

# panorama

UNITED FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION



## Retirement benefit notification reminder

Per the PA Contract, anyone who qualifies for the PA Retirement Benefit and wishes to retire Dec. 31, 2024, or May 31, 2025, must notify the Executive Director of Human Resources in writing no later than the close of business **April 1, 2024**.

### Eligibility:

- Employees 55 years old at the time of retirement and/or eligible to retire under their retirement program
- Have at 10 years of service at the College
- Hold academic rank of Professor or Associate Professor or promotional level of Level IV or Level III

### Limitation:

- No more than 10 bargaining unit members on the basis of length of service in the bargaining unit

### Explanation of benefit:

A sum equal to \$416.67 for each unused, accumulated day of sick leave, but not to exceed \$50,000 (equivalent to 120 sick days), shall be credited to the account of the retiree to pay their share of health insurance premiums, until the sum is exhausted.

1. If the retiree stays on the College health insurance plan, the County pays half of the retiree premium and the remaining half is deducted from the account.

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# panorama

## EDITORIAL POLICY

Panorama is the voice of our local. In addition to the PA website ([www.mvccpa.org](http://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

### **PRESIDENT**

Norma Chrisman

### **INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR**

Robin Saxe

### **EDITION**

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### **WEBSITE**

[www.mvccpa.org](http://www.mvccpa.org)

# Prez Desk

I recently attended NYSUT's Higher Education Policy Committee meeting, which was held in Albany on February 4 and 5. I must admit that while it was nice to get together with SUNY/CUNY two-year and four-year institution union officials, this meeting left me feeling a bit like Eeyore — envisioning doom and gloom.



Norma Chrisman

As you'll see in the Political Outreach Committee article, NYSUT is pushing for fair funding and promoting its "New Deal for Higher Education in New York" initiative. The state, county sponsor, and the students are the three components in funding community colleges. The state continues to neglect funding their share. Most counties (including Oneida County) are funding at or above their required share. This leaves the students having to pick up the remainder in the form of tuition and fees.

SUNY's Downstate Hospital (one of five SUNY academic medical center and hospitals) is again in crisis, and the state is threatening to shut them down. The state has been providing less and less funding to SUNY Downstate since Governor Andrew Cuomo's tenure. Approximately 90% of the patients receiving its services are on Medicaid. This hospital serves mainly the Black, Hispanic, and immigrant populations. The state is proposing decommissioning Downstate and transferring its services to Kings County Hospital, which is already bursting at the seams and will find it difficult to properly service the needs of these additional patients.

In addition, nine community colleges (not MVCC) are facing accreditation issues due to low or negative fund balances. As President VanWagoner recently announced, Clinton County Community College no longer occupies its campus facilities and now resides on the SUNY Plattsburgh campus. It's my understanding that both institutions are facing low enrollment and financial issues. SUNY Potsdam, Fredonia, Buffalo State, Delhi and Maritime have also been identified as "financially struggling."

We were provided with a brief synopsis of Governor Hochul's 2024-25 proposed budget:

- Information regarding higher education was very "vanilla" – not many specifics were listed
- \$20 million reduction in system funding
- \$217 million for one-time funding and strategic funding initiatives

# Prez Desk (continued)

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- \$53 million for funding full-time faculty positions (one-time funding per faculty member)
- \$20 million reduction overall from last year!
- Flat funding for campuses across the system
- Community colleges – 100% funding floor for 2023-24 year amounts
- \$138 million for SUNY community college capital funding projects

In “other news,” there is talk that P-12 teachers will no longer be required to have a master’s degree to teach! NYSUT’s Executive Vice President Ciffone’s staff presented information about this topic and stated that “eliminating the requirement would diminish standards and the

academic vigor that makes New York a leading state for teacher prep.” It was said conversations mentioned that in lieu of needing a master’s degree, individuals could get microcredentials.

In closing, I would like to ask the membership to take action by going to the NYSUT MAC (Member Action Center) and Urge Legislators to Invest in Public Higher Education. It’s easy to do — go to <https://mac.nysut.org/action/863?1709052248> and fill in the blanks (our NYSUT Local is 39015). Click “Next,” then select the representatives to whom you want to send a message (see the NYSUT MAC Message below to review the preformatted message).

In Solidarity,  
Norma

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## Message from the NYSUT Member Action Center: Urge legislators to invest in public higher education

Please send your New York State officials this message by going to [NYSUT MAC to Urge Legislators to Invest in Public Higher Education!](#) Here’s the preformatted message:

Dear Legislator:

As a constituent who cares deeply about public higher education, I urge you to advocate for the New Deal for Higher Education in New York, which will provide additional funding to support the State University of New York and the City University of New York.

The New Deal for Higher Education is a \$4.5 billion investment in our future. It reimagines a system that helps students seamlessly transition from public K-12 classrooms to the lecture halls of New York state’s world-class network of public colleges and universities.

Sadly, years of underfunding have led to a steady decline in critical support for students’ academic progress and success. Although the last state budget cycle made meaningful investments in public higher education, the need is still great. In fact, many public

colleges and universities are forced to raise tuition or make cuts to academic programs and student services to survive — cuts that disproportionately affect low-income and Black and brown communities. Every student deserves access to affordable and accessible higher education. That means public colleges and universities that don’t break the bank, and that are located within the local community so that individuals from every stage of life have educational opportunities. New York state must continue to invest in and strengthen our SUNY, CUNY and community colleges.

Additionally, SUNY’s three teaching hospitals at Stony Brook, Downstate and Upstate are crucial to training health care professionals, many of whom choose to remain and work in New York. Enhanced education and training at these institutions are key to promoting economic mobility and reducing disparities. Achieving this requires quality, accessible public higher education, backed by operational support, student services and sufficient capital funding to support aging

*Continued on next page*

# NYSUT MAC message (continued)

infrastructure and a new and improved facility at SUNY Downstate.

To meet these objectives, our campuses require additional Operating Support; Student Supports; and Public Higher Education Access for All.

New York's public higher education institutions deliver high quality education to students from low- and middle-income backgrounds and engage in groundbreaking research. Yet, they have long been constrained by limited budgets. To improve student experiences, retention and graduation rates, significant increases in state operating aid are essential. This funding will allow for more full-time faculty and fairer pay for adjunct faculty.

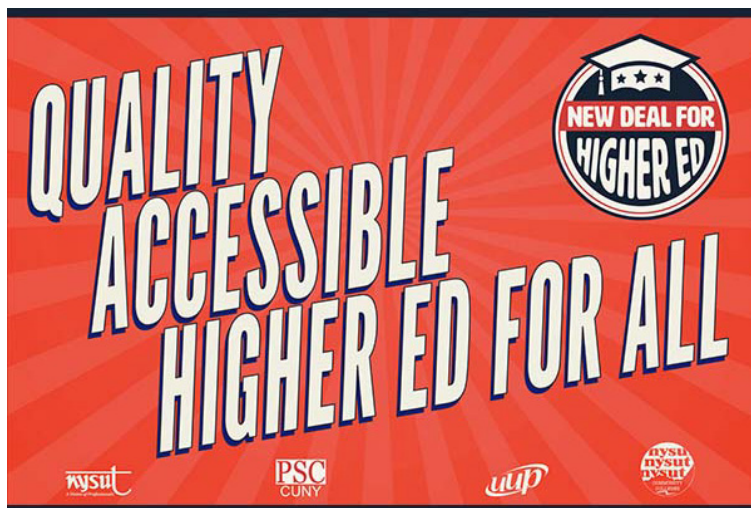
Accordingly, I am asking for the following investments in operating support:

- SUNY – \$139 million to close the deficits at 18 SUNY campuses; \$110 million to enhance student academic programs and services; \$175 million in critical mission funding for SUNY hospitals; \$200 million for bridge-funding for post-COVID financial challenges at SUNY Downstate hospital.
- CUNY – \$341 million for 2,306 full-time faculty hires at senior colleges; \$44 million for 376 hires at community colleges; \$24.5 million for graduate education support; \$11.7 million in additional base aid for community colleges; and \$101.7 million to cover one third of the state's 40 percent funding obligation.
- SUNY community colleges – \$22.7 million in additional base aid and \$99 million to cover one third of the state's 40 percent funding obligation.

College students today face increasing challenges in staying enrolled, a situation exacerbated by COVID-19. Public higher education institutions in New York serve a diverse body, including many first-generation students. Over half of these students are students of color from families with incomes below the state average. For most CUNY students, the university provides their only access to mental health counseling and academic support. Additionally, food insecurity is a significant issue among these students.

Accordingly, I am asking for an investment of \$216.5 million for student supports to provide the following:

- \$30.5 million for SUNY four-year campuses;



- \$100 million for SUNY community colleges;
- \$62 million for CUNY four-year campuses; and
- \$24 million for CUNY community colleges

Students choose New York's public colleges and universities because they are readily accessible and offer exceptional education, which leads to new opportunities. However, shifting the financial burden from the state to students and their families has decreased access to the quality education they deserve. Investment in SUNY and CUNY not only benefits students, but also provides substantial returns for New York's tax base. Continuously imposing costs on students instead of providing public funding undermines their success, leading to prolonged student loan debt and putting a drag on New York's economy. We advocate for investing in CUNY, SUNY and community colleges to enhance access to public higher education without extra costs to students. Although SUNY and CUNY both provide a top-quality education, they differ in structure, operation, handling of costs, fees and mandatory expenses. Achieving affordable or free education necessitates funding that caters to the specific needs of each system.

Accordingly, I am asking for an investment of \$3 billion to provide students with greater access to a world-class public higher education at SUNY and CUNY.

I respectfully ask that you bring up these issues with your conference and advocate for students, their educators and our public institutions of higher education.

Sincerely,

Your Name

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# Political Outreach Committee

The Political Outreach chair, Justin Rahn, represented the MVCCPA at the NYSUT organized Higher Education Lobby Day in Albany on February 6.

In past years, the MVCCPA spent the lobby day making appointments and chatting with our regional representatives in Albany. During these meetings, we would express the needs of Community Colleges along with any other asks that NYSUT was requested for the year. As you can imagine, the conversations would generally be about the state paying their fair share in funding Community Colleges.

This year, NYSUT organized all of the appointments and set up teams to meet with five New York State representatives. Each team was comprised of a representative from SUNY, CUNY and Community Colleges.

Justin's team was comprised of a staff member from SUNY Stony Brook, a staff/faculty member from Hofstra Community College, a faculty member from Borough of Manhattan Community College and a retiree from Bronx College. His team met with:

- Assemblymember Jake Blumencranz (R – AD 15)
- Senator Michael Gianaris (D – SD 12), Deputy Majority Leader
- Assemblymember Gina Sillitti (D – AD 16)
- Senator Brian Kavanaugh (D – SD 27)
- Senator William Weber (R – SD 28)
- Assemblymember Mary Jane Shimsky (D – AD 92)

The team discussed the following items with each of the representatives:

- Total of \$4.5 billion in investment for New York State Higher Education in a “New Deal for Higher Education in New York”
  - Increase for Operating support for Community Colleges (\$22.7 million) and another \$99 million to cover the one third of the State’s 40% funding obligation
  - Increase for student support funding for Community Colleges (\$100 million for SUNY and \$24 million for CUNY community colleges)
  - Increase for Public Higher Education Access for All (\$3 billion in total for the entire SUNY and CUNY System)
  - NYSUT Revenue Proposals for 2024
  - Capital Gains Bill to increase revenues by roughly \$12 billion
- Progressive Income Tax bill to increase revenues by roughly \$21 billion
- Corporate Tax Reforms to increase revenues by roughly \$7 billion
- Billionaires Tax Bill to increase revenues by roughly \$20 billion
- Stop the closure of SUNY Downstate Hospital

The trip was productive and the discussions were good. NYSUT’s approach to having representatives from each of the three areas of higher education worked fairly well, as we had a chance to each discuss our own concerns and were able to bring those concerns together in a coherent message to our representatives.



## 2024 Community College Leadership Conference

# MVCC PA members share experiences

*Yue Riesbeck*

November 2023. On a Friday in the crisp deep Fall weather of Central New York, I drove to Saratoga Springs to join a few of the PA members at the 44th Annual NYSUT Community College Conference at the Gideon Putnam Hotel.

Upon arriving at the hotel I was awed by the beautiful, grand building that whispered history. I also enjoyed the interior of Gideon Putnam greatly. Old telephone booths, a funky elevator sign — things you don't see in a modern hotel.

I met up with a few other folks from the PA shortly before dinner. My ecstasy quickly diminished when two beloved long-term members of the college, who were also PA officers and student support advisors, told me with a big grin that this hotel was haunted.

I was always scared of ghosts, and this revelation led to panicked text messages to my spouse and internet searches. It was quickly determined through the internet searches that [fellow PA member] Rossberg's floor was the one that was the most haunted. (Full disclosure: Ross is called Rossberg here because I do not know what's grammatically correct: "Ross's"? Or "Ross"?). Back to the

topic. So Ross'(s) floor is the most haunted. This theory was confirmed the next morning by Ross, who heard weird noises and did not sleep well. Rest assured I was able to enjoy the hotel again.

In addition to learning many, many new things that will help me with serving our union, the second best part of the conference for me was bonding with great people from PA and truly enjoying each other's company. We had two rounds of friendly game nights playing "Phase 10," where I fell in love with a card called "skip." In the most heated moments of the game nights, only soft things were thrown at each other.

If you wish to read more about the valuable sessions we attended at the conference, please read the article written by Sam McManus, which should be here somewhere. Sam and I went to exactly the same sessions.

The End.



# NYSUT Community College Conference

## PA members' experiences (continued)

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*Sam McManus*

Why is the union special to me? That was the question I was asked at the first timers' breakfast at the NYSUT Community College Conference this past weekend in Saratoga Springs. It took me a while to think about it, because I wanted the perfect response. After all, I knew I would be early on, and I wanted to make a good impression, but after mulling over it for a while, the answer was, and had always been, easy, at least since I realized what the union meant.

I'll admit that I had no knowledge of what unions did, and the role they could play in higher ed, because I had never asked. When I first arrived at MVCC I remember a couple of people telling me that the union was great, but this was in passing, and I nodded and continued on my way. When I became full-time faculty, I was approached by other PA members and asked to be a part; they explained to me what it all meant, and how the union went to bat for its members, and I signed up right away. I haven't looked back since.

So, what did I tell them? I said I cannot imagine my life in higher ed without a strong union, that I was at the conference because I wanted to be part of making that difference for others.

When I was asked to be put on the ballot for the negotiations team, I envisioned a time when I would go to a conference and get a crash course in negotiations, and that's exactly what happened. Yue Riesbeck and I were both first timers at this conference, and we went to all of the same workshops

together, talking about each session once it was done, and processing the takeaways.

The first takeaway was that everyone is so amazing, and so welcoming. People I hadn't met before took me under their wing and treated me like I had been coming to these conferences for years. It shouldn't have surprised me, honestly, as I've felt that from day one with the PA. The second takeaway was that each workshop was worthwhile. Not only did I learn about and do mock negotiations (as a manager!) but I also got to pick the brains of people who have been doing this almost as long as I've been alive. That was invaluable.

But the biggest takeaway for me was hearing the stories from those who have been in the trenches, who have fought for contracts and achieved what they'd set out for themselves; it was daring to think that I could be helpful in our own negotiations. After all, I was voted into this role by my peers, and I will fight for them, for me, for every single member of the PA, when we get going with our first round of negotiations to get a new contract.

Oh, and I'm certainly coming back next year. I think they're saving a room for me.



# Community Outreach Committee

The MVCC Professional Association gave back to our community in many ways during this past fall. Here are some photos.



Top: This fall, the MVCC PA collected toys to be donated to The Center, a nonprofit organization in Utica that helps recently arrived refugees and immigrants successfully resettle in the Mohawk Valley. Community Outreach Committee member Carolyn DeJohn delivered a carload of toys to The Center in late December. Thanks to all who contributed!

Above: Robin Saxe and Norma Chrisman delivered a donation to Mother Marianne's Kitchen on behalf of the MVCC PA.

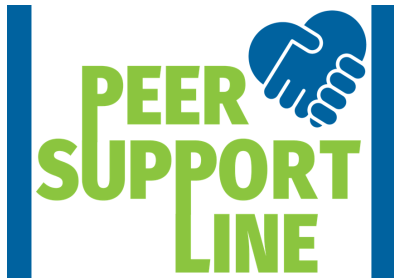
Right: The PA once again participated in the Ziyara Shriners Feztil of Trees, this time with the theme of "Merry Grinchmas!" Thanks to Robin Saxe, Sandy Shepardson, Grace Costello, Norma Chrisman, and Patti Antanavige for donating items and setting up our entry.





# Member Resources

Available to MVCCPA members through NYSUT



## Peer Support Line

The Peer Support Line is offered at no cost to all NYSUT members and their immediate families.

Staffed by trained in-service and retired individuals who understand the unique professional and personal challenges of NYSUT members, this confidential helpline provides answers, resources and empathetic support and is available eight hours a day, five days a week.

The Peer Support Line can help you access benefits through your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and provide information and resources for professional assistance within your local community.

Learn more: <https://memberbenefits.nysut.org/free-member-benefits/peer-support-line>



## Calm App

MVCC PA in-service and retiree members have access to a premium Calm subscription as a FREE benefit through NYSUT! The premium Calm subscription provides members with unlimited access to the full library of content at calm.com and in the Calm app, which can be utilized via a desktop, laptop, tablet, or mobile device (iOS or Android).

Members can add up to five dependents (age 16 or older) to receive their own premium Calm subscription. Please note: Dependents can only be added through the calm.com site (not the Calm app); dependents will then receive their own premium Calm subscription.

To create your account now, go to this dedicated URL for NYSUT members: <https://www.calm.com/b2b/nysut-member-benefits/subscribe>

## New Member Committee

### Yue Riesbeck

On November 15, 2023, the New Member Committee hosted the annual PA New Member Reception where members enjoyed beer, wine, music, and each other's company. Participating new members had a chance to mingle with peers from a variety of departments.

## WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Jon Boardman

Akibul Noyon

Michelle Luvisi

Kathy Reilly

Kelly McFerren

Karin Salas

Sara Miller



Scholarship  
for students

## Students Houppert, Kerr named 2024 PA Scholarship winners

Amanda Kerr and Madison Houppert were selected as the 2024 recipients of the MVCC PA Scholarship. The scholarships were awarded at the PA Luncheon on Jan. 12, 2024.

**Amanda Kerr**, of Boonville, is a Human Services major preparing for a career as a school social worker. While at MVCC, Kerr has excelled in her studies while being involved on campus and in the community. She has been named to the President's List, and in May 2023, she was inducted into Spire, a national honor society that recognizes the unique achievements of adult learners and other nontraditional students, and was selected to receive the 2023 Spire Scholarship. Kerr actively gives back to the community by offering free in-home haircuts to those in need, creating a gardening club, and getting involved through local fundraisers and benefits. She also serves as a member of the Remsen Barn Fest Committee and Boonville Environmental Council.

**Madison Houppert**, of Lowville, is a Graphic Design major who plans to start her own graphic design business. While at MVCC, Houppert has excelled in her studies and received many accolades for her work and service to the college and community. She has been named to the President's List and in February 2023, she was inducted into MVCC's Lambda Beta Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year colleges. In the community, she helped to paint the sets for Lowville Academy high school musical and volunteers at North



Country Pet Adoption Service, the Lowville Elks Lodge Christmas Sharing event, American Red Cross Blood Drive, and the local church.

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 Kerr and Houppert wrote about their own community college experience in their essays, which can be found on pages 11 and 12.

# *The Value of Community College*

*By Madison Houppert*

2024 PA Scholarship winner

To value something is to cherish it; to hold it in high regard because you've recognized that it enriches your life. If you don't know where you would be today, it's valuable.

As a high school student who was always an overachiever, I never pictured myself attending a community college. I took five AP classes and still got grades that put me in the top 15% of my class, which would have allowed me to attend almost any university of my choosing. However, I was unsure, and honestly afraid, of my future. I found myself drowning in the endless options of career paths and breaking under the weight of pressure and expectation. Present day, I am a student at MVCC, and I can personally testify to the life-changing education that a community college provides for not only myself, but all alumni, current students, and students to come.

A community college education gives you a chance to make mistakes while you discover who you are and what path you want to pursue. When you attend a community college, you become a part of their community; one that nurtures you and helps transform your potential into prosperity. Along the way, I've encountered nothing but support and guidance from my professors, administrators, and other faculty. They concern themselves with creating countless opportunities for students and they make your priorities their priorities. The value in a community college education is that they value you too. You're not just another number on their enrollment list, you're an asset to the academic and social environment of the campus. In fact, you're encouraged to contribute new ideas and make your voice heard.

As important as academics are, I've found that

*When you attend  
community college, you  
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you transform your potential  
into prosperity*

more value can be obtained through "real-world" education, or the knowledge and skills one acquires by personal experiences. A community college education goes further than the classroom setting. It offers students countless opportunities for social networking and prepares them for future endeavors. They can gain real-world experience by becoming an officer for a club, getting an on-campus job, or even signing up for field trips to educational locations and future places of employment. There is truly something valuable about laying the foundation to a successful future whatever that may look like.

If you take advantage of all the adventures awaiting you at a community college it's unquestionably going to be of value to you and your future. Just ask any employed alumni on campus, and they will tell you that MVCC changed their life forever, and still continues to do so. Ask any student on campus, and they will tell you how far they have come already. It enriched my life, it enriched their life, it can enrich yours too. I really don't know where I would be today without it, and that's why I can confidently say that receiving a community college education is not just valuable, it's priceless.

# The Value of Community College

By Amanda Kerr

2024 PA Scholarship winner

I grew up in a small town called Constableville and am the youngest of three children. My family is not one of wealth. My parents have always had to work so hard for everything we had, and in turn, I have grown up to work just as hard. Working hard gives me a feeling of pride and accomplishment.

I am currently working full time and raising two children on my own while completing college as a full-time student. Community college is invaluable to me, for without it, my dream of attending college would not be in existence.

I always held onto my dream of attending college. It was always in the back of my mind. A few years ago, I saw a major for administrative assistant being offered at MVCC. Working as a school secretary I was excited to see if this was a possibility for me to enroll. In the past when I had looked into schools, I always felt so pressured. Big expensive schools pushing me to enroll blindly. Connecting with people I know nothing about, I was very untrusting.

Mohawk Valley Community College is so valuable to me. The moment I applied I did not feel pressured at all. I felt pride, I felt more connected to my community. I had so many connections to the school naturally, before even applying. I immediately felt comfort, and an overwhelming sense of pride to become a Hawk. Every single step of the way has been exciting, every person I have talked to has been helpful and motivating. For me personally, I know that my dream of attending college would not have happened without MVCC. I have learned things about myself that I never knew. With the help of MVCC, I am going to create a better future, not only for myself but for my children and future clients.

Community colleges are important to the overall

*Community college makes it possible for students from all walks of life to pursue higher education ... without it, my dream of attending college would not be in existence.*

landscape of education because they make higher education options available to students in a manner that is convenient and cost-effective.

As a student who has experienced the one-of-a-kind difficulties and possibilities that come with attending a community college, I am certain these schools are a vital resource for satisfying the needs of students and the larger community.

Community colleges are a great option for students because of their low tuition rates, accommodating class schedules, and positive impact on students' future careers and the community as a whole. These educational establishments make it possible for students from all walks of life, regardless of their economic status, to pursue higher education by charging reduced tuition rates and providing a wide variety of financial assistance alternatives.

Another convincing argument for my decision was that they provide a flexible learning environment, and for this reason, I decided to attend MVCC. I am able to attend a class in-person as well, and this class is the highlight of my week. I have had to work while attending school, so I needed to be able to successfully juggle my education with my other commitments. Students can balance their education with other obligations, such as employment and family responsibilities, since

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community colleges provide a range of session times, including weekend and evening classes. Because of this flexibility, people have the ability to mold their educational experiences to fit the specifics of their lives, which in turn improves their chances of being successful.

Students are given assistance in defining their career routes as well as making connections with possible employers through the college's specialized career services. Community colleges provide students with the tools they need to achieve success in their chosen disciplines and make important contributions to the workforce after graduation by placing emphasis on the development of practical skills and building connections with local industries.

The needs of students are prioritized in community colleges, creating a sense of trust. It is common practice for these establishments to work together with local companies, industries, and organizations to guarantee their educational offerings are in line with the requirements of the labor market. Community colleges play an important role in economic development and help bridge the gap between education and employment by encouraging community connections. They provide a substantial contribution to the development of

the community's social and economic systems by assisting people in acquiring marketable competencies and relevant credentials. They also address the demands of the labor force and promoting economic growth. As a result of this, I have a strong belief that students should give serious consideration to continuing their education at a community college since it is an option that is both realistic and beneficial.

Earning a college degree to become a School Social Worker gives me a most rewarding purpose, which not only changes my life, but the lives of my children lives and future generations to come. Not only can I relate to students in a better way by being a student myself at almost 40 years old, but I am gaining the skills and knowledge to help us all break generational cycles and create a healthier future. Knowing that I could possibly save and encourage a student and bring them to a productive place of self-love and positive growth is the greatest purpose — to help students realize they are not alone, and to help future generations be productive and to be positive role models. I could possibly save someone's life or prevent crimes just by offering my services to others. Following this path is one that will never become stagnant but will forever keep growing, and I have MVCC to thank for this amazing opportunity in my life.

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## Retirement benefit (continued)

- If the retiree includes their spouse on their health insurance plan, the full premium is deducted from the account.
  - Once account funds are depleted, the retiree is responsible for their half of the premium (and full premium for spouse, if applicable).
- 2.** If such a retiree should die before this benefit is exhausted, the remainder shall continue to be applied to the health insurance premiums of any eligible dependent of the retiree who was covered under the College's health insurance plan at the time of the retiree's death but only until the remaining benefit is exhausted or said dependent is no longer covered under the

College's health plan for any reason. There shall be no payment made to the estate of a retiree or dependent under any circumstances.

**3.** An employee who is eligible to receive the benefits in this Section 10.7 may apply donated sick leave days under Section 11.2.B toward the \$50,000 maximum sum above, provided the employee satisfies the criteria for, and is granted donated sick leave, subject to the conditions of Section 11.2.B.

- Any retiree who receives health care from a spouse or domestic partner's plan or through Medicare can submit evidence of a paid premium reimbursement. Reimbursement will be made quarterly based on a submission deadline determined by the college.

# Member Profile

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## Michelle Luvisi

### Registration Specialist

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

As a registration specialist, I evaluate the transcripts of incoming transfer students and work with the department deans to see what classes will transfer to MVCC.

#### What inspired you to get into the field you chose?

I originally started off in the fashion merchandising/retail field. However, after working in that field for multiple years I needed a change. I decided to apply to MVCC as a library clerk on the Rome campus. After that I worked as an Accommodations Specialist in Rome and then as a College Services Associate in the Registrar's office on the Utica campus. Higher education isn't what I initially started in, but I love what I do and I enjoy working at MVCC!

#### What attracted you to the position you are in?

I had worked as a CSA for the past few years in the Registrar's office and was looking for a way to apply the knowledge I already had as well as learn new things and challenge myself.

#### What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

I enjoy spending time with my cats, reading, music, and doing arts and crafts.

#### What is something people might be surprised to know about you?

Right before Covid, I took a roller derby bootcamp through CCED in attempt to get out of my comfort zone. I've continued doing the roller derby bootcamps on and off after Covid. I also just recently tried snowboarding.



# Member Profile

## Sara Miller

### Applied Learning Coordinator

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

The Applied Learning Coordinator is a new position at the college, designed to help students apply what they've learned in the classroom through real-world experiences such as volunteer work, site visits, and internships. The position is funded by the (Pre-ETS) Career Transition Program grant but housed in the Career Development Center; therefore, I serve as the Career Center's liaison to the School of Public and Human services and work with the Career Transition Program to place students in volunteer and internships roles.

#### What inspired you to get into this field?

I grew up in a family that valued education, particularly community college education, so the mission of the community college was engrained in me at a young age. My grandfather attended MVCC on the GI Bill in the late 1940s, and I grew up watching my mother grade ESL homework of her refugee students at MVCC.

As a teenager I worked with children, so my desire to work as an educator began there and evolved over time. In college and graduate school I studied history and have since adjuncted in that field. However, I found that I felt most aligned within my various roles in Student Affairs.

#### What attracted you to the position you are in (or, what made you come back to MVCC)?

I believe I had the ultimate applied learning experience in the form of study abroad in Kenya. That semester abroad made me realize what applying classroom learning truly meant as I was no longer simply studying African and African American history, I was witnessing it and engaging with students from all over the continent and the world.



Ultimately my study abroad experience prepared me for my job as MVCC's International Student Services Coordinator (2011-2016) which crystalized what applied learning can do for students as they explore and discover interests. The ISS role combined with strengths developed in community roles such as a TEDxUtica organizer and yoga teacher have allowed me to help students build self/career awareness and connect the dots for students and employers in a variety of ways.

#### What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

Adventuring with my husband, daughter, son and dog in the Adirondacks, snowboarding, yoga, meditation, reading, eating all the foods, and going to see live music with good friends and family.

#### What is something people might be surprised to know about you?

I've been to 10 countries—Kenya, Uganda, Vietnam, Japan, China, Italy, Canada, Iceland, Nicaragua, and the United States.