



**Reaching Higher in Massachusetts:
Helping Students Create Their Vision for the Future
Through Postsecondary Planning.**

August 15th, 2023
Fitchburg State University
Hammond Hall
8 am – 3 pm

Sponsored by





A Note from the RHM Leadership:

Welcome to the 2023 annual Reach Higher MA Summer Convening, bringing together a diverse coalition of over 150 of the region's educators to learn more about and help implement the Reach Higher initiative across the Commonwealth. Our theme for today's program is **Helping Students Create Their Vision for the Future Through Postsecondary Planning**.

We have a robust and inclusive agenda that I believe will energize you, introduce you to others in this field, and give you new and creative ideas to incorporate into your work. This year will bring new challenges. We have a Supreme Court decision that will affect how college admissions offices do their work, and a new FAFSA that we are all trying to make live up to its promise of being simple. We have high hopes that this convening will connect us, so we can make plans to collaborate with one another and improve upon our work. For this event, we have brought together some of the best and brightest thought leaders in the region. Thank you for taking a summer day to focus on your dedication to your students, their families, and our communities. Your work makes a difference.

This event would not happen without the efforts of my colleague, Christine Scafidi, who is our convening chair. In addition to her work as STEM and Workforce Development Coordinator for GEAR UP Massachusetts and as my co-chair of Reach Higher MA, Christine takes on this event each year with enormous energy and passion and, again, she has created an amazing program. In addition, I want to thank Tony Trodella, Director of Admissions for Fitchburg State University, for making this convening a reality. From our first meeting with Tony, we knew this site would work well for our event. We are also so appreciative of the Fitchburg State University staff for their support. Today there will be numerous opportunities for learning, networking, and action. I hope you leave today's convening inspired to do at least one new thing to help your students to "Reach Higher" and pursue training or education after high school graduation. This event is also the kickstart of our work together for the coming academic year. Stay in touch, give us feedback, and help us plan future trainings and events so we may move forward in our work to inspire all students to pursue, persist and achieve post-secondary success.

Sincerely,

Julie Shields-Rutyna

RHM Co-Chair and Director of College Planning, Education, and Training at MEFA and the entire RHM Leadership Team

Meet the RHM Leadership Team

Catherine Chiu, Boston Public Schools

Kevin Fudge, American Student Assistance

Nyal Fuentes, Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education

Apelila Joseph, MEFA

Christine Scafidi, GEAR UP, OSFA, MA DHE

Tim Poynton, UMASS Boston

Julie Shields-Rutyna, MEFA

V. Scott Solberg, Boston University

Taryn Tomkins, MassEdCO



**Reaching Higher: Helping Students Create
Their Vision for the Future Through Post-Secondary Planning
Fitchburg State University
Hammond Hall, August 15th, 2023
8:00 AM – 3:00 PM**

8:00 am Registration and Continental Breakfast – Hammond Hall Lobby

Welcome and Introductory Greetings - Hammond Hall Main Lounge

- 8:30 am**
- **Christine Scafidi** – *Reach Higher Massachusetts Convening Chair*
 - **Dr. Richard S. Lapidus** – *President, Fitchburg State University*
 - **Regina Robinson** – *MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education*

- 9:00 am**
- Keynote Speaker** – Hammond Hall Main Lounge
- **CJ Powell**, *Director of Advocacy, National Association for College Admission Counseling*

9:50 am Break

Breakout Sessions – Percival Hall

RHM Breakout I:

- 10:00 am**
- **UndocuAlly: Supporting Immigrant Students – MIRA Coalition**
 - **Innovation Pathways Program Overview and a Pilot Success Story**
 - **College & Career Readiness with the Boston Celtics**
 - **College Access to College Success: Where and What are the Connections?**
 - **MyCAP: Driving Student Success**
 - **Post-Secondary Pathway in Entrepreneurship**

10:55 am Break

Panel – Hammond Hall Main Lounge

Educators: How do we support students, parents, and each other when the world has changed so much?

Moderated by Christine Scafidi, STEM and Workforce Development Coordinator, MA DHE, Reach

11:00 am *Higher Massachusetts Convening Chair and Co-Chair*

- **Kyle Hartung**, *Assoc. VP, Post-Secondary Education and Training, Jobs for the Future*
- **Dr. Nicole Johnson**, *Director of Educational Equity and Justice, MA DHE*
- **CJ Powell**, *Director of Advocacy, National Association for College Admission Counseling*
- **Diane Soboski**, *NEACAC President, Director of College Counseling, Portsmouth Abbey School*

12:00 pm Lunch – Holmes Dining Hall

Breakout Sessions – Percival Hall

RHM Breakout II:

- 1:00 pm
- From Highschool to Higher Education: Creating Realistic Transition Plans for Graduating Students
 - More Than Just Milestones: A Culturally Relevant Approach to Postsecondary Planning in an Inequitable World
 - Building Blocks to Success: Stackable Education as a Pathway to Careers
 - Promoting College SUCCESS for BIPOC Males - STCC's MILE Program
 - Developing a College Access Mindset Through Staff Training
 - Supporting Students with Disabilities to Ensure Post-Secondary Readiness and Success

1:50 pm Break

Breakout Sessions – Percival Hall

RHM Breakout III:

- 2:00 pm
- What's Next? Getting Started on Career – Massachusetts Community Colleges
 - Advising Low-income Students into Postsecondary Programs that Lead to Well-Paying Careers
 - Expanding College and Career Options Through Online Learning
 - Early College: A New Vision for Dual Enrollment

2:50 pm Closing and Thank you – *Hammond Hall Main Lounge*

3:00 pm FSU Tours Available – *Hammond Hall Lobby*

Our Welcome Speakers

Dr. Robert Lapidus, Fitchburg State University's 11th President, is a recognized leader in higher education, took office as the 11th president of Fitchburg State University in July 2015. A product of public education, he has long been an advocate for increased access and affordability for higher education. Since becoming president, he has been guiding the university by advancing teaching and learning excellence, fostering diversity and inclusiveness, and engaging the campus community as a steward of place within the city and region.

During his tenure he has invested in student success through the adoption of a revised general education curriculum that includes a first-year experience, designed to help establish students' sense of campus community and strengthen their connection to both their discipline and the institution. Students are introduced to campus resources, practice time management, strengthen study skills, begin to consider career planning, and formulate a better understanding of cultural diversity, among other topics.

Dr. Lapidus also oversaw the adoption of a new five-year strategic plan that focuses on education justice, being a student-ready campus, and inclusive excellence. He also guided the university through the successful completion of an exhaustive accreditation review by the New England Commission of Higher Education.

He is active in the community and volunteers his time in support of a variety of civic leadership organizations. He serves on the boards of several local institutions, including Cushing Academy, the Fitchburg Art Museum, the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce, and Sizer School. He is an active member of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, and in April 2022, he was appointed to the NCAA Division III Presidents Council. He was named one of the Worcester Business Journal's "Power 50" in 2022 for his work in community development.

Prior to his arrival at Fitchburg State, he served as the dean of the College of Business Administration at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. During his time at the college, Lapidus implemented a new strategic plan and guided the college successfully through two Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business re-accreditation processes; a distinction earned by less than 5 percent of business schools worldwide. He provided direction and oversight in the construction of a LEED Silver certified \$42 million College of Business complex and raised more than \$24 million dollars in support of a wide range of college initiatives.

Lapidus earned a bachelor's degree from Indiana University, Bloomington, a master's degree in marketing from California State University, Long Beach, and a doctoral degree in marketing from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. He also holds a certificate in management and leadership in education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Lapidus and his wife, Lisa, live in Fitchburg. They have two children, Zachary, and Hannah.

Dr. Regina Robinson, Ed.D. joined DESE in September 2021 as a deputy commissioner overseeing strategic initiatives (workforce diversification), educational options (Early College, Charter Schools, etc.), planning and research (policy and federal grants), and the P20W Hub. Regina is a collaborative and skilled leader with a passionate expertise in student success for over 20 years. Prior to joining DESE, Regina was Dean of Student Affairs at Cambridge College, where she provided comprehensive support services to help non-traditional learners complete their degree.

As a promoter of student effectiveness and support, Regina understands students' pathway from admittance to degree conferral, pre-K to career, and engages both higher education and preK-12 stakeholders on the critical components impacting student success. She has been a fierce advocate for K-12 students with disabilities in the Greater Boston area and in 2014 was appointed to serve on the Boston Public Schools' Superintendent Search Committee and was later appointed to the Boston Public School Committee, where she served for one term.

Since 2008, Regina's vast service to organizations has ranged from board and community engagement with past and current organizations like the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium, Thrive in Five, Operation House Call, Scholar Athletes, the Higher Education Resource Center, Special Olympics Massachusetts, and the Federation for Children with Special Needs. She has also been a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) guest lecturer at 10 colleges and universities across the Commonwealth, which include HGSE, BU, UMASS Boston, HMS, and Brown, especially focused on topics of disability inclusion, advocacy, and parental engagement. Regina possesses the unique ability to visualize educational attainment through many lenses: as a former college administrator, instructor, and local district leader to current K-12 parent advocate and statewide policymaker. As the parent of 4 children, one who is a star with Down syndrome, Regina is personally invested in access to education and career success for all students, from all backgrounds, and with all abilities. A recent doctoral graduate in Higher Education Leadership from Regis College, Regina's research is focused on spotlighting gender, race, and executive leadership in education.

Keynote

CJ Powell, Director of Advocacy, National Association for College Admission Counseling. CJ Powell currently serves as the Director of Advocacy at the National Association for College Admissions Counseling where he leads the advocacy efforts for the association's 26,000 plus membership on the state and federal level on all issues related to college access. Most recently he served as a Biden-Harris appointee at the U.S. Department of Education beginning as a special assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education before his promotion to the Chief of Staff role in the same office. While at the Department, CJ worked on a wide range of topics including the Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds, student basic needs, college access programs, college completion programs, and affirmative action. Prior to his federal service, CJ served as the inaugural higher education program analyst at The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and The Leadership Conference Education Fund. In this role, he led the higher education civil rights coalition, a table of more than 50 national civil rights and policy organizations and led the development of the first full higher education policy agenda from the civil rights community. CJ began his career in education equity as a college adviser in the College Advising Corps, assisting students in rural North Carolina in planning their postsecondary lives. Following graduate school, CJ served as the founding director of college preparation for a new high school in Nashville, Tennessee.

CJ holds a BA in religious studies from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and an MS Ed. in higher education from the University of Pennsylvania.

Panel:

Moderator: Christine Scafidi, *STEM and Workforce Development Coordinator, GEAR UP, MA DHE, RHM Convening Chair, RHM Leadership Team*

Panelists: Kyle Hartung, *Assoc. VP, Post-Secondary Education and Training, Jobs for the Future*, **Dr. Nicole Johnson**, *Director of Educational Equity and Justice, MA DHE*, **CJ Powell**, *Director of Advocacy, National Association for College Admission Counseling*, **Diane Soboski**, *NEACAC President, Director of College Counseling, Portsmouth Abbey School*

Dr. Kyle Hartung is an associate vice president in Jobs for the Future's (JFF) Education Practice. Over the last 25 years Kyle has worked as a teacher, leader, consultant, and researcher in public K-12 systems and higher-education settings. In his current role at JFF he leads teams working with state, regional, and local leaders to design, strengthen, and scale solutions to reimagine the ways in which people—youth, young adults, and adults—experience and move through education and workforce development systems to ensure that they access the knowledge, skills, credentials, and capital critical to launch, re-enter, or advance in a career, achieve

economic advancement, and realize their best possible futures. Kyle is regular participant in our country's ongoing conversation and work about equity, education, workforce development, and the future of work. His areas of expertise include college and career readiness, education-industry partnerships, work-based learning, secondary and postsecondary alignment, intermediary design and development, career navigation, systems change, adult learning, and mixed-methods research.

Dr. Nicole Johnson currently serves as the inaugural Director of Educational Equity and Justice for the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE). Nicole comes to this work with the aim and passion to challenge the status quo and consider the voices and experiences of historically marginalized students. Through her professional and personal endeavors, Nicole seeks to learn more about the experiences of minority students and advocate for change to eliminate the challenges and barriers that racially minoritized students face in the public postsecondary education system. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Management from Bentley University, a Master of Art in Peace and Conflict Studies from University of Massachusetts Lowell, and a Doctor of Education in Higher Education Administration from Northeastern University.

CJ Powell – Please see keynote above

Diane Soboski recently joined the Portsmouth Abbey Community as the Director of College Counseling after serving as the Director of Admissions at Champlain College in Burlington, Vermont, since 2018. She began her career in college admissions at Wheelock College in Boston. She continued at the College of the Holy Cross, where she held various admissions roles, each with increased responsibilities, over ten years. While at Champlain College, Soboski oversaw a team of admissions professionals responsible for more than six thousand applications within an increasingly competitive selection process. Her ability to collaborate with colleagues and others involved with financial aid, scholarship, and student success was instrumental in supporting institutional goals and those of prospective students and families. Her work at the College of the Holy Cross included supporting international students and student-athletes, and she was the admissions liaison to both the men's and women's tennis and track and field teams.

Ms. Soboski has also served in several leadership positions within the New England Association of College Admissions Counselors (NEACAC), including as the president-elect of the Executive Board, as well as being elected to serve as a representative for the New England Region of the National Association of College Admission Counseling.

She earned her master's degree in higher education administration from the College of William and Mary and her undergraduate degree from Hamilton College, where she remains actively engaged as an alumna.

Breakout Presenters:

Session I

1. **UndocuAlly: Supporting Immigrant Students** – Best practices and resources for supporting undocumented, immigrant or refugee students.

Room: Percival 103

Moderator: Rachelle Lappinen, *MassEdCO, Worcester North GEAR UP*

Speaker: Catherine Ramirez Mejia, *Access and Resources Specialist, Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA) Coalition.*

Catherine Ramirez Mejia joined MIRA Coalition in October 2022 as the Access and Resource Specialist. She builds organizational knowledge on immigrant access, creates, and leads trainings, and designs resources and materials for a wide range of audiences. Prior to joining MIRA Coalition, Catherine was

the Program Coordinator and Operations Manager with Connecticut Court Appointed Special Advocates.

2. Innovation Pathways Program Overview and a Pilot Success Story –

Room: Percival 105

Moderator: Erin Jaques, *MyCAP District Coordinator, Boston Public Schools*

Speaker(s): Karen Ares, *Career Pathway Coordinator, Career Pathway Coordinator*, **Jennifer Gwatkin**, *Policy Maker, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Conversation (DESE)*.

Karen Ares is the Career Pathway Coordinator at Career Pathway Coordinator since August 2022. In this role, she coordinates grant funding, internships, curriculum, certifications, and community outreach for our four Career Pathways, two of which are Innovation Career Pathways designated by DESE. Karen previously served as Executive Director at the Blackstone Valley HUB for Workforce Development, a non-profit which aids workforce development in Advanced Manufacturing. She was also the former K-12 STEM Director for a regional school district, leading the charge to implement Project Lead the Way in all grades and Innovation Pathways at the high school. Karen taught high school science for 7 years and is passionate about bringing real-life learning experiences to students and seeing them apply their knowledge outside the classroom in relevant industries to enhance their professional skills. Karen holds a BS in Biology, and an MS in Environmental and Occupational Health.

Social Media: [linkedin.com/in/karenares/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/karenares/), Twitter @AresKaren2020

Jennifer Gwatkin has been involved with Innovation Pathways since their inception in 2017 and has served as the state lead for the program since 2019. Her prior roles at DESE include Early College coordinator (2017-2019) and liaison to Massachusetts' two public K-12 virtual schools (2014-2017).

In life before state government, Jennifer worked for Northeastern University in a regulatory compliance role supporting campus and online program expansion, and, for many years, in postsecondary licensure and accreditation. Jennifer holds a Master of Public Administration from Syracuse University's Maxwell School and enjoys long hikes with her nine-pound miniature dachshund named Pollywog.

3. College and Career Readiness and The Boston Celtics –

Want to learn how to create a relationship with a local sports team? GEAR UP Massachusetts has a long history with the Boston Celtics, and more recently with the New England Revolution and Worcester Red Sox. How did we cultivate these partnerships? Learn our strategies, best practices, and details of our events. It could something your organization or school could replicate!

Room: Percival 106

Moderator: Robert Dais, *Statewide Director, GEAR UP Massachusetts*

Speaker(s): Krista Callinan, *GEAR UP Financial Literacy Coordinator*, **Sara Eldemery**, Sr. Group Sales Account Executive & Events Manager

Krista Callinan has been with the GEAR UP MA program for over 10 years, starting as the Program Assistant. For the past several years she has been serving as the Financial Literacy Coordinator and is responsible for the GEAR UP scholarship and all State-wide Initiatives, like the Massachusetts College Application Celebration, and very successful initiative involving Massachusetts professional sports teams, like The Celtics, The New England Revolution and The Worcester Red Sox.

Sara Eldemery's role with the Boston Celtics is to orchestrate group outings and programs for games. Sara earned her bachelor's degree from Bentley University.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/sara-eldemery-69448065/>

4. College Access to College Success: Where and What are the Connections? – Successful access to higher education begins with a student's family and continues as they progress, ideally, into a "college-going

culture” that includes steady academic progress, good advising and counseling, careful exploration of higher education choices, perhaps dual enrollment, ideally a bridge program, and help securing financial aid -- continuing over the summer when many underrepresented and first generation students need help with their “college prep” homework, including paying required fees.

Once enrolled, ideally, access to “high impact retention practices”:

- 1) “Intrusive advising” that occurs during their first semester, perhaps via a peer mentor
- 2) First Year Experience course, and follow-up
- 3) Guided Pathways – narrowing choices to minimize confusion and connect to career exploration
- 4) Learning communities – an academic peer group
- 5) Affinity groups – discovering shared interests

For “adult learners,” older adults transferring, returning to college, or starting for the first time, including vets, advising and counseling geared to their needs.

Room: Percival 107

Moderator: Mary Colon, *Valley Opportunity Council, GEAR UP Holyoke Regional Program Coordinator*

Speaker(s): David Johnston, *Director, Center for Higher Education Retention Excellence*, **Dr. Chaka Felder-McEntire**, *Executive Director and Founder, Higher Heights*

David Johnston is a planner, researcher and consultant in the life skills learning and education of challenged youth, now working under the banner of the Center for Higher Education Retention Excellence, dedicated to improving access to and success in higher education for underrepresented, first generation and otherwise challenged students. CHERE conducts small, interactive conferences on key higher education issues related to this mission – more than 30 events since its founding in 2012.

In addition to creating CHERE as a subsidiary of the Hartford Consortium for Higher Education, David taught First Year Introduction for five years at Eastern Connecticut State University, a required 3-credit course for all freshmen. He also worked as the recruiter and counselor for the Intensive College Transition Program in Meriden, Conn. 2013-2019, that helped adult learners and ESL students qualify for credit courses at the nearby community college. He has also been a substitute teacher for 11 years, mostly in middle schools in his very diverse community.

He has a BA in Government from Dartmouth College, an MS in Urban Planning from the University of Wisconsin, and an MBA from Columbia University.

Dr. Chaka Felder-McEntire is a professional development consultant and a 20-year+ education administrator with expertise in leadership, motivation, diversity/equity/inclusion, trauma informed practices, counseling, and college & career readiness. A certified Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion professional, Dr. Felder-McEntire provides training and coaching to the public and private industries who want to “repurpose for success”. Dr. McEntire is the owner of Higher Elevations Consulting that provides professional development, coaching, motivational speaking, and fitness consultation. Dr. Felder-McEntire is also the founder of Higher Heights Youth Empowerment Programs, Inc. (www.higherheightsyouth.org) and the Connecticut College Access (www.connecticutgoestocollege.org), organizations that both focus to increase Equal Access and Opportunity for all minority, low-income and first-generation students. To date, the organizations have helped over 10,000 students graduate from high school, enroll into college, and provide them with over \$3 million in scholarships.

5. **MyCAP – Driving Student Success:** Students need to own their futures. MyCAP engages students in process of self-discovery, leading to identification of careers aligned to personal interests’ strengths and talents, connecting course taking with career and self-interests and mapping it all to an authentic plan for postsecondary success.

Room: Percival 108

Moderator: Amy Wilder, *School Counselor, West Bridgewater Middle Senior High School*

Lisa Harney is a Dropout Prevention and Reengagement Specialist at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education working in the College, Career, and Technical Education unit. Lisa passionately believes in the potential of EVERY student to not just graduate high school but to be successful in college, career, and active civic life. Her priority projects include alternative education, chronic absence, dropout prevention and re-engagement, and implementation of *My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP)* – a four-year individual planning tool for ALL students.

Prior to working at the Department Lisa was the director of an alternative high school for pregnant and parenting teens operated under the guidance of the South Shore Educational Collaborative. The success of the program was in the holistic design including on-site day care, postsecondary planning, mental health counseling services, and a rigorous academic program leading to a high school diploma.

Lisa holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Boston College, a Master of Science degree in Business Education from Suffolk University and a Master of Education degree from UMass/Boston.

- 6. Post-Secondary Pathway in Entrepreneurship** – Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) will share how NFTE and others can support students on their post-secondary entrepreneurship pathway. NFTE will share student stories, resources, and recommendations geared towards supporting students who want to start their own business or incorporate the entrepreneurial mindset into their steps to success! Our session will focus on college pathways, workforce development connections, and community connections.

Room: Percival 209

Moderator: Julie Shields-Rutyna, *Director of College Planning, Education, and Training at MEFA*

Speaker(s): Adanma Ude, *Regional Director of the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE)*,
Jennifer Green, *Senior Director of Programs, Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship*

Adanma Ude has dedicated her career to supporting young people and their path to success. Since the age of 14, Adanma has worked with Boston's youth to provide them with engaging programming and school-based enrichment services. While at NFTE, Adanma has overseen new partnership growth and facilitated new statewide programs while also advocating for youth entrepreneurship programming across various forums. Prior to joining NFTE, Adanma served as the Director of Partnerships for City Year, Boston where she led her team as they served over 50 schools across the city. As a mother to a beautiful 8-year-old son, when not working, Adanma enjoys spending time with her family, cooking up delicious meals based off her grandparent's recipes and roots, and serving as a board member and advisor for various community and institutional boards.

Jennifer Green has been overseeing NFTE's entrepreneurship education programming across New England for twelve years. Over her tenure with the organization, Jennifer has supported nearly 100 entrepreneurship educators across middle schools, high schools, and CBO partnerships. Over her time with NFTE, she has helped 10,000 young people tap into - and leverage - their own entrepreneurial mindset. Jennifer is passionate about igniting the entrepreneurial spirit in young people, having her own transformative experience while earning her MBA from Babson College, rated #1 in the world for entrepreneurship for over 20 years. Jennifer lives in Natick, MA with her wife and two young children. When not working, Jennifer enjoys camping, tennis, birding, and coaching her sons' Little League teams.

- 7. From Highschool to Higher Education: Creating Realistic Transition Plans for Graduating Students** – Join us as we explore innovative ways the UMASS System is supporting students as they transition into the Academic rigor of post-secondary education. Through engaging dialogue, we will discuss common

transitional issues and roadblocks that interfere with student's educational planning. Facilitators will highlight academic, social, and systematic supports provided to incoming first-year students aimed at removing systemic challenges and emphasize student ownership of the academic planning process. Participants will learn about cost effective interventions being utilized in collaboration with SSS programs on campus to scaffold students into credit bearing courses during the summer to limit the financial burden of developmental course enrollments and decrease student's timeline for earning their degree of choice. An emphasis on student reflection and resource management will remain a core component of the dialogue.

Speaker(s): *Craig Elkins, Director, Alternative Admissions Erik Baumann, Program Coordinator, College Now, Daniesha Tobey-Richards, College Now Retention Counselor, Alternative Admissions, Vera Delgado, Program Coordinator, Alternative Admissions*

Room: Percival 103

Moderator: *Jazzmun Baez, Valley Opportunity Council, GEAR UP Springfield Regional Program Coordinator*

Craig Elkins received his B.S. degree in Biology from Plymouth State University and his M.Ed. in Leadership and Management from Fitchburg State University. For over decade, Craig has been working to help underrepresented youth from North Central Massachusetts and the South Coast achieve their educational goals through positions in local school districts as well as state and federal grants within Mount Wachusett Community College and here at UMASS Dartmouth. As a first-generation college student, Craig is aware of the challenges young people face today as they work towards completing high school and earning college degrees. He works diligently to educate students and instill within them, the skills necessary to be engaged citizens and active members of their community. Currently, Craig serves as President of the Massachusetts Educational Opportunity Association.

Erik Baumann currently serves as the Admissions Coordinator for The College Now Alternative Admissions Program at UMass Dartmouth. In addition to overseeing our admissions process, he also serves as the Counselor/Advisor to a cohort of students every fall semester. He is committed to helping students and believes education can change the world.

Erik has an MA from Boston College.

Daniesha Tobey-Richards is coming directly from a career in case management, Daniesha began her Professional Advising Career in 2018 with servicing students within the Charlton College of Business school at UMass Dartmouth. Supporting and advocating students while they pursue their academic goals became a mission and passion. Seeking stronger and more direct opportunities to positively impact student's retention, Daniesha transitioned into the College Now/START program as the Retention Counselor in 2021. Drawing on personal experiences as a first-generation college student, Daniesha takes a proactive approach to advising while valuing the collaboration with students multifaceted support networks.

Daniesha has an MPP in Educational Policy. Contact me via email @ drichards@umassd.edu.

Vera Delgado is a Program Coordinator/Advisor. I live in Rhode Island. Prior to start at UMassD I worked for 19 years at the Community College of RI. I have now joined UMassD for the past 4 years. I have my master's degree in Counseling. My goal is to get my license in mental health. I speak 3 languages and some knowledge of French. I love playing volleyball. Vera has a master's in counseling.

8. More Than Just Milestones: A Culturally Relevant Approach to Postsecondary Planning in an Inequitable World –

Postsecondary planning is often thought of as a series of steps like building a list of schools or programs, writing a personal statement, completing FAFSA, and submitting applications. OneGoal's approach, which is grounded in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, ties these steps to the process of identity exploration and fostering a critical consciousness to support students in understanding the systemic barriers to postsecondary success and persisting towards their greatest aspirations. Based on internal research OneGoal conducted of alumni who did not complete a degree, our approach is designed to prepare students to successfully navigate the challenges they may face in their transition to postsecondary without internalizing systemic failures as their own. This workshop will feature an overview of OneGoal's research and how that influenced an overhaul in our curriculum as well as a panel of students who will share reflections on their experience through the transition to postsecondary.

Room: Percival 105

Moderator: Olivia Hull, *School Counselor, Maynard*

Speaker(s): Adam Seidel, *Deputy Director Massachusetts, OneGoal*, **Ainsley Robles**, *Senior Director of Program, OneGoal*, **Erika Solugren**, *Senior Director of Partnerships, OneGoal*, **Addy Bonilla**, *Student*

Adam Seidel oversees regional growth, strategy, and operations at OneGoal. Prior to this role, Adam led all facets of the OneGoal program for six years as the Managing Director of Program. Before joining OneGoal, Adam served as the Director of Operations at Roxbury Preparatory High School and at the Roxbury Prep Lucy Stone Campus where he was able to celebrate the first two classes of graduates. He has worked in education for over 20 years. LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/adam-seidel/>

Ainsley Robles is the current Senior Director of Program for OneGoal Massachusetts. Driven by her love for being in community with others, Ainsley leverages her curiosity and communication skills to support the building of a network of champions for young people across the state of Massachusetts, in pursuit of each person having a viable pathway towards pursuing their own postsecondary dream. As a Teach for America alum, graduate of Boston University, and former classroom educator in Lawrence, Ainsley understands the importance of building and leveraging networks of support with stakeholders who are mission driven to disrupt systems of oppression on behalf of future generations of leaders. Ainsley has worked at OneGoal Massachusetts for over 3 years in various roles and is passionate about providing access to quality postsecondary advising because she intimately knows as a first-generation Latina, the power it must change communities

Ainsley has an M. Ed and is accessible at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ainsley-robles-71a94760/>.

Erika Solugren is the Senior Director of Partnerships with OneGoal Massachusetts. She has been working in the education sector since 2014, including higher education and educational non-profits. Her background includes admissions and enrollment, program development and delivery, advising, systems, and relationship management.

Erika has an AA from Miami Dade College, a BA from Amherst College, and an MA from Harvard Extension School. Contact Erika on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/erikasologuren/>.

Addy Bonilla is a 2018 graduate of Lawrence High School. Addy is a current student at Fitchburg State University.

9. Building Blocks to Success: Stackable Education as a Pathway to Careers –

Designed to focus on equity, access, and success for both high school and college students, this session will explain the concept of stackable credentials as a pathway to learning, that leads to a career. The session will cover the concept of stackable credentials, including an illustration of how Lasell University designed and implemented this approach for specialized career pathways.

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Describe stackable credentials
- Understand various pathways created by stackable credentials
- Understand how stackable credentials offer students greater access to post-secondary education
- Develop a plan for post-secondary education based on stackable credentials

Room: Percival 106

Moderator: Donna Connolly, *Talent Search Director, MassEdCO*

Speaker(s): Cristina Haverty, *Associate Professor and Dean of Health Sciences, Lasell University,*

Adrienne Franciosi, *Associate Vice President of Strategic Initiatives*

Cristina Haverty, PhD., Dean, School of Health Sciences, Lasell University. Maria Cristina Haverty, “Cris” is the Dean of the School of Health Science at Lasell University in Newton, MA, USA. With thirty years of higher education experience as a practitioner, educator, and administrator, Cris takes an active role in creating an optimal educational experience for students of all levels, as well as for faculty at Lasell. Cris supports students and faculty through global and domestic collaborations, professional development, advocacy, and academic program development. Cris’ expertise in developing educational experiences, academic programs, accreditation, and industry partnerships led to the rapid expansion of the School of Health Sciences at Lasell. Cris earned her BS in Athletic Training from Springfield College, Springfield, MA, her Master of Education in Counseling, Sports Psychology, from Boston University, MA, and her Doctor of Philosophy in Leadership in Education from the University of Massachusetts Lowell.

Adrienne Franciosi serves as Associate Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and is an education leader skilled in partnership and workforce development, recruitment/retention strategies, and program development. Prior to this role, Adrienne served as Assistant Vice President of Graduate and Professional Studies where she championed Lasell’s graduate programs internally and externally, additionally working to improve the graduate student experience.

Adrienne has an M.S. in Communication.

10. Promoting College SUCCESS for BIPOC Males - STCC’s MILE Program –

This presentation will provide a comprehensive analysis of why BIPOC male students face disproportionately low retention and graduation rates at colleges and universities nationwide. Furthermore, we will dive into the actions being taken by Springfield Technical Community College's Male Initiative for Leadership and Education (MILE) Program to combat this trend. Attendees will learn about MILE’s innovative and practical approaches that have significantly improved retention and graduation rates for male students.

This session benefits educators, administrators, and policymakers committed to promoting equity and inclusion in higher education. By attending, participants will gain critical insights and practical strategies to help address the success rates of BIPOC males in their institutions.

Room: Percival 107

Moderator: Apelila Joseph, *MEFA Pathway Program Manager*

Speaker(s): Dr. Miguel Maria, *Assistant Dean of Student Initiatives,* **Christian DeJesus**, *Academic and Transfer Counselor* and **Melvin Tejada**, *Academic and Transfer Counselor*

Miguel Maria is an accomplished Assistant Dean of Students with a passion for student success. He served as the inaugural Director of the Male Initiative for Leadership and Education (MILE) from August 2021 to September 2022 before transitioning to his current role. In his current position, he is responsible for overseeing SUCCESS-funded initiatives and services related to student support. He also manages the MILE and Lead Programs at STCC, two student support programs that focus on male and female underrepresented students. Before joining STCC, Miguel worked as a Financial Aid Counselor at Westfield State University.

Miguel earned a bachelor's degree in Economics and Political Science from Westfield State University, followed by a Master's in Public Administration, and completed his doctoral studies at the University of Hartford, where he earned an Ed. D in Higher Education Leadership. His research focused on millennial administrators in higher education.

Miguel's passion for student support programs stems from his experience as a first-generation college student who benefited from these services himself. Through his work, Miguel is dedicated to promoting student success and ensuring that every student has access to the support they need to achieve their goals.

Christian DeJesus currently serves as an Academic & Transfer Counselor for the Male Initiative for Leadership & Education. Christian earned his Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Westfield State University and is working on his M. Ed in Higher Education Administration. Christian's professional experience has been centered on supporting all students in finding their voice and creating a positive rich educational experience as well as coaching students with career and professional developmental needs. Being First- Generation himself, Christian is committed to empowering students as they navigate through their experience in Higher Education.

Bachelor's in psychology, working on a master's in education, Higher Education Administration

Melvin Tejada Academic and Transfer counselor for the MILE program (Male Initiative for Leadership and Education). I've been in higher education for about two years. Started off in financial aid at Westfield State University as a financial aid counselor and after a little time there moved to Springfield Technical Community College.

Melvin has a bachelor's in business administration and working on a Master's in Education, specifically in Higher Education

11. Developing a College Access Mindset Through Staff Training

Learn about implementation of a professional development series rooted in social emotional learning competencies that helped our counselors learn how to adjust their practices to work with the unique needs to of low-income students. These practices have taken the traditional approach of finding out what the student wants to study and replacing it with: "Who do you want to become in college?" This series approached topics such as the history of college access, student self-efficacy, understanding intersecting identities and student relationship building. At the conclusion of the series, staff began to exhibit the social emotional learning competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making. Growth in these competencies sets up the framework to future success in developing a college access mindset in your staff.

Room: Percival 108

Moderator: Dr. Rose Boulay, *Springfield Promise Administrator, Springfield Public Schools*

Speaker(s): Dr. Alexander Patturelli, *Director of Undergraduate Admission, Regis College*, **Emily Turcotte**, *Academic Success Coordinator for Peer-Led Instruction at Framingham State University*

Dr. Alexander Patturelli is the Director of Undergraduate Admission at Regis College in Weston, MA. After receiving his bachelor's in Business Management at Stonehill College, he went on to receive a master's in Strategic Communication from Regis College and a doctorate in Higher Education Administration at Northeastern University. His research was centered on improving the college admissions process for low-income students. This research culminated in a training program for admission professionals rooted in social emotional competencies. With more than seven years of experience in enrollment and communication, he has led strategy development pursuant to the institutional goals of increasing higher education access for underserved student populations, onboarding of new staff members, management of the operation budget, oversight of internal and partner driven marketing campaigns and data driven decision making to pursue enrollment as well as retention goals at the university. My passions include college access initiatives for students and building relationships as a catalyst for students feeling a sense of belonging on campus. Having grown up in Massachusetts as a first-generation college student, I am particularly passionate about working with student populations in New England. Additionally, in alignment with my research, I have begun to pursue the integration of social emotional frameworks into team building to foster staff development and retention. Outside of work I enjoy spending my time with my wife and son as well as our dog, Luna in our home north of Boston.

Emily Turcotte is the current academic coach and coordinator of peer tutoring, former Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admission at Regis College. Emily earned her M. Ed at Regis College and her BA from Framingham State University.

12. Supporting Students with Disabilities to Ensure Post-Secondary Readiness and Success

To ensure that students with disabilities are college and career ready, there are supports, resources, and options available. In this session, you will learn how to involve parents in Individuals Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) transition planning. The presenter will share information about ABLE accounts, saving accounts that can be helpful for students with disabilities to help with college and other life expenses such as assistive technology & specified program. Hear from two educators who have had success with this work and who will share strategies and experiences in preparing students with disabilities for life after high school.

Room: Percival 209

Moderator: Jennifer Bento-Pinyoun, *Director of MEFA Pathway*

Speaker: Adam Hartwell, *MEFA, Community Outreach Manager for MEFA Savings Programs*, **Jenna Shales**, *Director of Student Accessibility Services, Bridgewater State University*, **Sarah Parker**, *Assistant Director of Student Accessibility Services, Wentworth Institute of Technology*

Adam Hartwell advocates and promotes the Attainable Savings Program, Massachusetts ABLE Account program. This is a specialized, tax advantaged, investment account that allows individuals to save for educational and financial goals while protecting their federal benefits.

Adam joined MEFA in 2022 and is a National Award-winning DSP with over 20 years of experience working in community advocacy, developmental disability supports, and education. In his role at MEFA, Adam works with a wide range of national, state, and local organizations and individuals to offer education and training on MEFA's Attainable Savings Plan.

Adam can be reached on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/adam-hartwell/>

Sarah Parker has an M.S. Ed Simmons University in Assistive Technology, and a BA from Bridgewater State University - Communication Sciences & Disorders

Jenna Shales oversees Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at Bridgewater State University. It is through this office that students with disabilities seek academic and community accommodations in addition to

countless opportunities related to advocacy and leadership development. Jenna holds a Master of Science in Forensic Mental Health Counseling and has served the disability community for over a decade through her work for various non-profit adult service providers and volunteerism on multiple boards and committees centered on the idea of empowering individuals with disabilities and supporting communities to do the same.

Jenna has a Master of Science, Forensic Mental Health Counseling.

13. What's Next? Getting Started on Career – Massachusetts Community Colleges

The Workforce Divisions at each of the 15 community colleges across Massachusetts play a critical role in providing training into upwardly mobile careers. With high school graduations behind us, there are many high school graduates who have selected not to pursue an associate degree, attend a 4-year institution, or take part in technical school this fall. We want to take this opportunity to share some of the short-term opportunities available that you may not even know exist at a community college - training for careers in clean energy, manufacturing, health care, education and so much more.

Room: Percival 103

Moderator: Sharon McLaughlin, *Education Advisor, Talent Search, MassEdCO*

Speaker: Lisa Carchia, *Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges*

14. Advising Low-income Students into Postsecondary Programs that Lead to Well-Paying Careers

Low-income students are investing thousands of dollars and hours on a college education, yet for too many of them, it isn't paying off. The lack of clearly marked paths to well-paying careers is contributing to the erosion of faith in the value of a postsecondary education and a decline in college enrollment, particularly for students of color and those who are seeking an alternative to the traditional four-year degree. High school and college advisors -- and their students -- need more information to understand their local labor market and to identify a variety of postsecondary programs that lead to financially rewarding careers. NextGen Talent will present its framework and tools for making advising more career-focused and evidence-based, which include labor market literacy tools and a high-value postsecondary program finder. We cannot equitably counsel all students or narrow the racial wealth gap without a new approach to advising.

Room: Percival 108

Moderator: Steve Winston, *Director, GEAR UP, Worcester North High School, MassEdCO*

Speaker(s): Norma Rey-Alicea, *Founder, NextGen Talent*, **Orquidia Paulino**, *Asst. Director, NextGen Talent*

Norma Rey-Alicea (she/ella) is the Executive Director and co-founder of NextGen Talent. She has dedicated her career to the development of new educational models and career advancement solutions to close the opportunity gap for low-income students, with a focus on Latinx, Black, and immigrant students. Prior to NextGen Talent, she worked for Jobs for the Future (JFF), where she co-developed its Best Bets Services, providing professional training and tools to help students find career pathways meeting their interests and filling regional employer needs. Earlier in her career, Norma worked for the Hispanic Office of Planning and Evaluation (HOPE) in Jamaica Plain. As HOPE's Director of Tutorial Services, she designed curricula, taught, and managed tutorial services for low-income Latinx students attending the Boston Public Schools. She is a proud indigenous Guarani Latina from Jamaica Plain, as well as a community activist on racial justice issues, affordable housing, and the rights of indigenous peoples and immigrants.

Orquidia Paulino (she/ella) is the Assistant Director of NextGen Talent. Orquidia joins the NGT team from student affairs in higher education, supporting students through their ongoing development in the college setting. As a first-generation Dominican-American, Orquidia is passionate about bridging the educational gap that exists for low-income, first-generation collegegoers, and students of color.

Orquidia has a Master's in College Student Personnel from the University of Rhode Island and a BA in Modern Languages from the University of Massachusetts Lowell.

[LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/orquidia-p/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/orquidia-p/)

15. Expanding College and Career Options Through Online Learning

A partnership with online learning provider can expand schools' program of studies. This will allow students the opportunity to pursue interests that they may not have had the chance to otherwise. In this presentation, I will discuss how VHS Learning, a local non-profit with 26 years of experience has opened new pathways for students to explore college majors and careers in fields that previously didn't exist. I will share case studies of students that had life changing experiences from being able to pursue their interests on a deeper level.

Room: Percival 108

Moderator: Taryn Tomkins, *Director of Professional Development and Staff Support for GEAR UP MA*

Speaker(s): Alysha Hearn, *VHS Learning*

Alysha Hearn is the Associate Vice President of School Services at VHS Learning. She has over 10 years of experience in the education management field and has led operations, academics, sales, and partnerships teams during her career. Prior to VHS Learning she spent many years working in the international education industry and loves the global environment that VHS Learning provides its students. She brings her passion for customer care and smooth processes to the school services role at VHS Learning. Alysha has a BA in Art from Earlham College and an M.S. in Global Studies and International Relations from Northeastern University.

Alysha has a BA in Art from Earlham College, MS in Global Studies, and International Relations from Northeastern University

16. Early College: A New Vision for Dual Enrollment

Is your work with students guided by the principles of #EquitableAccess, #AcademicPathways, #EnhancedStudentSupport, #ConnectionToCareer, and #DeepPartnerships? If these sound good to you, you should attend this session to learn how Early College in Massachusetts is growing. You'll hear from practitioners working to offer this innovative college access and success program to high school students. A panel of direct service providers and administrators from K-12 and higher education will share an Early College overview and their experiences with the program. The session will answer your questions about how you can join the Early College movement and how this initiative can help your students build their vision for their future by taking college courses in high school.

Room: Percival 209

Moderator: Tchorzky Eugene, *UB/UBMS Academic Resource Counselor*

Speaker(s): Andrew Goodwin, *Director of Early College and Dual Enrollment*, **Shaunti Phillips**, *Early College Counselor- Mount Wachusett Community College*, **Melissa Chisholm**, *Early College Coordinator- Gardner High School*, **Alex Navarro**, *Dual Enrollment Coordinator, Fitchburg State University*

Andrew Goodwin has worked in promoting college access and success with a focus on low-income and first-generation college students for more than 15 years. In this time, he has been an Advisor, Testing and Tutoring Coordinator, Academic Resource Specialist, Adjunct Professor, and Grant Director at the university and community college levels. He has held various roles on the boards of the New England Educational Opportunity Association, Massachusetts Educational Opportunity Association, The Fitchburg High School Improvement Council, and the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center. He holds a B.A. and an M.A. in American History from Framingham State College and Fitchburg State University respectively as well as a Graduate Certificate in Non-Profit Management and Leadership from Boston University's Questrom School of Business. He is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from UMass Lowell.

Shaunti Phillips is currently an academic counselor for the Early College Academy at Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC). I have worked in various college access roles at MWCC for the past 18 years. My experience includes advising, Trio, Gear Up, dual enrollment and early college. As an underrepresented, first generation college student myself, it has always been a passion of mine to help provide equitable opportunities for students and to help students succeed. Prior to working in college access, I was a mentoring specialist where I recruited and trained mentors to work with children and youth at a local non-profit organization. Shaunti has a Bachelor of Arts, Psychology - University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Master of Science, School Counseling - Fitchburg State University.

Melissa Chisholm

Alex Navarro



