

# The Mount Observer

“Voices of the students of Mount Wachusett Community College”

November 22, 2024

VOLUME 19, ISSUE 3

12 PAGES

## MWCC Mascot Changes Go to Vote Lions, (No Tigers), or Bears. Oh, My!

By Jordan Chila

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

with reporting by

Elysian Alder

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

From Nov. 11–20, 2024, Mount Wachusett Community College held a vote to decide whether to replace its current mascot, Marty the Mountain Lion. Marty became mascot back in 2016 and has had updated designs over the years. The college’s marketing department feels the school could revamp the identity of the mascot to be more tailored to the spirit of MWCC, while some in the community expressed

reluctance to see Marty retired.

The college offered a range of alternative mascot options for consideration, however the polls have narrowed it down to two options - the bear and the mountain lion. Beyond selecting a specific mascot, the survey asked what factors were important when choosing as well as what specifies their relationship to the college. If a new mascot is chosen, the school could roll it out as early as this coming spring, however, some people may not be ready for this change to come so soon.

There has been debate if the school needs to completely do



Image from MWCC

away with Marty or just rebrand the design. Kathy Matson, director of student life, sees the need for design changes but opposes a full-on change to a new mascot. Matson stated, “I feel that we should absolutely update the logo, but the mountain lion should stay.” Matson further elaborated by saying there is no “logical” reason to change it. “I’m not aware of any student-initiated push to change the mascot, and everything we do at MWCC should be student centered,” she said.

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## Americans Re-Elect Trump for Second Nonconsecutive Term as 47th President

### MWCC Students Share Their Thoughts

By Benjamin Heffner

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

On the national stage, former President Donald Trump secured victory in the 2024 U.S. presidential election, defeating Vice President Kamala Harris to become the 47th president of the United States. Trump became the first president since Grover Cleveland to win two nonconsecutive terms. He earned 312 electoral votes to Harris’ 226, sweeping all seven battleground states. Trump also won the national popular vote, making him the first Republican to do so in 20 years.

Republicans regained control of the Senate with a 53-47 majority, flipping Democratic-held seats in Montana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Democrats held onto seats in Arizona, Maryland,

Michigan, and Wisconsin. Republicans also won the House of Representatives, securing a government trifecta.

#### State

For voters in Massachusetts, federal-level races unfolded as expected. Vice President Harris

won the Bay State’s 11 electoral votes, Democratic U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren was re-elected to a third term over Republican challenger John Deaton, and all nine Democratic U.S. representatives were re-elected.

The biggest question was how

voters would decide on the five ballot measures.

Voters passed Question 1, which repeals the MCAS graduation requirement, with 59% voting in favor. Another

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“Election Results” >>>

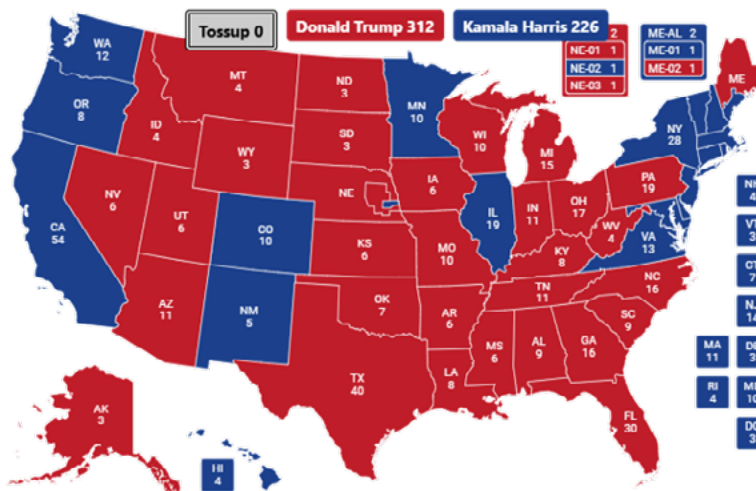


Image provided by Benjamin Heffner

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# Mascot Changes

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Matson was part of the committee that worked on the project to change the mascot, alongside Sabine Dupoux, Assistant Dean, Nia Carignan, Associate Director of Public Relations & Communications, and Stephanie England, Director of Marketing. “The first email I received about the project was on July 16th and it simply stated, “a rebrand of the college’s mascot.” It did not specify changing the mascot completely,” said Matson. She went on to further elaborate that, to her knowledge, no surveys were requested or received from anyone outside of the marketing department prior to moving forward with the mascot change. “Ultimately, we paid for services to change the mascot without knowing if students, staff, and faculty even wanted to make a change,” said Matson.

With recent updates to the remaining options for the mascot, England was asked if designs were readily available for students and faculty to aid in their decision. She detailed a two-step phase that consists of first narrowing down the mascot contestants and then having another poll for the design. “In phase two, visual concepts will be developed for

the chosen animal, and students, employees, and the community will be invited to vote on the final design,” she said.

England further elaborated, stating, “With the recent launch of free college...we feel it’s the perfect time to refresh the mascot to better reflect our current students, staff, and faculty.”

When asked how the school gained funds for this, England gave insight that the marketing department had funds ready and set aside for this to happen. She also gave awareness into how much the renovation of a new mascot could be. “While we do not have a finalized cost due to the inclusive research and feedback loop...we anticipate the total cost to be no more than \$5,000,” said England. She further expressed how if Marty is to remain, she is happy with the expenses made in order to keep a mascot that will uphold the MWCC spirit and values.

James Vander Hooven, President of Mount Wachusett Community College, confirmed how the funds were allotted for the development of a Mascot. Vander Hooven stated, “The funds used for this were part of the institution’s fiscal budget that I authorized and then received approval from the Board of Trustees.” The funds have been

used to hire and partner with the School Branding Agency based out of Hyde Park, NY for the design process, including creating a mythology and backstory for the mascot.

Others shared Matson’s earlier concerns. Sophia Spier, a Liberal Art and Science Major, voiced thoughts on the process. “Looking at this pragmatically, I think it could be a waste of resources to rebrand the school entirely.” Spier further elaborated how the school could simply rebrand some versions of Marty to a more “serious, less cartoon-like” version, but keep the more cartoonish aesthetic on things like the Garrison Center and Marty’s Market.

While some would love to keep Marty the Mountain Lion, others are more open to the idea of a change. Science major, Jay Morris, said, “I would like the new mascot to have a meaning behind it. I like Marty, but if the new mascot represents MWCC better, then I like the idea of changing the mascot.”

Why the marketing department didn’t use a graphic design student to work something up was brought to question when the conflict of funds and design were present. In 2016 MWCC marketing department enlisted Dylan Safford to help with the

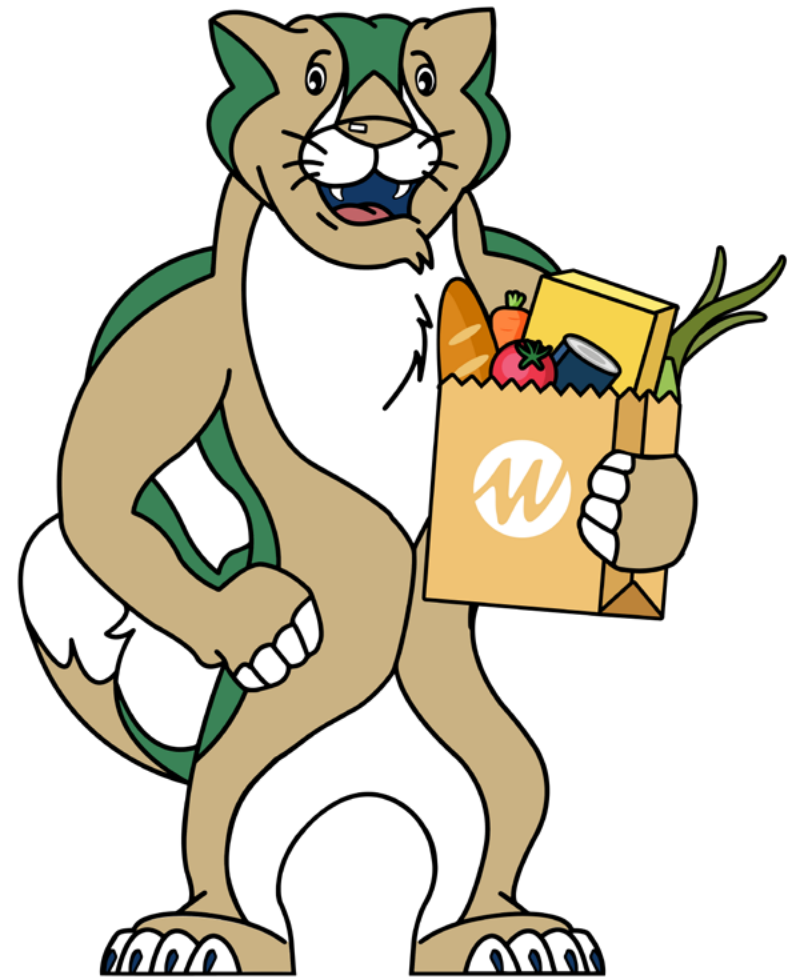


Image from MWCC

creation of Marty we see today. England expressed the need to branch out because of timeliness. “This rebranding effort is on a defined timeline to align with the replacement of current materials and ongoing marketing needs, which wouldn’t be conducive to student schedules.” However, she is excited for student input with the voting process.

Either way, the new mascot will

be chosen by the votes it receives, even while some students and staff have questions about demand or necessity for a change of mascot in the first place. President Vander Hooven would not disclose his vote, but did feel good about the process. “I really feel that the selection should be made by the majority of the voters- they should play a big role in the selection, not just me.”

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

# Election Results

>>> continued from page 1

closely watched ballot measure, which would raise the minimum wage for tipped workers, was rejected with 64.4% voting against it, marking a huge win for local businesses. Other approved measures included a proposal to audit the state legislature and another allowing ride-share drivers to form unions. A measure to legalize certain psychedelic substances was rejected.

## Student Opinions

Mount Wachusett Community College students provided their thoughts on the presidential race and the state ballot measures in the days following the election.

Phoebe Theall, 18, a Political Science major, expressed concern for the country as both a woman and an open supporter of Kamala Harris. “This outcome feels incredibly heartbreaking, and I truly worry about our

rights,” Theall said. However, she continued to have faith that brighter days for America are ahead. “The indomitable human spirit is difficult to kill, and I do believe the American people will not allow this to suppress them”.

In contrast, Jenny Karagosian, 37, a Human Services major, expressed concern about state ballot questions 2 and 5. “MCAS is designed to show where a school is at as a whole and

what needs to be worked on. A student shouldn’t have to stay back because their school isn’t giving them the education they need or what’s on the test,” said Karagosian. As for Question 5, Karagosian explained, “I’ve been in the restaurant business since I was 18 and rely on tips to pay my bills to supplement what my non-profit paycheck doesn’t provide. If [Question 5] passed, I would lose my tips, food prices would

skyrocket, and half the restaurant would lose their jobs because they wouldn’t want to pay us all.”

Desiree Leader, 61, an Interdisciplinary Studies major, was so disappointed by the election results that it brought her to tears. “I have been voting since the early 80’s. I have voted for people who have won and I have voted for people who have lost. This is the first time I ever sat down and cried over the election results.”





# How High Schoolers in Central Mass Are Getting a Diploma at MWCC

By Benjamin Heffner

OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

In June 2024, Bryce Caron graduated from Gardner High School with not only a high school diploma, but college credits as well under his belt. Caron earned his college credits through the *North Central Massachusetts Early College Academy*, a division of MWCC's *Early College & Dual Enrollment* Department. He is now continuing his studies at Springfield College majoring in Psychology with two minors in Athletic Coaching and Sports Analytics. "Dual Enrollment really helped me get an understanding of what to expect at a college level and made the transition from high school to college so easy. I was able to make so many meaningful connections and spend the time I would have spent stressing on the small things with friends," Caron said.

Of the approximately 3,831 students enrolled in the Fall 2024 semester at MWCC, approximately 598 are high school students earning college credits, and some even their associates degree, all while simultaneously earning their high school diploma, as well as saving an average of \$30,000 in college tuition and fees. The program was founded 20 years ago in 2004 and is currently led by *K-12 Partnerships and Civic Engagement* Dean Fagan Forhan and Assistant Director Sara Vettese.

The first division of the program

was Gateway to College, designed specifically to assist high school dropouts. It received support and assistance from the *Gates Foundation*, founded by Microsoft founder Bill Gates and his then-wife Melissa. "We wanted to help students enter a more relaxed environment," Vettese said. However, there soon became a problem. "We were having students fail high school intentionally to be accepted," Forhan said.

So, in 2010, the second division, named Pathways, was introduced. This division provided twenty academically motivated high school students, per year, with the opportunity to earn their high school diploma and an associate's degree while completing their junior and senior years of high school taking courses at MWCC.

While both the Gateway and Pathways divisions were thriving, there remained a gap for students who were not struggling academically, but did not meet the rigorous standards to be accepted into Pathways. However, as the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education noticed the success of other dual enrollment programs across the state, more programs were being added and financially supported.

The term dual enrollment is often described as "a course in which enrolled high school students receive credit as high school and as college students." While programs vary from state to state, they all share the same goal of motivating students to



Image from MWCC

help them build their academic career and help them transition from high school to college. Dual enrollment students have their own office separate from the Advising Center, located on the Gardner campus in room H348, where they work with their college advisor and high school guidance counselor to meet graduation and transfer requirements. Most dual enrollment students take their courses at the Gardner campus, though some take courses online or on their high school campus. The most common courses on campus, like College Writing I and Statistics, have sections just for early college students. However, students can also take

traditional college courses based on their interests.

One professor involved with Dual Enrollment since its early conception is philosophy professor Dan Soucy. Soucy has taught early college students in all his courses and will teach three early college sections for the Spring 2025 semester: Medical Ethics, Interdisciplinary Capstone, and Intro to Philosophical Issues. Soucy said he was excited when he learned about the dual enrollment programs. "I always thought that if I learned philosophy in high school, I would've learned it in college." He also talked about the impact that dual enrollment has on high school students. "A

lot of students are unafraid to ask questions which makes me a better teacher. The majority of students really want and are eager to be at the college level."

Today, there are 7 Dual Enrollment divisions at MWCC, ranging from traditional programs like Gateway, Pathways, and ECA, to niche programs like Automotive and Fire Science. All dual enrollment students have access to the same resources as traditional MWCC students. Forhan & Vettese have said the amount of confidence that students possess is beyond noticeable. "Students are extremely confident in their own abilities. They are more prepared than their high school peers."

Have your own opinions on current events, hot-button issues, or events on campus?  
Write an opinion piece and send it to [mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu](mailto:mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu)

It may just end up in our next issue!



# Student Profile: Ian Dolan

## Trombone and TV



**Ian Dolan**

*Photo courtesy of Ian Dolan*

**By Melanie Mitcheson**  
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

From trombone practice to filming TV news, Ian Dolan has an impressive range of skills.

Initially interested in computer-generated imagery (CGI), Dolan, a 19-year-old Mount Wachusett second year student, now works at his town's cable access outlet, where he conducts interviews and films the nitty gritty of his local town meetings. Dolan has a full schedule. His five MWCC classes and two workdays with Templeton Community Television (TCTV) don't leave him much time for his passion: the tenor trombone, a rewarding chance encounter that all started back in elementary school.

When the band director was assigning instruments, fourth-grader Dolan signed up to play bass guitar, already imagining himself taking the stage as the school band's rock star bassist. Unfortunately, all the other boys harbored similar ambitions.

"We went down the list," Dolan remembered, "and trombone was the only other option."

A decade later, Dolan plays classical and jazz tenor trombone with the Fitchburg State Symphony Orchestra and the Fitchburg State Concert Band and describes music as a "huge part of my life." From jazz to Eminem to Taylor Swift, he appreciates a wide range of genres depending on his mood but affirms "classical is where my heart is: both playing and listening."

An openness to hear out all the options seems to be a Dolan characteristic. While he is conscious that some students have their end goals and life paths already decided, he questions where his future and his affinities will take him. But his current job may hold a clue: after working

in community television, Dolan discovered a desire to be "on the front lines of the news" whether as a producer, director, or the journalist chasing stories. "I kind of love all of it," he admitted.

Although he aims to become a well-rounded pro, comfortable on or offscreen, for now Dolan feels most at ease behind the scenes, which in his case means behind a camera filming or in front of a computer editing footage. His classes at the Mount are the next step on the academic journey toward a career in journalism. After earning an associate degree in Liberal Arts: Media & Communications from Mount Wachusett, he plans to transfer into Fitchburg State's media program ("I don't want to break the bank," he explains).

Qualifying the cost of rent

and the housing market as "absolutely absurd," Dolan reflected on living at home while trying to put money aside. "I'd like to feel a lot more secure, both financially and within," he remarked. With the costs of education and housing prohibitively high, his eventual goal—finding his own place, graduating with a bachelors, and "becoming more established"—is, for now, a dream deferred.

But with Dolan's flexibility, hard work, and a measure of philosophy, it remains to be seen for how long. "Every moment definitely has challenges," said Dolan, commenting on the trombone and the journey he embarked on from the unknown to mastery of the instrument. "But that's just like everything in life, really."

# Student Profile: Samuel Nieves

## From Dance Instructor to Social Club CEO

**By Kent Yang**  
STAFF WRITER

Entering the diverse doors of Mount Wachusett Community College is an ambitious student by the name of Samuel Nieves. Nieves is a full-time student pursuing a degree in Business Administration. He grew up in Andover, Massachusetts where he was raised by his Irish grandmother, but has been living the past eight years of his life in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. Nieves comes from a heritage which blends both the Puerto Rican culture and Irish culture. As a proud first-generation American, Samuel Nieves is determined to meet all of his goals.

In 2011, Nieves graduated high school and would then attend Salem State University for a year.

On the side, Nieves was a very passionate dancer, so he instructed dance. Through Nieves' dance career, he won awards such as the Young Choreographer Award in multiple dance competitions, four years in a row. However, his life took a different turn when he found bigger opportunities in Fitchburg where he was managing clubs. Eventually, feeling that the traditional networking scene was bland, lackluster and boring, Nieves aimed to recreate the networking scene where he envisioned a more vibrant, engaging, and friendly environment for people to connect. With this, Nieves found his own calling and created the social club called Social Light.

As the CEO of Social Light, Nieves aims to build a community

full of business-minded individuals and entrepreneurs. A success story Nieves shared was starting an initiative where men's professional attire was collected and donated to men in need, ensuring they had something to wear during events and in interviews, giving them the confidence they need. "I started it because I knew how confident I felt in a suit, and I believe everyone should have that opportunity," explained Nieves.

Nieves considers himself a workaholic and some of the biggest challenges he faces are being too hard on himself. To overcome this, he has learned the importance of "letting things go and delegating responsibilities." His resilience and self-awareness has helped him navigate the

challenges of being a business owner and student.

Outside of work, Nieves also dedicates his time to organizations such as the Student Government Association (SGA), the Sexuality And Gender Alliance (SAGA), and participates in work-study programs at the theater. Nieve stated he is "...loving the Mount, both the professors and staff have been great!"

For those entering the field of business administration, Nieves offered this advice: "Keep envisioning your dreams, because manifestation is powerful." He encapsulates the determination and innovation that often defines the First-Generation American experience. "Just because other people can't envision it (your



**Samuel Nieves**

*Photo courtesy of Samuel Nieves*

dreams) doesn't mean it can't happen," he added. His journey from dance instructor to social club CEO is a testament to his hard work, grit, and creativity—and it's just the beginning of his legacy.





# The Few, the Proud, the Timeless

## The United States Marine Corps Turns 249



From left: Tony Sivos, Army Vet; Peter Sennett, Marine Vet; Bob Mayer, Army vet; Buddy Shorey, Navy vet; Elmer Eubanks-Archbold, Army vet; Kent Yang, Marine vet; Charles Ellis, Army Vet.

Photo by Sarah Savoie from Student Support Services.

By **Kent Yang**  
STAFF WRITER

Nov. 10 marks the birthday of one of the world's most prestigious and formidable fighting forces: the United States Marine Corps. On this day, Marines around the globe celebrate the history of past and current Marines through various traditions, most notably the Marine Corps Birthday Ball and the ceremonial cake cutting.

As Marine Corps tradition has it: "The first piece of cake is given to the Guest of Honor. Traditionally, the second piece is given to the oldest Marine, then handing the third piece to the youngest Marine signifying the passing of experience and knowledge from the old to the young of our Corps."

In the accompanying photo, the Guest of Honor at Mount Wachusett Community College's

cake cutting ceremony hosted by the Veteran Services department was Bob Mayer, Army Veteran and Director of Veteran Services; the oldest Marine in the room was Peter Sennett, a Marine Corp Veteran Officer; the youngest Marine in the room was none other than myself, a Marine Corp enlisted veteran.

For those unfamiliar with the United States Marine Corps, here's a brief history. The Marine Corps is older than the United States itself. It was

major conflict, defending the United States and its interests against all adversaries.

Some notable battles in Marine Corps history include the Battle of Belleau Wood in World War I, where Marines earned the nickname "Devil Dogs" for their ferocity, the Battle of Guadalcanal in 1942, the Battle of Iwo Jima in 1945, the Battle of Hue City in 1968, and campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

What sets the Marine Corps apart from other branches, such

any branch of service, there will be a chain of command. As a Marine Corps veteran, I can say with confidence that, regardless of who holds political office, the Corps remains dedicated to serving the people and upholding the interests of the United States above all else.

"First to Fight" isn't just a motto—it's a core element of Marine identity, representing our unwavering readiness and commitment to defend against any threat. The Marine mindset

**"The first piece of cake is given to the Guest of Honor. Traditionally, the second piece is given to the oldest Marine, then handing the third piece to the youngest Marine signifying the passing of experience and knowledge from the old to the young of our Corps."**

established on Nov. 10, 1775, when the Continental Congress passed a resolution drafted by John Adams stating that "two battalions of Marines be raised." These Marines, known as the Continental Marines, served under the leadership of Capt. Samuel Nicholas. Their mission was to protect ships and Navy vessels and to carry out amphibious assaults.

At the end of the Revolutionary War, the Continental Marines disbanded, only to be re-established as the United States Marine Corps on July 11, 1798. Since then, the Corps has participated in every

as the Army or Navy? While the Marine Corps traditionally specializes in amphibious assaults, it is the only branch that can fight effectively on land, in the air, or at sea. The battle record speaks for itself. Marines are the only branch in service that can be deployed to anywhere around the world within 24 hours. For short-term deployments, the Corps does not require congressional approval; the authority comes directly from the president or commander-in-chief.

Speaking of the President, with the election just behind us, it's worth remembering in

is a weapon in itself. We pride ourselves on our discipline, lethality, and ability to secure Mission Success. As one of the most agile and rapidly deployable branches, Marines all around the nation are always prepared to respond to any threat or crisis at a moment's notice. The Marine Corps' core values of honor, courage, and commitment have guided us for 249 years, and they continue to define the legacy of the Corps today.

This year, the Marine Corps celebrates its 249th birthday. Happy birthday to all Marines—past, present, and future.

## GET INVOLVED!

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



# ASK THE OBSERVER

## What is the best class you've taken at the Mount?



Jordan Chila, 31, Professional Writing, Editor-in-Chief:

I have two that I've really enjoyed since being at MWCC. The first is the Journalism 1 class that I took with Professor Fuller. My second class that I really liked—which I didn't think I was going to, to be quite honest—was my Speech class that I took with Professor Steele.



Elysian Alder, 27, Professional Writing, Editor-in-Chief:

I think that the class that has had the biggest impact on me as a whole was also Professor Fuller's Journalism 1, and 2, and 3 class, but especially Journalism 1. But I think one of the best organized classes I've taken was last spring, and it was Professor Roche's Massachusetts Poets class. I also really liked Women's Literature, with Professor Pitkiewicz.



Princess Yeboah, 19, Professional Writing, Assistant Editor:

I have to agree with both of you when you both said Journalism 1. That has to be one of my favorite classes I've taken at the Mount. And another favorite is one I'm taking right now, and it's Professor Valois' Creative Writing class.



Vana Mangiarelli, 29, Professional Writing, Assistant Editor:

I agree with you on Creative Writing, Princess. I think Professor Valois' class gets the organization award for me, but another class that I really liked, in terms of those that made an impact on me, was Environmental Science with Professor Conn.

## Why?

Jordan Chila, 31, Professional Writing, Editor-in-Chief:

I enjoyed learning a whole new aspect and background of writing that I didn't really think about before. Professor Fuller did a great job teaching the class, and I think that she does really well relating to her students and listening to their needs.



Elysian Alder, 27, Professional Writing, Editor-in-Chief:

For sure. I think a lot of the feedback and support that she constantly gave me and the confidence that she had—and still has—in me and my writing...it was like nothing else. It's so crazy for someone to have as much faith in me as she does. It made a huge difference in the class experience for me, plus—not to be cheesy—I think it's just generally been life-changing.



Princess Yeboah, 19, Professional Writing, Assistant Editor:

Same. I love Katie [Fuller] so much. She has this way of pushing you—if she sees you have a great story idea or even just the beginning of one, or something you're interested in, she'll literally track you down and encourage you to pursue it. She's passionate.



Jordan Chila, 31, Professional Writing, Editor-in-Chief:

Passionate...exactly. I think the way to determine if a class is good is your professor and the people you're taking it with. If you find like-minded people in your class, you're going to really enjoy it. For me, Journalism 1 had both.



Elysian Alder, 27, Professional Writing, Editor-in-Chief:

I'm curious, Jordan, why Speech, too?



Jordan Chila, 31, Professional Writing, Editor-in-Chief:

I didn't think I was going to enjoy it, to be quite honest. But Professor Steele was a great teacher—very laid back, but her expectations were clear. It was another new learning process for writing, and since that's my major, I really enjoyed learning that aspect and gaining the confidence to give those kinds of speeches when I probably wouldn't have been as comfortable doing it before.



Princess Yeboah, 19, Professional Writing, Assistant Editor:

That's kind of how I felt about Journalism. The more I started getting involved in it, the more it really stepped me out of my comfort zone because I had to go out and talk to people. But you also just get to do your own thing, which I think is really cool.







Vana Mangiarelli, 29, Professional Writing, Assistant Editor:

I'm taking Journalism next semester, so now I'm excited to see how it is.



Elysian Alder, 27, Professional Writing, Editor-in-Chief:

Humble Katie is totally going to hate reading all of these nice things we've said about her and her class, I can tell you that much. But you said Environmental Science with Professor Conn was your pick, right?



Vana Mangiarelli, 29, Professional Writing, Assistant Editor:

Yep! It was a rigorous course that involved a lot of video watching and article reading, but I think that's a very good way to approach environmental concepts. Professor Conn gives you these really good avenues that you get to dig into and research with. I feel like it's also had one of the biggest impacts on me of any course that I've taken at this college.



Elysian Alder, 27, Professional Writing, Editor-in-Chief:

Would you say that that's like a personal life impact?



Vana Mangiarelli, 29, Professional Writing, Assistant Editor:

Oh, yeah. I just feel like so much of what we learned stuck with me in a way that other courses maybe haven't. The material sticks, but with history, you learn about something that happened a billion years ago, but with environmental science, it's ongoing. It's something I can actually contribute to. And I was astonished by how little I knew. You think you know, 'Okay, don't use plastic,' but then you learn about microplastics in the water, the impact of PFAs, and even the chemicals in scented candles and air fresheners. The depth of knowledge that should be right there but isn't—it's crazy.

## Any honorable mentions?

Elysian Alder, 27, Professional Writing, Editor-in-Chief:

Going back to the Massachusetts Poets class with Professor Roche last spring...I thought that she did such an amazing job organizing it, researching it, and making it as engaging as possible. Poetry isn't usually my thing, but I came away from that class with a changed perspective on it. That'll probably be one of the most memorable classes for me.



Jordan Chila, 31, Professional Writing, Editor-in-Chief:

I think it's super important, especially with online learning, that everything needs to be really organized and put together and thought out. Otherwise, students just don't know what to do. There's so much controversy on using Blackboard because it's so hard to use. So having something that's really organized and helpful makes everything so much easier.



Vana Mangiarelli, 29, Professional Writing, Assistant Editor:

Definitely. Like Creative Writing is best organized for me. [Professor Valois'] teaching style and the way she organizes things on Blackboard really target the obstacles for creatives. She gives time in class to write, but also provides space for people to post whatever they're working on, even if it's not the assignment. She meets with us [for the independent study] weekly, and she requires discussion in addition to what we do in class. And she gives poignant, thoughtful feedback.



Princess Yeboah, 19, Professional Writing, Assistant Editor:

I love the way Michelle [Valois] teaches and always helps to improve our work. You can write your own stuff, and she gives you time to just sit and do it. It's crazy how much creativity you can have in just a few minutes. The things I've written—sometimes I just think, 'Wow, did I really write that?'



Elysian Alder, 27, Professional Writing, Editor-in-Chief:

Yeah, this Creative Writing class is probably going to be the one that impacts me the most as a creative person, in my personal writing career.



Jordan Chila, 31, Professional Writing, Editor-in-Chief:

I also ended up liking History of the United States I, with Professor Morris. It was kind of tedious, but I liked it. We had to read the textbook from start to finish, and it was the first time I've ever done that. It was kind of an accomplishment in itself, because I'm like, 'Holy crap. I've never even done that. Who does that?'



Jordan Chila, 31, Professional Writing, Editor-in-Chief:

I feel like I've taken so many things here, and I can pinpoint certain things I really got from each one. Like, 'Oh, I like this' or 'I like that,' or 'This course did this, and I'll never do that again.' It's really interesting to look back.

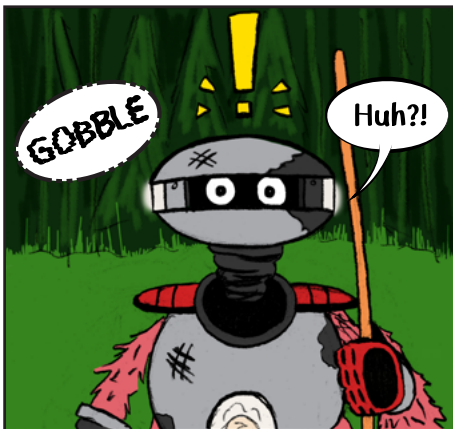
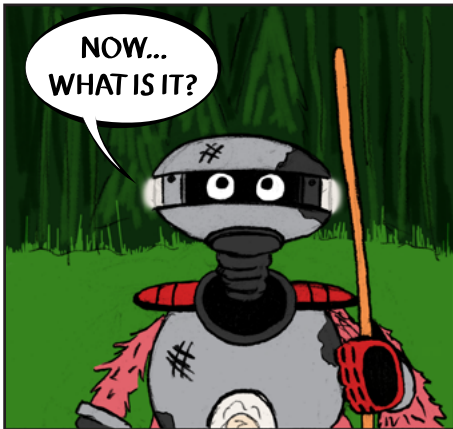




# COMICS

# GUBBINS

Created by Tom Hill Jr.



The Mount Observer Polls presents

# Your Thoughts

## What is your favorite Fall activity?



Want to join in on the fun yourself? Check out the MWCC Mobile App at <https://mwcc.edu/campus-life/mwcc-icconnect-mobile-application/> and get started!

THE EAST WING GALLERY  
Raymond LaFontaine Fine Arts Center

## Copper Giloth

Drawings 2011-2024

November 7- December 5, 2024

Gallery Talk: Friday, Nov. 8 at Noon

Gallery Hours: Mon-Thurs: 8 a.m.– 8 p.m.  
Friday: 8 a.m.– 5 p.m.  
Open during Theatre events  
Closed: Nov. 11, 28, 29

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Mount Wachusett  
Community College  
444 Green Street, Gardner, MA

IMAGE: Valeros: Trees, 2024, digital/photographic drawing, 12 x 16 in.





# WHAT'S COOKIN' AT MWCC

## Grandma's Pierogi Recipe

Submitted by Elysian Alder

### Ingredients

#### Dough

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup water
- 1 large egg
- 2 tsp vegetable oil
- 1 tsp salt

#### Potato Filling

- 1 ½ lbs Yukon Gold potatoes
- 2 ½–3 cups grated cheddar cheese or cheese of your choice (adjust amount for desired cheesiness)
- ¼ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp black pepper
- 1 ½ sticks unsalted butter
- 6–8 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp sour cream

(Optional: Use onions, mushrooms, or drained sauerkraut instead of cheese. If using sauerkraut, skip the sour cream.)

#### Topping

- 1 medium onion, thinly sliced
- 1–2 sticks unsalted butter

(Optional: Use sauerkraut instead of onions.)



### Directions:

#### Step 1: Make the Dough

1. Place the flour in a large bowl and create a well in the center. Add the water, egg, oil, and salt into the well, using a fork to incorporate the flour until a soft dough forms.
2. Transfer the dough to a floured surface and knead until smooth and elastic. Add flour as needed to prevent sticking.
3. Cover the dough with an inverted bowl and let it rest at room temperature for 1 hour.

#### Step 2: Prepare the Filling

1. Peel and cut potatoes into pieces. Boil them in salted water until tender (about 8 minutes).
2. While the potatoes cook, melt the butter in a pan and sauté the garlic until soft but not browned.
3. Drain the potatoes and mash them in a large bowl. Add the cheese, salt, pepper, sour cream, and the butter-garlic mixture. Mix until smooth. Let the filling cool completely.

#### Step 3: Roll and Fill the Dough

1. Divide dough in half. Keep one half covered while working with the other. Roll out dough on a floured surface to about 15 inches round in diameter. Use a round cutter or glass to cut out circles.
2. Place a small ball of cooled filling in center of each circle. Fold the dough over the filling to form a half-moon shape and press the edges to seal tightly; you can use a fork for a textured edge.
3. If the edges don't stick, brush them lightly with water before sealing. Do not leave any gaps.
4. Place the pierogi on a lightly floured tray and cover with a towel.

#### Step 4: Make the Topping

1. Melt butter in a pan and sauté the onions until soft. Set aside. (Or prepare sauerkraut as an alternative topping.)

#### Step 5: Cook the Pierogi

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.
2. Add half of the pierogi and cook for 5 minutes, starting when they float to the surface. Gently stir occasionally to prevent sticking.
3. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the cooked pierogi to a lightly buttered pan. Toss with half of the onion topping.
4. Repeat with the remaining pierogi, adding the rest of the topping.

*This recipe makes roughly 50 pierogi, depending on the size that you make them.*



# WHAT'S COOKIN' AT MWCC

## Hallacas: A Celebration of Family and Heritage in a Venezuelan Thanksgiving Way

Submitted by Regulo Moreno

Cooking a stuffed turkey for Thanksgiving takes time and preparation, but it's a great way to bring the family together and share love and connection. In the same way, Venezuelan hallacas are a special dish that brings everyone together for a shared experience. While some people see food like stuffed turkey or hallacas as just something to eat, for my family, hallacas mean so much more. They connect us to our heritage, show our love, and are a tradition that has been passed down through generations. Each step - mixing the dough, preparing the filling, and folding the plantain leaves - connects us to our history and reminds us of our roots.

This recipe started with my grandmother Celsa, my dad's mom, who passed it on to my mom Judith. My mom then taught it to me and my wife, ensuring the tradition lived on. Hallacas represent our Venezuelan roots and the warmth of our family traditions.

Every Christmas, my mom would turn our kitchen into a lively place where the whole family would come together to make hallacas. Thinking back on those times fills me with nostalgia and gratitude for the love and unity they brought.

### Ingredients

#### Directions:

- Black pepper
- Salt
- Cooking wine
- 4 cups (1 L) of vegetable or corn oil
- 3 beef bouillon cubes
- 5 kg of smoked banana leaves (I used 10 packs of frozen leaves, 500 g each)
- 6 yellow onions, -6 medium white potatoes
- 200 g of annatto seeds
- 3 green bell peppers
- 2 leeks
- 4 green onions
- 10 oz garlic cloves
- 3 red bell peppers
- 18-20 sweet peppers
- 1 ½ kg of beef, pork, and chicken
- 16 oz
- (450 g) of Italian Mix Giardiniera pickles
- 3 oz (80 g) of capers
- 1 bottle of sweet red wine
- 3 packs (1 kg each) of Harina P.A.N
- 12 oz (340 g) of black raisins
- 21 oz (600 g) of green olives

(Makes 40 Hallacas)

#### Preparation of Annatto Oil:

1. Slightly crush the garlic cloves and place them in a small pot with oil and annatto seeds. Heat over medium heat until it simmers.
2. Remove from heat and let it cool.
3. Once at room temperature, strain the oil and discard the seeds.
4. Reserve the annatto oil, as it will be used throughout the hallaca preparation process.

#### Preparation of the Hallaca Filling (Guiso):

1. Thoroughly clean the beef, removing any excess fat or sinew. Dry with paper towels and set aside. Clean the pork and rub it with lemon juice; let it rest for ten minutes, then rinse again.
2. In a large pot, heat the annatto oil, then add onions, scallions, and garlic. Sauté for a few minutes, then add sweet peppers and bell peppers. Remove the sautéed vegetables with a large spoon and increase the heat.
3. In the same pot, sear the pork over high heat, then remove and set aside with the sautéed vegetables. Repeat the process with the beef and pork ribs.
4. Return all the sautéed vegetables and meats, then add the remaining ingredients: tomatoes, piloncillo (or raw sugar), olives, paprika, cornmeal, beef broth, and wine. Mix everything well with a wooden spoon and cook over low heat for about 90 minutes.
5. Finally, add the capers, parsley, and pickled vegetables. Continue cooking on low heat until the filling is relatively dry.
6. Let the filling rest for about two hours before using. Carefully remove the bones from the pork ribs, and the filling will be ready.
7. Note that no salt is added to the filling, as the olives and capers usually provide enough. Taste and adjust salt if necessary.

#### Preparation of the Dough:

1. Combine 10 cups of chicken broth In a large bowl, and gradually add the pre-cooked cornmeal, ideally with the help of another person so you can mix with both hands. Add the annatto oil and continue kneading until the dough is smooth and uniform.
2. If the dough is sticky, sprinkle in additional cornmeal until it no longer sticks to the surface.
3. Once you transfer the dough to a flat surface and knead further. Once the dough has the desired consistency, divide it into 20 equal portions and form smooth balls. Keep them covered on a tray until ready to assemble.





#### Preparation of the Hallaca Decorations:

1. Peel and thinly slice the onion.
2. Peel, deseed, and slice the bell pepper into thin rings.
3. Shred the chicken breast into large pieces, aiming for about 20 pieces.
4. Drain the capers, olives, and pickled vegetables.
5. Set aside all decorations for assembly.



Image from flickr, by Alex Lanz

#### Assembly and Wrapping of Hallacas:

1. Wash the plantain leaves thoroughly under running water and dry with a cloth. Separate the leaves into three sizes: large (for the base), medium (for wrapping), and small strips (to secure). Lay out all ingredients on a large surface: dough balls, filling, decorations, annatto oil, and leaves.
2. Place a large leaf on the work surface, lightly grease your fingers with annatto oil, and flatten a dough ball on the leaf into a thin circle about 3 mm thick.
3. Add three large spoonfuls of filling in the center of the dough. Top the filling with one onion slice, one bell pepper ring, two capers, one olive, two raisins, and one piece of chicken.
4. Lift the two opposite edges of the leaf and gently bring them together. Hold the hallaca by its weight to ensure the filling stays centered, then carefully roll the edges closed.
5. Fold the two open ends of the leaf towards the back, then wrap the hallaca with a medium-sized leaf for added support. Secure everything with a strip of leaf like a belt, then tie with kitchen string, wrapping three times in both directions.
6. In a large pot, fill halfway with water and add a handful of salt. Once the water is boiling vigorously, carefully place the hallacas in the pot and cook, covered, for 45 minutes.

## WHAT'S COOKIN' AT MWCC

### Matt's Autumn-Inspired Chicken Wings

Submitted by Matthew Infantino

#### Ingredients

- One package of chicken wings.
- ½ Cup Brown Sugar
- 1 tablespoon Garlic Powder
- 1 Tablespoon Onion Power
- 1 Teaspoon ground Ginger Powder
- 1 Teaspoon Cinnamon
- 1/8 - ¼ tsp Nutmeg
- Salt- your call.
- Pepper- your call.
- Honey

#### Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 425.
2. Drizzle Extra Virgin Olive Oil (or whatever you have on hand) over wings and toss with salt and pepper.
3. Add in dry rub mix and toss thoroughly. Spread wing pieces out on baking sheet.
4. Roast in oven until wings turn a golden brown and the skin starts to crisp.
5. Remove from oven, drizzle with honey and sprinkle with salt.
6. Continue roasting for an additional 5-10 minutes.
7. Remove from oven, let stand for 5 minutes and then devour them



Photo by Matthew Infantino



# WHAT'S COOKIN' AT MWCC

## Papa's Stuffing Recipe

This recipe is a family recipe from my husband Nick Johnson - Submitted by Jordan Chila

### Ingredients

- ½ pound ground pork
- ½ pound ground hamburger
- Small diced onion
- 1 can Cream of Mushroom soup
- 1 can of Cream of Chicken soup
- 2 boxes of Stove Top Stuffing
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1 teaspoon of pepper
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon A1 Sauce



Image from Wikimedia Commons, by Dorevabelfiore

### Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
2. Combine pork, hamburger, diced onion, A1 sauce, salt and pepper into a skillet and cook until brown.
3. Follow directions on the StoveTop Box to cook stuffing.
4. In a bowl mix Cream of Mushroom soup, Cream of Chicken soup, stuffing, and meat.
5. Once ingredients are combined, pour them into a casserole dish evenly.
6. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes until it looks golden brown on top.

## See Your Recipe Here!

Send your favorite cooking combos to us at [mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu](mailto:mountobserver@mwcc.mass.edu)

THE MOUNT OBSERVER | VOLUME 19, ISSUE 3 | November 22, 2024

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