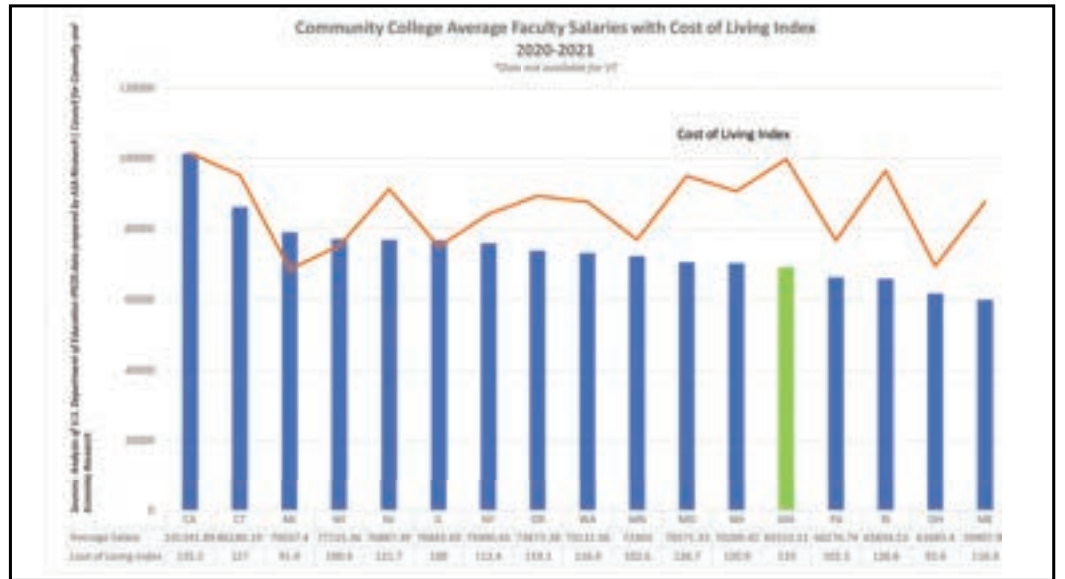
The budget had not been passed as of Observer press time on the evening Nov. 14, but the Observer distribution date is Friday, Nov. 17, so there is a possibility the budget could have passed on Wednesday.

### Community college faculty salary far below the cost of living in Massachusetts

Beyond the painstakingly slow process of getting paid late, faculty and staff in community colleges in Massachusetts are paid lower salaries than their counterparts in some other states, when the cost of living is taken into account.

As the cost of living in Massachusetts has skyrocketed in the last 10 years, including inflation, the 2% raise does not keep pace with the basic expenses of living in this area. According to the MCCC - NECC chapter, "other higher education unions in Massachusetts have been offered, and accepted, an 8% per year annual raise – including some members of other unions at NECC. The MCCC union was the only state higher education union that was not included in the 8% offer."

The chart with this article shows the cost-of-living index in Massachusetts is \$133,000 (red), while the average salary for community college faculty, \$69,152 (green). Living in Massachusetts is nearly as expensive as living in California, \$135,000 (first blue left), with the big difference that California faculty wage surpasses \$101,000, over 46%



Source: Analysis of U.S. Department of Education IPEDS data prepared by ASA Research | Council for Community and Economic Research.

more than their colleagues in Massachusetts.

State universities in Massachusetts have less workload and are paid significantly higher than their counterparts in community colleges with same credentials and experience, according to NECC faculty.

"UMass'es professors are making 30-40% more roughly than we make in community colleges. Our teaching load is 10 classes a year, their teaching load is between 5 to 7 classes a year. Most community colleges around the country are 8 classes a year. As a result, the important point is, because we cannot make ends meet on a base salary, most full-time professors take overload classes. For example, I have my base load of 10 classes, and I teach another 7 or 8 extra classes so I can make means to cover my expenses. The pay has been going down and down with inflation and the workload up and up to make up to the pay, and this hurts the students because if I have twice as many students, I have as much as half time to spend with them. If we would get paid a competitive wage, then we would be able to spend more time after class with our students," stated Dr. Greene.

Indeed, this was confirmed by Philosophy Professor Meredith Gunning. "I work for UMass Boston as well. There, faculty have received a fair raise, but here, I am very disappointed with the MCCC union. I love unions but I feel MCCC have failed me," said Gunning. She works as senior lecturer in philosophy in UMass Boston and in NECC,

she works as philosophy professor and chair of Global Studies Department.

### Difficulties in hiring new professionals and finding volunteers

Salaries are so low that it is a titanic job hiring for new positions or retaining new talent, according to NECC faculty.

Candidates either drop out of the hiring process as soon as they learn the salary, or they stay six months or a year until they find something else, Greene said. "In addition, it is hard to find volunteers among faculty and staff as they have low morale due to low pay and being overbooked with lots of responsibilities around campus, he said.

### MassReconnect

Without a doubt MassReconnect is a great opportunity that can benefit around 8,000 students across the 15 community colleges in Massachusetts.

MassReconnect allows students 25 and older without a college degree to attend community colleges for free.

However, Gov. Maura T. Healey should take into consideration the request of their educators.

Portanova said offering free college to a large percentage of our population "is a beautiful, amazing new initiative," but she questioned "how are we supposed to invest in the success of those students if we're not investing in faculty and staff who are there to support?"

In agreement with this concern, Muller stated, "If you're going to bring more students, you also have to be able to serve equitably and humanely with the same accommoda-

tion for the faculty."

### Why are they staying?

Due to the unfair pay, faculty and staff are almost pushed to "live like Thoreau in Walden," said professor Hurajt. Since 1998, however, she has loved teaching in NECC as there is support at every level, from courses through honors-level courses for students. Hurajt, MA, teaches English and is the Honors Program coordinator.

Portanova, MA, PhD, stated, "It's probably the most rewarding job you could do because you get to serve others and you get to help others succeed in their goals and that's such an amazing opportunity."

Muller's profile says that she takes pride in her students evolving into confident and self-reliant individuals. Her credentials include MBA, chair of Department of Business and Accounting, chair Executive Committee and All College Assembly.

"My dream is that the place where I am in, the place where I like to teach, the place that I really come to love in the last 15 years (NECC) would pay me the salary that I should get. That would be my dream. So I'm holding out hoping that the state come true, and trying to do everything that I can to encourage them to do that," said Greene, MFA, PhD, chair of Department of English.

If you want to support your professor or staff in your community college, please visit this site: [bit.ly/MCCCpetition23](https://bit.ly/MCCCpetition23) and sign up for their petition "Fair Pay for Community College Educators."



# Food programs in jeopardy?

*Students create petition about food, housing, civic engagement resources*

BY DANIELA VALDIVIA-TERRES  
News Editor

On April 2, there was a petition spread by Student Government Association SGA about food and housing insecurity titled Saving Civic Engagement. It called for students to sign up on behalf of the services the Civic Engagement, Service-Learning, and Community Resources Coordinator, Janel D'Agata-Lynch, used to oversee before her position was retrenched.

Those services were:

**Food Insecurity assistance** that includes programs like Free Monthly Mobile Market, Free Food Pantries on Haverhill and Lawrence campuses, and freezers with frozen foods in both campuses.

**Housing insecurity assistance**, according to students' needs, whether they had children or not, they were accommodated by a nonprofit organization, and followed-up by D'Agata-Lynch. As a licensed social worker she followed every case by case.

**Free feminine products** were available in bathrooms in both campuses.

**Clothing assistance**, students had access to vouchers from secondhand stores.

**Civic Engagement**, which involves programs across campuses promoting voting among students. Highly needed now with a presidential election coming.

The SGA, known for its strong voice advocating for students' concerns, was asking NECC students for their signatures as their support. Specifically, the SGA was concerned for the future of the food access programs that D'Agata-Lynch started in 2022 with a grant she applied and obtained for this cause from the Department of Higher Education.

Here there is an excerpt from the petition and please see it in full in the photo above.

"It has come to our attention that the Grant for the Food insecurities program will be coming to an end this

June 2024 ... the NECC administration has been fumbling around trying their best to keep this program up and running.

"Without this work, about 140 students a semester will be left without housing insecurity support. Is there a plan to continue these services? NO, NECC has no current plan to continue this program."

Elijah Antunes, President of SGA and Representative of Executive Committee, All College Assembly ACA, said "when we found out that after Janel (D'Agata-Lynch) left, Francellis (Quinones) came into that position, it became of consolidating and the effort still seemed to be there, but it just isn't. It wasn't at the level that it was previously." Antunes added that as the food grant would expire in two months, they are concerned about the future of food programs.

Quinones was hired as Chief Officer of Justice Equity Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) director in July 2022. She is no longer working for NECC since November 2023, but she was on leave earlier.

On Sep. 7, 2023, in the Board of Trustees meeting, Randall Correa was announced as the newly hired Food Access Outreach Coordinator. It was announced in the website that he and Quinones would work "closely at utilization rates for the NECC Mobile Markets and food pantries, which have declined significantly in recent years."

**The \$180,000 grant for free food access to students**

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education DHE/ARPA Food Security Program Food Access Project, granted \$180,000 to NECC, to be used according to the plan D'Agata-Lynch proposed to help students with food insecurities, during 11/21/22 to 06/30/24. The grant is meant to be solely and exclusively used as the title says, for food for students.

In one year, since D'Agata-Lynch left NECC in May 2023, the food pantry and

the freezer with free frozen food known as Smart Meals in Haverhill was dismantled. The Free Mobile Market with fresh and seasonal produce and groceries disappeared. No feminine products were refilled. Student point of contact for any food or housing insecurity or any basic need was not announced. All the other programs mentioned above know as Civic Engagement vanished.

**Duties assigned to new dean of students**

Jason Arey started his new role in NECC last August 2023 as dean of students. This position "oversees a variety of student support services in the areas of Counseling and Psychological Services, Compliance, Veterans and Military Services, Student Life, the Center for Accessibility Resources and Services, Community Standards, Student Government Association, and the Care and Concern Outreach Team, including student conduct and student wellness initiatives. The dean is also responsible for oversight and development of extracurricular and student retention activities at the college," according to the NECC website.

However, as Quinones was on leave before leaving NECC the new dean of students, Arey, was assigned to take over the food programs and oversee the DHE/ARPA grant. Here are the current student food programs he is managing:

**Food Boxes** with some produce and canned food were offered to students since November '23. These boxes are coming to NECC under a contract with an outside company UTECH, and mostly known as MADD love food boxes.

**Market Basket Gift Card**, students can access up to one \$50 card per academic year.

**\$10 Food Voucher**, students receive four vouchers \$10 each to buy food in the cafeteria or the bookstore in Haverhill campus, and \$3 meals in Lawrence campus.

**Food Pantry in Lawrence** campus, only under appoint-

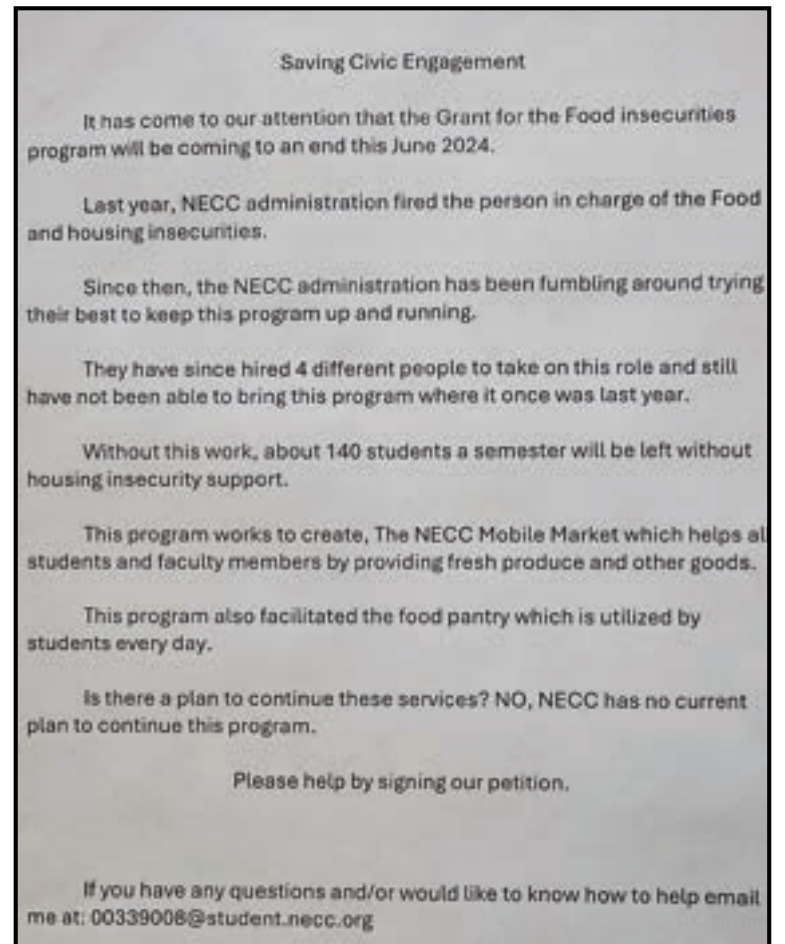


Photo by News Editor Daniela Valdivia-Terres

**The petition members of the Student Government Association were asking students to sign.**

ment, students can shop for free in the food pantry.

**Snack Bags**, this recent initiative proposed by Arey allows students to request a snack bag for the weekend. This includes crackers, fruit cup, cereal among other bites.

Arey's statistics from Dec. 31, 2023, to April 5, since he took over, shows that 359 students have received support from all these food program.

Regarding the **voting initiative**, Arey said "we have a couple of different groups that are nonpartisan, that focus on voter registration," who will come to campus, one of them during the Spring Jam, and they will help students to register to vote.

Arey said students can access **feminine products** through the Lawrence pantry. He gets them through the Dignity Matters organization.

Arey also said the grant included a budget to hire a full-time assistant who would take care of this initiative until the grant expires, June 30. However, he said the person they hired quit and applied for another position within NECC

and that the assistant position is vacant. As the budget can not be used for other purposes, that money will be refunded, he said. At the same time, he said there are more funds available but they have to spend it before the deadline.

"It is sad, but I'm going to try not to (return money.) But even if ... I spend every single cent in all of the food lines that I've just talked about, the salary line is still there," he explained.

**No more food grants?**

What is going to happen when the grant is over or expired? The student trustee, Zeke Vasquez, in the last Board of Trustees meeting spoke up. He explained he was concerned that there was no plan to continue with food programs but before the meeting he said he had a conversation with Provost Paul Beaudin and Arey.

"They have promised that they are currently working on extending the grant or finding new funding through the

*Story continues on Page 9*



## News

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### Continued from Page 6

Department of Higher Education,” Vasquez said.

“I hope that we are able to hold them accountable. Because that is the whole reason that we are here ... Last year we had similar issues which were promised very similar things, and at the end of the year, unfortunately, we’re still looking for those programs and we’re hoping that there was more active support,” Vasquez said.

However, President Lane Glenn said “solving that is not going to happen through one-time grants” He asked Arey, “how much is our grant Jason? We are not to solve this with \$100,000 grants from DHE. It

is too big a challenge. It’s just not going to happen. So, our advocacy is going full throttle into getting more money into students’ hands. I encourage the students and others involved in this to try that.”

Glenn said that “other structural things around increasing student aid by Pell Grant aid. Those are the kinds of things that over time can make a difference.”

Indeed, in an interview after the meeting, this same thought was reinforced by the Vice President Lawrence Campus and Community Relations, Noemi Custodia-Lora, “you know grants are something that they’re very limited. We

do not know how, if, or how much money will be available in grants in subsequent years. So that’s the reason why the college is looking into more sustainable solutions. To really help the students.”

Near the deadline for this edition Beaudin interviewed by this reporter said he and Dean Arey have a “plan three prompt approach” which consists in advocacy for student to get more money through Pell grants, access to local public assistance or state programs and working with Student affairs.

When asked about housing insecurity, Beaudin said the NECC website has con-

tact information of the Care and Concern Outreach Team, which is a multidisciplinary team within NECC. When asked about who a student may contact for domestic violence assistance, Beaudin said the NECC website also had information of a nonprofit organization to reach out to.

#### Hope on the horizon, for now

Karen Rooney, executive director of development institutional advancement which is a fancy title to say that “she works helping to secure grants and implement them.”

Rooney said NECC the grant is underspent. She explained NECC has asked to

repurpose some of the money to “reallocate” more sources of food for students. She said the Department of Higher Education confirmed they have it in consideration, but it is not guaranteed yet.

Also, NECC has asked for an extension of the grant until Dec. 31, 2024.

In any case, if you are a student going through food or housing insecurity or are in need of any of the above services, please I encourage you to contact the Dean of Students, Jason Arey at [jarey@necc.mass.edu](mailto:jarey@necc.mass.edu).

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April 25, 2024

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# Daniela Valdivia-Terres

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## Summary

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Experienced in writing and business outreach with strong interpersonal communication skills. Able to apply past skills as a seasoned travel and tourism professional with 15+ years of experience assisting customers to fulfil through international and domestic travel needs.

## Skills

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- News interviewer and reporting
- Social media content creator
- Bilingual and Bicultural (Spanish)
- Italian and French intermediate level
- Analytical, creative, and problem-solving
- Tailor-made travel itineraries
- Experienced in Canva (design tool)
- WordPress (web builder)

## Experience

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### Community Outreach Representative - Intern

*Transformative Development Initiative TDI Lawrence* February – May 2023

- Community outreach connecting businesses with grant program and various projects focused on business development
- Interview business owners to learn about their needs and connecting them with resources in the community
- Assist in producing promotional videos showcasing local restaurants in the district

### Campus Life Editor

*NECC The Observer, the award-winning college newspaper* January 2023 – Present

- Interviewing and making sure students, faculty and staff voices are represented
- Researching sources and fact checking
- Writing campus news reports and opinion articles

### Creative Content Director

*Infini Media & Marketing, Lawrence, MA* December 2022

- Developed *Plan de Marketing 101* service for small business owner about how to create content in their social media outlets
- Work closely with small business owners about how to communicate, target and promote their services or products
- Design and build websites and eCommerce sites in Wordpress
- Create content, graphic designs i.e. logos, videos and copy for social media

### Travel Product Manager

April 2015 – Present

*Vibra Tours USA LLC, Travel & Tour Operator, Lawrence, MA*

- Work closely with Reservations and Customer Service to ensure all client contract details are accurate and delivered satisfactorily
- Establish parameters and quotes; negotiate prices and confirm with written contracts
- Hire and train staff for guiding services
- Consistently offer professional, friendly and engaging service

### Tour & Travel Sales Manager

March 2015

*Vibra Peru Tours SAC, Travel Agency & Tour Operator, Lima, Peru*

- Participated in tradeshows, international tourism expo and promotional events
- Developed tourism marketing strategies and enable product development for niche market
- Produced statistics on sales, travel destinations and customer satisfaction
- Human Resources, hired staff and trained for different positions
- Ensured that information was kept confidential and secure on databases



## Professional Achievement Awards

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- NECC Writing Award, Honorable Mention for Excellence in Journalism 2023
- NECC PACE Citizenship Award 2023
- NECC Phi Theta Kappa International College Honor Society student 2023
- NECC Writing Award: Excellence and Distinction in Writing; Composition I 2022
- Letter of Recognition for serving as a Spanish-speaking tour guide for "Bread & Roses Festival" by Friends of Lawrence State Park 2016
- Third place award in Business Accelerator Program by EparaTodos 2016
- First place winner at Pitch Contest by Entrepreneurship For All – EforAll 2015

## Education and Certification

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*Northern Essex Community College, Associate Degree Education, Haverhill, MA*  
**Associate of Arts, Journalism & Communications** **January 2022 – Present**

*Northern Essex Community College, ELL Adult Education, Lawrence, MA*  
**Business Fundamentals Certificate** **June 2018**

*Entrepreneurship For All, Spanish & English Program for Entrepreneurs, Lowell, MA*  
**Business Accelerator Program Certificate** **March 2017**

## Volunteerism

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*Friends of Lawrence Heritage Park, Lawrence, MA*  
Tour guide in Spanish for trolley tours around the city during seasonal events 2023

*NECC All College Assembly, Haverhill, MA*  
Student member 2022

*Radio Catolica 98.1 FM, Lawrence, MA*  
Co-host and co-producer in a morning radio show weekly for Hispanic communities 2018