

panorama

UNITED FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION



Students Cool, Tajir chosen to receive PA scholarships

Devin Cool and Hanadi Tajir were selected as the 2023 recipients of the MVCC PA Scholarship. The scholarships were awarded at the PA Luncheon on Jan. 11, 2023.

Cool, of Frankfort, is a Metal Fabrication major preparing for a career in metallurgy and materials science. While at MVCC, Cool has excelled academically. He was named to the President’s List and volunteered to help other students through tutoring.

Tajir, of Utica, is majoring in Liberal Arts & Sciences: Mathematics and Science with an emphasis in Biology and plans to continue her education to eventually become a surgeon. Tajir has excelled in her studies while being actively involved on campus. She serves as the student trustee on MVCC’s Board of Trustees, president of MVCC’s Lambda Beta Chapter of Phi

Theta Kappa; PTK New York regional president; treasurer of MVCC’s Student Congress; and a member of the Drama Club and Muslim Student Association. She also participated in MVCC’s Student Leadership Academy, was a member of the Track & Field Team, and was a biology and chemistry tutor in the Learning Commons.

To qualify for the PA Scholarship, a student must have completed at least 30 credit hours at MVCC and have a grade point average of at least 3.00. Applicants also must write and submit a 500-word essay on the importance of labor unions in American society or the value of a community college education.

Both Cool and Tajir wrote about their own community college experience in their essays, which can be found on pages 4 and 5.

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EDITORIAL POLICY

Panorama is the voice of our local. In addition to the PA website (www.mvccpa.org), email, and bulletin boards, Panorama is a principal vehicle for bringing you, on a regular basis, information on the views and activities of our members.

We welcome articles by, for, and about PA members of union-related issues and concerns as reflected in NYSUT and AFT activities as well as in the purpose and functions of the PA's standing committees: Community Outreach, Education & Training, Grievance, Internal Communications, Political Action, and Research & Records.

All submissions are subject to the review and acceptance of the Editor and/or Internal Communications Committee. We do not accept articles that make personal attacks and we reserve the right to edit articles for length. We look forward to hearing from you.

PUBLISHER

MVCC Professional Association

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Norma Chrisman

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR

Robin Saxe

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Prez Desk

It's that time of the year where all state-funded agencies, groups, and institutions are on pins and needles. Wondering why? The governor's "proposed" budget was released on Feb. 1. This prompts everyone to see what they may be receiving. No, it's not at all like waiting to get a gift. Instead, it's more like holding your breath to see if you're included on the gift list and then what you may be getting.

I say "proposed" as the State Senate and Assembly now get their chance to go through this proposed budget and negotiate their changes before an actual budget is voted and adopted. We can equate this to how the budget process works at the college. Finance creates the initial budget (typically by rolling our current budget into the next academic year), the budget directors review everything, meetings are held to negotiate why items are needed in the budget, and then it goes through the final approval process with the Board of Trustees and the county.

Community colleges have not always fared well with funding even though there is legislation that states community colleges must be funded at a specific level. Unfortunately, when the legislation was passed, the wording "notwithstanding" was included in the language, therefore giving the state "an out," so to speak, to fund at whatever level they wish to annually. Conversely, the county is mandated to fund us at the same level as the previous year or higher. If they elect to fund us at a higher rate, that will become the base funding level in future years.

In past years, we were always funded by the number of FTEs, which was fine when our enrollment was plentiful. With declining enrollment, that funding model was detrimental to institutions. The state recently adopted a funding floor model. The current budget proposal will maintain a funding floor model proposed to be at 100% of the prior year's funding, which is up from last year's 98%.

The current budget proposal also contains many one-time funding items. Some of those that will impact community colleges are:

- \$115 million funding for educationally disadvantaged students through higher education opportunity programs and training centers administered by SUNY
- \$48.8 million to reimburse colleges for the cost of "TAP Gap" tuition credits



Norma Chrisman

- \$2.1 to SUNY community colleges for state support to campuses that receive for Excelsior Scholarship recipients.
- \$53 million to hire additional full-time faculty. This was offered last year as well, but MVCC did not receive any of that money.
- \$57 million for new capital project appropriations. The state contributes 50% of the project cost and the county (our local sponsor) contributes the other 50%. If the county is unable to fund their share, the money would come from either the Foundation or ASC as the college's operating budget can not be used to fund any capital projects.

Source: <https://www.budget.ny.gov/pubs/archive/fy23/ex/agencies/appropdata/StateUniversityofNewYork.html>

It's important to note that the monies listed above get "distributed" to the various institutions across SUNY. We can only hope that MVCC will be among those getting the money distribution.

A New Deal for Higher Education in NY

As part of this process, NYSUT asked that community college, CUNY, and SUNY union presidents gather in Albany to stress the importance of funding higher education. I had the privilege of representing the PA in Albany again this year where NYSUT asked us to promote the "New Deal for Higher Education in New York" campaign, which seeks to recenter our public colleges and universities as a public good. New York State must reaffirm public higher education's role in society by standing up for a just, inclusive, and well-funded public higher education system.

NYSUT's Executive Director/Political Director Melinda Person spoke about an online survey of 800 registered voters in New York that was conducted Jan. 13-17, 2022:

- 88% of respondents were in favor of ensuring that all New Yorkers who are interested have access to higher education.

- 87% of respondents felt the state should increase operating aid for state colleges, universities, and community colleges to support continued operations without cuts to the services and programs they provide.
- 86% of respondents felt the state should provide funding to increase student supports, including mental health counseling and academic support, at state colleges, universities, and community colleges.

Source: *NYSUT Hart Research Associates* handout "Voters' Attitudes About Increasing Funding for New York's Public Colleges, Universities, and Community Colleges"

Governor Hochul stated that "I will invest in education" at the NYSUT Legislative Reception on Monday, Feb. 6: "We have invested \$1 billion in mental health services. The more money we invest in the students' mental health now, the better their outcome will be." Lieutenant Governor Antonio Delgado added that "everyone is a gatekeeper to education."

Prior to heading out to meet with our representatives on the morning of Feb. 7, community college, CUNY, and SUNY four-year lobbyists heard from a variety of speakers fighting for a #NewDealforHigherEd. Roberta Elins, President of the UCE of FIT and Chair of ED39 representing NYSUT's community colleges, said, "For many college students, usually the ones that come from less privileged backgrounds, their educational journey starts at a community college. It is their first rung upon the educational ladder. The community colleges are the ones that serve the least privileged students and for us that is a privilege."

It sounds like everyone, including New York State residents, are on board with supporting higher education, right? As Jerry Maguire would say, "Show me the money."

Let's hope that our representatives in Albany "walk the talk" on behalf of community colleges and higher education.

PA Scholarship student essays

Thank you, community college

By Hanadi Tajir

As a first-generation Sudanese Muslim refugee female student, there were obstacles to overcome. As the oldest of five children, I was responsible for taking care of the house and family paperwork. In high school I was an ordinary student, who just attended classes. I decided to attend MVCC because it gave me the comfort of being close to my loved ones, continuing my education with the lowest cost of money, and the appreciation of feeling connected towards my professors and peers. Community college has taught me the value of community service and academia. I enjoy interacting with others because it allows me to learn more about them as individuals. Being a leader does not happen by accident. Instead, it happens when you've decided on something and want to do something about it. It's critical for me to advocate for marginalized and first-generation college students, as well as the problems they confront. Volunteering is the first step in realizing that there is no money or other resources. It emanates from within. Every time I work on something, I do so with enthusiasm because I believe I am doing so to benefit the community.

Attending community college has shaped my life differently. Within a year and a half I was able to make long lasting friends, gained leadership skills and understood myself and what I want to do in life. The challenges that I had to face so that I can stand on graduation day and be proud of myself for all the work that I have done. Thanks to many different resources and programs that were provided by Mohawk Valley Community College; organizations and clubs, such as Phi Theta Kappa International Honor society, Educational opportunity program,



CSTEP, On-Point for College, Student Congress and many more. Being a STEM primary-colored Muslim student compelled me to get out there and share my thoughts because, in today's world, there aren't many colored people who play important roles on their campus.

Attending MVCC, working, being involved in college activities, research projects, involvement in New York regional PTK and my chapter Lambda Beta, having a social life is hard, and being a role model not only to my siblings, but also my fellow minorities is not easy but manageable. My actions are of pure intentions so everything has a reason and it makes my life a story more than a to-do list. I can now leave knowing I was able to give back to my community, and a legacy behind for others to continue. The value of attending a community college has changed my life, and if I had to start over, I would take the same path.

The Value of a Community College Education

By Devin Cool

As someone who is currently attending community college as well as attended in the past, I have come to deeply appreciate the great deal of value that this educational option provides. Community college allows one to dip their toes into higher education, begin laying the groundwork for further advancement, and gain more perspective on potential career paths.

The low costs of community colleges make higher learning more accessible to a wider audience of students. Students who may not initially have the means to go to a more expensive university find an affordable option to transition further into academia, while still receiving a college level education oftentimes close to home. Community college can also provide a college setting for one to learn a trade.

Like many others, my first experience with attending a community college was right after graduating high school. I had ideas about the course I intended to follow but lacked a clear plan or even a clear idea of how to go about achieving my educational goals. Because my main interest was music I opted to enroll in a Humanities program, with the objective of laying an academic foundation. It was over the course of obtaining my first associate's degree that I acquired a tremendous amount of insight into who I was as a person and a clearer understanding of what my expectations were of my education. During this time, I was privileged to work with many outstanding educators and fellow students, even meeting people that became life-long friends. I fostered many skills and discovered new passions such as creative writing, poetry, and visual art.

By the time I completed my first degree program, the community college I was attending had finished developing a program focused on the discipline I was interested in, music industry. I again was given an opportunity to work with instructors who brought real-world experience and wisdom into the classroom. Fundamentals such as performance, theory, operating soundboards and recording equipment, legal and contractual aspects, as well as the direction the music industry was heading were all attainable without having to go to a larger, more expensive institution.

After completing my second degree program, I entered the workforce and served in the manufacturing industry for many years. It was after



the company I worked for laid off all its employees that I was given the opportunity to return to higher education through New York State's Trade Readjustment Assistance program. Having excelled in this occupation, I sought to continue in the field, enrolling in the Metal Fabrication program at MVCC.

I once again found myself being taught by educators who worked in the field, learning not just about the processes, but also the how's and why's behind what I had been doing. I have been able to deeply expand my knowledge of machining and manufacturing. Access to an impressive machine shop provides the ability to learn set-up and operation of a variety of machines and processes. This program also boasts the advantage of learning other skills such as welding, computer aided design, blueprinting, blacksmithing, additive manufacturing, and metallurgy. Returning to community college has renewed my desire to further pursue higher education and has provided a stepping-stone on which to move forward into academia.

One last benefit of the community college experience is diversity. Both institutions I attended provided the opportunity to meet people from many places, cultures and backgrounds. For this reason, community college can be described as a gateway to the world; there is great capacity to experience diverse perspectives without venturing too far from one's hometown.

Community college has played and continues to play a vital role in setting the cornerstone of my future education and career path. The value of these opportunities cannot be understated, as a cost-effective, accessible, and life-enriching educational experience.

NYSUT Leadership Institute

Erica Brindisi | 1st Vice President

My journey through NYSUT's Leadership Institute began this past August with a weeklong conference and culminated with a second mini conference in January. Leadership Institute has provided me many opportunities to learn about leadership and to network with other NYSUT members from across New York State who are working on becoming better leaders within their unions, and I'd like to share with you some of the highlights from my experience.

We started the institute with a session called Defining Leadership. During this session, it was stressed that union leaders and union work needs to be more than just transactional, instead it needs to be transformational. This was a reoccurring theme throughout the institute, and taking this approach to leadership is how we can really engage members and make a meaningful impact on members' lives. This led into other sessions based around something called the "DISC Assessment." This was an assessment that we had to take before going to Leadership Institute that gave us insight into our leadership style and our "workplace personality." My assessment was pretty spot-on, and after many breakout sessions and discussions about DISC, I learned that it's important to understand this to be able to work effectively with others and lead others within an organization. If anyone is interested in learning more about DISC or taking the assessment, let me know; NYSUT can make this available.

I also learned that good leaders need to be able to communicate effectively, motivate and get members engaged, resolve conflict, set attainable goals, work effectively as part of a team, give direction, and delegate tasks. Good leaders must be honest and transparent and need to see the value in developing other leaders. This is something we spent a lot of time on — the importance of bringing people in, getting them involved, making sure they are part of the team and that they are recognized for their



contributions. We also spent time talking about leading with an equity lens and keeping diversity and inclusion at the forefront.

I attended multiple institute sessions on labor and leadership in the past, present and future. We discussed the impact of the labor movement on civil rights, gender equality, and income equality. We talked about how our local union fits into the state and national labor picture, and we explored the strengths and weaknesses of the labor movement as it exists today. We also discussed where the labor movement is headed in the future and the need to build local union density, internal and external organizing, and community engagement.

I had the opportunity to attend two sessions given by Jeff Grabelsky, Co-Director of the National Labor Leadership Institute at Cornell. Jeff is what you would call a union expert! He has so much knowledge on all aspects of union affairs, and you can tell that he really enjoys sharing his expertise with others. The focus of both sessions I attended was on adaptive leadership. Jeff took us through several periods in our history when the world underwent dramatic change, and we analyzed how labor leaders responded effectively to adapt to changes so that their organizations could remain relevant and vital. The purpose was to gain insights from our past to help us become more effective and adaptive leaders in the future.

During the institute, we also heard from some inspiring keynote speakers. One speaker was NEA Executive Director Kim Anderson. Kim spoke about the mission, vision, and values of the NEA as an organization championing justice and excellence in public education. The mission of NEA is to advocate for education professionals and to unite us in preparing every student to succeed. Sound familiar? It should, because these are the same values we hold here at MVCC, and our union plays a large role in advocating for us and uniting us!



We also heard from AFT President Randi Weingarten. Randi is a passionate and energetic speaker, and she really got us fired up! AFT, AFL-CIO represents 1.7 million members, including teachers, paraprofessionals and school-related personnel, higher education faculty and staff, nurses and healthcare professionals, government employees, and early childhood educators. Randi spoke of the mission of AFT, to champion fairness, democracy, economic opportunity, and high-quality education for students. She spoke of the importance of and impact of community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism.

It was evident that Leadership Institute is very important to NYSUT. The teaching fellows, all labor relation specialists, prepared informative, interesting and thought-provoking sessions. And the entire executive team, including Andy Pallotta and our very own Jolene DiBrango, joined us for most if not all of the institute. It was really special to get to hear from and to interact with these amazing leaders in such an intimate setting.

Even though Leadership Institute was jam-packed with information sessions, we did have some time carved out for “extracurricular” fun activities. My favorites were axe throwing and



trivia night. From axe throwing, I learned that I’m a pretty good shot with a smaller hatchet and I really like boozy ice cream, and maybe these two things shouldn’t be mixed! I could tell that Andy Pallotta certainly agreed with my last statement as he nervously asked us all if we signed waivers. At trivia night, my team did pretty good. We came in second, but I learned that I personally really need to work on my arts and entertainment knowledge! These activities allowed us some down time to get to socialize with our group members and other institute participants and to learn about each other’s locals. I can without a doubt say that because of these interactions, I have gained some amazing lifelong colleagues and have made lasting friendships.

Community Outreach

Robin Saxe | Community Outreach Committee

Hello from the Community Outreach Committee! We would like to thank everyone that had donated and participated in our most recent collection efforts. As a collective we are making a difference for members of our community and our students here on campus.

During the new member reception we asked for donations of non perishable quick meals and snacks for the students at Kernan school. We developed a partnership with the 6th grade leadership group early in the fall semester to help them in collecting food for holiday breaks. We were able to collect a significant amount of food in addition to cash donations that were used to purchase additional food items. The leadership group was thrilled to receive more supplies before the Thanksgiving break and even more thrilled to have a visit from MVCCPA members Sharon Zone and Dan Eddy. We will be collecting more items for Kernan in the coming months leading up to spring break in April so watch you emails for this announcement.

This past end of semester gathering we collected hats, gloves, and socks for The Center. As the committee discussed choosing an organization to support during this event we learned of the difficulty The Center was having. There was a water main break that destroyed their supplies and was going to be costly to repair. We learned that their biggest need was going to be cold weather accessories, this became our collection request to all of you and you delivered. We were able to supply The Center with multiple bags of warm cozy items in addition to monetary contributions adding up to over \$300.

Our Festival of trees theme this year was a beautiful winter in the garden display.



New Member Committee

Yue Riesbeck | New Member Committee

The New Member Committee would like to extend a warm welcome to our new members! We loved being able to meet each one of you in-person.

I encourage each new member to become familiar with the Professional Association website at mvccpa.org and our contract. Your new member folder that we brought you also has great information on benefits, including the vision plan, legal assistance, etc. As you review the materials, feel free to contact me at yriesbeck@mvcc.edu with questions.

Again, we welcome each of you to our union and hope you enjoy your journey at MVCC!

Welcome,
new members!

Michelle Burdick
Sharrone Sofer
Kathleen Samide
Matt Wagner
Grant Calogero
Heidi Palmiter

Daffodil days are back this spring

It's been a few years since the American Cancer Society's Daffodil Days has been offered on campus, but it's back this year! The last time we ran the campaign at MVCC, we collected more than \$500. Let's see if we can top it this year!

Orders will be accepted through Tuesday, Feb. 21, 2023. Daffodils will be delivered the week of March 20. Payment is due at the time of ordering. Proceeds benefit the American Cancer Society.

Daffodil costs:

- **Bunch of Daffodils:** \$10
- **Bunch of Daffodils with vase:** \$15
- **Bunch of Tulips (assorted colors):** \$15
- **Bunch of Tulips with vase:** \$25
- **Mini-Potted Daffodils:** \$15
- **Gift of Hope:** \$25 (Rather than receiving flowers, this option will donate flowers to



a local hospital, cancer center, or nursing home facility)

To place your order, please contact Norma Chrisman at nchrisman@mvcc.edu or in Payne Hall 379 at MVCC's Utica Campus.

Member Profile

Valarie Day

Financial Aid Assistant

What degree(s) do you have?

I have degrees in Criminal Justice and Adolescent Ed.

Where were you employed before coming to MVCC (or before your previous position)?

I used to work for the Utica City School District as a Teaching Assistant. I worked 1:1 with a student who was a braille user. He was in the College Connection program so half of my day was spent working at Proctor and half was working for Utica but at MVCC. That is how I got to meet a lot of people at MVCC. The year after my student graduated, he went to MVCC full-time. Tamara in OAR called and offered me a position because they needed someone who knew braille. I worked part-time as an Access Conversion Specialist for about 4 1/2 years. While I was working part-time for OAR, I started working for OHM BOCES where I was able to help students with college and career readiness (ex. FAFSA and TAP applications). In July 2021, I started working full-time in the Financial Aid Office at MVCC.



What attracted you to applying for the position that you are in?

I wanted to work with students in the community. When I was working for OHM BOCES, it was out of Proctor High School. I never had to stray too far from my roots that way. The Utica City School District dropped their partnership with OHM BOCES and I had to stop working at Proctor High School. My job then became a desk job and I was not happy without the student interaction. I loved working with the Utica population so when the Financial Aid position opened up, I jumped on it. Now I get to do some of what I did for OHM BOCES but at a more accelerated level with some great students and their families.

What is your family life like (spouse, children, furbabies, etc)?

I have been married for one year to my husband, Justin Day. I have a beautiful fluff ball named Baby. He is a miniature Shih Tzu/human in his own right. We share him with my mom who I am very close with. I have two sisters and a brother. Baby is part of the “Little Wolf Pack” with Sammy, Teddy, Scooter, and Sophie, plus several cat family members.

What do you like to do outside of work?

Snuggle with Baby. It’s the only thing I have time for outside of work and everyday life.

Anything else you’d like to tell us?

Working at MVCC has been a really positive experience for me. I love what I do, the students I help, and the team I work with!

Member Profile

Michael Grider

Veterans Education Coordinator

What degree(s) do you have?

Bachelor's degree in Communications from Utica University.

Where were you employed before coming to MVCC (or before your previous position)?

I was previously a case manager for Youthbuild, which used to be housed out of our satellite location at the EOC.

What attracted you to applying for the position that you are in?

I always enjoyed working with students and being able to identify the individual's needs. It's always important to remember that each student we work with has a different path to success.

What is your family life like (spouse, children, furbabies, etc)?

Me and my Black Lab named Blu.

What do you like to do outside of work?

Most of the time outside of work, I am spending time at the gym, golfing, and hanging out with friends and family.

Anything else you'd like to tell us?

My door is always opened for students and staff! Happy to help.

— *by Nicole Benton*



Member Profile

Sara Heinrich

Coordinator of Workforce Development

What is your official title at the college?

Coordinator of Workforce Development.

What degree(s) do you have and where did you go to school?

SUNY Delhi is where I started and Culinary Art is my first degree. Then my career took a shift and I ended up with a Business Management Bachelor's degree from Colorado Technical University. I hope to continue my education in Entrepreneurship or maybe Human Resources Management.

Where did you work before MVCC?

I was the Campus employment Coordinator at Utica University. I helped students with resume and cover letter, and finding jobs that fit into their busy schedules. I also helped with budgeting and staffing different departments with student employees. My position was housed under the Center for Career Readiness. I did a lot of programming as well including Student Employee Appreciation Week and student new hire orientations.

Can you tell me a little bit about your position here at MVCC?

I work under the SUNY Apprenticeship program. We partner with NYS Department of Labor and the State University of New York. We cover the cost for SUNY related instruction by providing three main services - registered apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and work-based learning. Mohawk Valley Community College is chosen to be the fiscal lead for all the SUNY institutions, which means we take care of all the invoicing and work directly with SUNY and NYS Department of Labor, and provide our support for other SUNY schools.

Can you tell me about what you enjoy doing outside of work?

I love being a mom - I'm a mother of two. I love to cook; I love Zumba, crafts or singing - just staying healthy! I also attend St. Matthew's Church. I love taking care of others and be there to support one another.

— by Yue Reisbeck

