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Virtual Honors Conference
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COMMONWEALTH HONORS PROGRAM
at MASSASOIT COMMUNITY COLLEGE
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In June 1997, the Board of Higher Education established a free-standing honors college of distinction at the University of Massachusetts Amherst called Commonwealth College. This organization has since approved Commonwealth Honors Programs at 24 public higher education institutions including community colleges, state colleges and all UMass institutions. As an accredited Commonwealth Honors Program institution, each semester Massasoit Community College’s honors students produce semester-long honors papers and projects. This booklet reprints the essays written by the recipients of the Fall 2020 Honor Garden Scholarship. This booklet also represents a portion of honors students’ research in abstract format and produced in various academic disciplines under the tutelage of students’ respective faculty sponsors.

Each of the abstracts in this collection describes an individual research project of students enrolled in Honors courses. These Honors courses include Seminar in Ethics and individual Honors Directed Studies.

Student abstracts are the original work of the student and based on personal study and research.
STUDENT PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

Student: Chinelo Anagboso
Faculty: Suzanne Morris
Humanities & Communication Arts

Effectiveness of the internet: Political activism

The use of the internet for activism is becoming increasingly popular, and youths are at the forefront of using social media's numerous advantages to fight for causes that are important. From Black Lives Matter to Bring Back Our Girls, social media is playing a great role in activism all around the world. Beginning with the use of email to protest in 1990, the internet has not only become the most popular means of activism, but it has also strengthened the traditional ways people fight for causes. Social media is effective for various reasons; the most vital reason is it has broken the barriers of communications that are present in traditional ways of protesting. Within minutes, people all over the world can connect and create awareness about a specific event. One of the biggest protests about immigration policies in the early 2000s in California was organized on Facebook. By the late 2000s, Facebook had also gained popularity and allowed people another social media outlet for activism. Twitter and Instagram were introduced and gained popularity in the early 2010s. By the mid-2010s, hashtags were introduced, and hashtag culture has played a dominant role in online activism. Social media is, however, not without its fault. People who oppose the growing popularity of social media have highlighted the spread of misinformation and questioned its effectiveness. It is evident that social media will continue to be the most popular platform for activism for present and future generations. This project explores the history of internet activism to better understand how the internet has become the most important platform for activism and how social media companies like Facebook and Twitter have to recognize the magnitude of their responsibility to proactively prevent threats on their platforms and also discuss options while offering suggestions for improving how to do so.
Harassment in Pakistan: An Ongoing Threat

The fight for achieving equal rights for women has been a global struggle. From the right to vote, to being able enter academic fields of their choice, the path for women to have the same rights as men has been an exhausting and long one. Unfortunately, there are countries that are still struggling to achieve this recognition of respect and equality. More specifically, making sure public areas are safe enough for women. Pakistan ranks as one of the lowest countries when it comes to gender equality in terms of education, health, economic opportunity, and political empowerment. In recent years due to the #MeToo movement and The Aurat March organization, Pakistan’s cases of harassment have become a public issue. One reported incident was the case of the motor highway incident, where a woman was raped and robbed after a group of men surrounded her car after it stopped on the highway. The case was brought to nationwide attention, with politicians and official figures giving their viewpoints on the case. While there were opposing views on who, if anyone, was to blame in this situation; it also brought up the question as to how to prevent this type of event from happening again and making sure public spaces in Pakistan are safer for women when alone. This paper will examine the history of Pakistan’s Women’s movement, explaining the current situation, and explore whether improvement is possible.
American Institutionalized Prisons’ Needed Reform of Corrections Personnel to Enable Rehabilitation for Inmates

Considering the outpour of police brutality videos captured on cell phones and surfacing in various mass media outlets in the earlier months of 2020 and beyond, society has witnessed police officer discriminatory abuse of power. However, in American institutionalized prisons, there aren’t any witnesses to video-record the indecent treatment and police brutality that inmates endure on a daily basis, but it cannot be denied that defendants that hold different “norms” (race/ethnic/religious minorities, LGBTQIA+) than most inmates, are treated more harshly by corrections personnel. These neglected inmates may also be denied more rehabilitation opportunities. The nation is predominantly familiar with the heinous details of the unjustified murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, yet these unwarranted homicides took place outside institutional correction facilities. Has the nation heard of Bradley Ballard or Jerome Murdough? These are just two of the many voiceless victims who have had to endure brutal treatment behind bars on a daily basis, with no witnesses to video-record and post to social media. This has ignited major questions that the American people need answered, such as how can corrections personnel do their job without putting themselves, or society at risk? What can the system add to corrections personnel training processes to make them more qualified to work in a field that includes so much diversity, but are still able to maintain the peace? More importantly, how can the system eliminate implicit bias in their personnel? This paper further explores how the field of criminology supports the critical examination of the societal reactions and treatment of criminals and the role of bias in the criminal justice system.
Student: Cassandra Cantwell  
Faculty: Panteha Sanati  
Humanities & Communication Arts  

Book Censorship in Public Institutions: A Breach of Intellectual Freedom  

In the United States, an individual’s intellectual freedom is protected under the First Amendment of the Constitution. However, the practice of book censorship violates these rights to freedom because it silences opposing viewpoints and controls the content of available books. Using data accumulated by the American Library Association over the past twenty years and other research articles that document the numerous cases of banned books, this paper identifies and addresses the threat that the censorship of written publications has towards adolescents. By suppressing the information available to young adults in public schools and libraries, book censorship cripples intellectual development and hampers the learning of essential skills, such as critical thinking. When diverse subjects or controversial texts are targeted and removed, the reader is denied the ability to view alternative perspectives and form educated conclusions. The ethical dilemma of book censorship in public institutions is built around societal bias and a conflict of interests, where the removal of a book represents the promotion of one belief over the condemnation of another, which is a direct infringement on the rights of intellectual freedom.
Supreme Court Vacancies During an Election Year

The death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg left a vacancy on the United States Supreme Court just six weeks before the 2020 Presidential election. Ginsburg’s granddaughter shared one of the last moments they had together and what she said to her: “My most fervent wish is that I will not be replaced until a new president is installed” (Nichols). Immediately after her death, a political frenzy ensued. President Donald Trump immediately began looking to fill her seat, while many Democrats were angered because of how Republicans handled a 2016 vacancy which was also a Presidential election year. As a result, the issue became partisan rather than looking at what is best for the country as a whole. Justice Ginsburg told Americans she could not imagine what the country would be—with Donald Trump as our president. For the country, it could be four years. For the court, it could be— [something she did not] want to contemplate...” (Nichols).

The Supreme Court, part of the Judicial Branch, is one of the three branches of the U.S. government. If working as designed, the Supreme Court should operate with impartiality, and put “integrity, the U.S. Constitution, and the rule of law above partisan interests” (Flynn). This paper will seek to explore the ethics regarding how our country should proceed with a filling vacancy on the Supreme Court. Because there is no set law, we can only look at precedent and the short- and long-term consequences that accompany it. The United States of America is not the same as it was when our forefathers drafted the Constitution and the Supreme Court decisions should reflect this difference.
Student: Ryan Concannon
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The Battle Between Pillaging and Preserving Art and Artifacts

The Rosetta Stone, arguably the most famous artifact ever discovered, has been stolen. Since it was unearthed in 1799, it has resided in Europe, which is 2,180 miles away from its home country of Egypt. The British Empire and surrounding European countries have stolen thousands of artifacts from nations all around the world, but now in the modern day we are beginning to see that perhaps a compromise of sorts should be implemented to get these pieces back to their respective owners. Here in the west, we admire and preserve history and its artifacts (although that is slowly beginning to change) however, such is not the case all around the world. In the Middle East, terrorist organizations such as ISIS have attempted to destroy countless museums and artifacts within. Many eastern nations do not put as much value on ancient item as we in the west do. In China, the communist government under Mao Zedong lead a massive “cultural revolution”, in which Ancient Chinese history and traditions was erased from the modern state of China. Why do some countries want to pillage and destroy art and history, while others want to preserve and admire the past? The battle between pillaging and preserving art and artifacts must be won by preservation, or mankind will not progress forward towards a better world for all.
Student: Jenivieve D’Andrea
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Monkey See, Monkey Do: An Ethical Analysis of Gender Roles in Advertising to Children

In an era that encourages gender inclusivity advertisers appear to be out of step with this societal progression. Using a combination of various case studies and child psychology and gender studies journals, this research serves to bring awareness to the harmful binary gender roles perpetuated in advertisements geared toward children. Many advertisements geared toward girls seek to groom submissive, domesticated adult women, while the advertisements geared toward boys encourage not only creativity and critical thinking, but also perpetuate toxic masculinity. The research conducted in this paper corroborates the vitality of dismantling the binary gender roles imposed on the impressionable minds of adolescents viewing advertisements. These harsh dichotomous gender lines could be rewritten if advertisers propose more gender neutral, and therefore gender inclusive advertising for their products.
Student: Ardelle Darko-Nyarko  
Faculty: Suzanne Morris  
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The Death Penalty  

Over the years, it has become clear that the Death Penalty is cruel and unusual punishment. No human being, no matter how wrong he or she is, deserves a punishment of this gravity. The problem with the Death Penalty is that it is equivalent to paying evil for evil. The only positivity that emanates from the Death Penalty is the laws and statutes that govern its implementation. For example, in the state of Texas, if an individual intentionally commits murder of an individual under the age of six years, the individual is subject to punishment by death. This is a very specific situation, whereas in Massachusetts, statutes concerning the Death Penalty are a violation against the state constitution; therefore, there will be no execution, even though the Death Penalty sentence is given. The main problem with the Death Penalty lies with the fact that mere men are charged with its execution. No one knows what truly goes on in another person’s mind, and the true intentions of another person. Therefore, the notion that another person can determine the course of someone else’s life is preposterous. In fact, the Death Penalty managed to decline last year, dramatically nationally, by analyzing verifiable historical analysis from the 1970’s to 2020. This shows that in as much as there are compassionate people out there, there are also people who seek justice. Instead of the state executing people for killing people, the guilty should be allowed to live their whole lives to think and reflect on their actions. This project seeks to explore the moral dilemma of the Death Penalty and the complicated circumstances surrounding and involved in a Death Penalty conviction.
Student: Judy-Anne Darko-Nyarko  
Faculty: Suzanne Morris  
Humanities & Communication Arts  

Social Media and Teenagers: Should Parents Monitor Their Teenagers’ Phones  

Many studies have been conducted on the effects of technology and social media on teenagers. Would it surprise you to know that “more than half of teenagers have been bullied online, and the same number have engaged in cyber bullying”? (bullyingstatistics.org) Over the years, social Media has evolved from the most convenient innovation to one of the surreptitious killers among teens. It started out with telegraphs, pneumatic tubes and eventually evolved into what it is today. Should Social Media be the reason why teens are dying? Should Social Media set the standard young people look up to and aspire to be? Popular opinion will answer NO! Truth is that social Media has many positive sides to it too. It has brought every one of us closer. The world is now a global village. Strangers across the world are just a message away. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, etc facilitate this accessibility. The issue of concern on the negatives of social media cannot be overlooked. “Teens with lower social-emotional well-being are more likely to report negative effects from Social Media use. They are more likely to say they feel bad about themselves. Specifically, when they do not get comments or likes. They also feel left out after they see photos of events they were not invited to” (Your Teen). It is ok to give teenagers the power of independence, but parents must participate to some extent in this independence. Teenagers suffer silently during the day and they are left with thoughts that haunt them throughout the night. These thoughts make them question who they are and if they matter at all. This is unacceptable and must be addressed. This project seeks to explore the dilemma of technological independence among teenagers and the complicated role of parental responsibility.
Student: Tatiana Dos Santos  
Faculty: Suzanne Morris  
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Vaccine: The Power of Immunization  

The vaccine is a powerful weapon, and since its development in the 18th century, it has drastically reduced many diseases such as smallpox and polio throughout the world. The vaccine’s function is to stimulate the immune system to produce antibodies to protect the body against the invasion of viruses and bacteria. Vaccine production requires the use of weakened, inactivated, or attenuated microorganisms. As a result, when a person receives the vaccine, the immune system acts directly on the microorganism to prevent the disease’s development. Thus, vaccines are considered an effective and safe substance for protecting against infectious diseases. Despite the evidence that vaccines are safe, many people are anti-vax and have doubts about vaccine benefits. The anti-vaxxer does not believe in the potential effectiveness of vaccines and claims that it can harm people’s health with low immune systems, cancer, and severe allergies.

In the same way, the anti-vaxxer movement points out that vaccines cause autism in children. However, the CDC states that there is no connection between vaccinations and developing autism. Therefore, it is essential to emphasize that doubts about vaccines are due to the lack of information about its advantages and the consequences of not being vaccinated. In the meantime, the world is experiencing a threatening situation where the creation of a vaccine is required to fight the current life-threatening Coronavirus disease. Thus, it is crucial to educate people to understand the need for vaccination. This paper will discuss the ethical dilemmas of vaccines, its discovery and success over time, the anti-vaxxer movement, and why people should be vaccinated.
Policing the Police: Black Lives Matter

Part of The Police Officer Oath of Honor states: “I, (officer’s name), do solemnly swear and affirm that I will faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all duties incumbent on me in the office to which I have been appointed according to the best of my abilities and understanding, agreeably to the requirements of the constitution, the laws of the Commonwealth, and the rules provided in accordance with law for the government of the correctional institutions of the commonwealth. So help me, God.” Tragically, for many Police Officers, this promise to protect and serve has seemingly gone unkept. There have been a relentless attacks and mistreatment on minorities, attacks that African Americans in this country thought would soon subside with the abolishment of slavery in 1865. Unfortunately, the war on “blacks” rages on. From public lynchings to public police killings, the murders have not stopped. Justice has not begun to serve any of the families effected forever by having a loved one stolen from them by the very people assigned to protect and serve. Throughout history there have been cases in which police have blatantly killed or seriously injured a person of color; riots incited, and payouts were made. At present, black people make up approximately 28% of those killed by police in the year 2020 alone, whilst making up only 13% of the population (McCarthy). None of their killers were ever charged with first degree murder. In fact, these Police Officers are usually protected and given lighter sentences, charged with the lesser charge, and sometimes not charged at all. The lives of blacks are still being bought, justice is not a payout for the life of a loved one, there is no price on a life; although, history reflects there has always seemed to be a price on the lives of blacks in this country. An institution built to protect from cannot be trusted to protect the very same people that they were trained to be weary of. Officers need to take accountability and be punished like any other civilian if not worse because of ignoring their required responsibility in their sworn “Oath of Honor.” This project seeks to explore the ethical dilemma of police brutality and the injustices surrounding the murders of civilians, specifically minorities, at the hands of on-duty officers.
Student: Elijah Karpf  
Faculty: Panteha Sanati  
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Treatment, Innovation, and the Ownership of Ideas: The Ethics of Pharmaceutical Patents  

The current intellectual property law concerning medicine is ostensibly written as an attempt to balance keeping medicine affordable and keeping the development of new medicine profitable. By providing pharmaceutical companies with a limited window in which they have complete control over their new drug, the law incentivizes drug producers to develop new medicines, while also ensuring once the window is over the drug becomes more readily available to the people who need it. However, through lack of regulatory oversight, these companies are able to treat their products and patients in ways past what the letter of the law would imply is acceptable. This paper will examine several real world examples of how medical intellectual property law affects the drug market, and how pharmaceutical lobbyists and corporations circumvent laws meant to keep medicine affordable for the people who need it.
Student: Allison Kussmann  
Faculty: Suzanne Morris  
Humanities & Communication Arts

Transgender Lives: A Matter of Facts

Many view transgender people living their lives as morally wrong and biologically incorrect. Tragically, there are people so outraged by the idea of living as transgender that they inflict acts of violence against those within the LGBTQA+ community. Since 2013, the American Medical Association has ruled these murders of transgender men and women as an epidemic. Overwhelmingly, Black transgender women, followed closely by Latinx transgender women, happen to be the race and gender targeted in these killings. Currently, there are no laws in place to protect transgender people. The closest law would be the Title IX Federal law, but it applies to federally funded schools, and states that no one under the basis of sex can be discriminated against. Alarmingly, eighty nine percent of Americans falsely believe that it is against federal law to be fired because someone is gay or transgender (Hunt 1). People within the LGBTQA+ community are denied housing, credit card applications, and jobs for just being in the community (Rights). Transgender bathroom laws have only been passed in six states, and sixteen states (including Washington D.C.) have laws implemented to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. What will it take to get all fifty states to pass laws in favor of transgender lives? That is still unknown, but the community fights everyday for equality and legal protection that still seems out of reach. This project highlights and questions the minimal rights for people of the LGBTQA+ community from the 1960’s to today, examines the mistreatment of transgender women in American society, and seeks to consider and pose reasonable solutions to help eliminate such needless crimes.
South Korea and The Conscientious Objector

The ratified Constitution of the Republic of Korea on July 17th, 1948, it states, “Article 19: All citizens shall enjoy freedom of conscience. Article 20: (1) All citizens shall enjoy freedom of religion. (2) No state religion shall be recognized, and church and state shall be separated.” This is a clear message saying that all South Korean citizens should enjoy the freedoms of following their religion, etc. It allows citizens to make decisions based on their conscience. However, this is untrue in South Korea, as hundreds of thousands over the years have been sent to prison for their beliefs. In fact, all male citizens are required to serve approximately a year and a half in the South Korean Military. Though some religions are pacifistic in nature, those who follow pacifist religions should not have to join an aggressive group like the military. Many in South Korea claim that their religion forbids them from serving, but instead of looking for alternative options for these individuals, the South Korean government imprisons them. To many, this contradictory logic seems unfair to those in these religions, as the South Korean constitution clearly states that they should have the freedom not to be forced into service. This project seeks to explore the ethical dilemma of the growing movement of Conscientious Objectors in South Korea and their opposition, whether or not it is a constitutional freedom of the people (during a conflict) to not be forced into military service, and who qualifies as a Conscientious Objector, and how to determine/identify a person truly held back by their conscience.
Student: Joseph Masone  
Faculty: Panteha Sanati  
Humanities & Communication Arts  

Monopolization in the Digital Age  

Using business and stock market statistics, case studies, and comparisons to monopolized industries of the past, this paper will examine the current monitored flow of user-generated data by the most powerful tech companies in the world and the U.S. government. There will be a thorough exploration of the influence and power of these large companies and governments over the populace, and how they’ve created and maintain this power. This will include a look at the algorithms they use, products they’ve created to gather data points on their users, and how they can lure the best and brightest software engineers with significantly higher pay than the industry average. Once these business practices and striking similarities to monopolies of the past have been revealed, it becomes apparent that the digital surveillance and data collection practices by FAANG (Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix, Google) and the U.S. government are intrusive and are an exploitation of power in the technological dependent society they have established.
Student: Ashley Onwe  
Faculty: Panteha Sanati  
Humanities & Communication Arts

The Life of a Child Bride

Most children enjoy a childhood when adults parents and guardians take care of them and shoulder the day to day responsibilities to care for and protect them until such time the children are old enough to manage their own life. However, there are kids who do not experience a childhood and are instead robbed of it by being forced into early marriages from the age of ten. Child marriage is described as a cultural practice whereby a child, usually a girl under the age of 18 is to be married to an older man. Child marriage is a traditional practice that started in India since 200 BC (two millennia ago) and is still being practiced today in a few African and south Asian countries like Ethiopia, Niger, Chad, Nigeria, Pakistan, and India. Reasons which keep perpetuating this practice are tradition, lack of education on how dangerous this practice is and religion (Islamic law). This practice is common in the Islamic community and is seen as a way of maintaining honor in a household or obeying the Quran. While this practice is considered a part of people's culture, this practice endangers the lives of little girls and because of the power dynamic in the marriage most girls become subjected to abuse. It is important to spread awareness and educate people about the dangers of child bride marriage because it has led to not only abuse, but damage of reproductive organs, PTSD, and death of little girls. UNICEF publicly labelled this practice a human rights violation and yet it is still happening every day. W.H.O claims that up to 39,000 girls get married everyday which should be a cause for concern regarding these girls’ lives. Educational campaigns can give people in countries the knowledge they need to reconsider this tradition because it damages the child’s reproductive system and could lead to death. With case studies from UNICEF on the causes and prevention methods that can help reduce this problem the Sara Adolescent Girl communication Initiative was developed and is being used in ten Eastern African countries.
**Student: Amara Smith**  
Faculty: Panteha Sanati  
Humanities & Communication Arts

**The Divided States of America**

In the United States, the rate at which Black Americans are killed by police is more than twice as high as the rate for White Americans. In the U.S, the police force has the least amount of training in any developed country. The U.S requires 843 hours, equivalent to a mere 21 weeks with an additional 13 weeks of field training totaling just 34 weeks. On the other hand, in Norway, Finland, Iceland, and numerous other developed countries an associate or bachelors is required, along with extensive field training. The U.S has had 23,977 people killed by police between 2001-2018. Norway, Iceland, and Finland have had 9 people killed by police combined. In Norway and Iceland the death and crime rate is so minor compared to the U.S, their cops are not even armed. Training and education requirements of the police have direct correlation with the number of deaths by police throughout the world. One of the major contributors to the number of deaths by police in the U.S, is because of Qualified Immunity. Qualified Immunity is a legal loop-hole for any police or government official to use at their discretion regarding any constitutional violations, deaths, and prejudices. According to federal law, as long as the officers do not violate “Clearly Established” law, they can claim Qualified Immunity. “Clearly Established” law is a vague, gray area because the victims need to pinpoint a case that was previously won with the same conduct of the police, making it difficult for the victims because cases now and cases years ago are miles apart. Perhaps the reason other countries do not have as high of death rates by police is because the concept of qualified immunity ceases to exist there. The long-lasting effects of systematic racism, generational poverty, racial trauma, and wrongful deaths continue to be fueled by qualified immunity. The lack of sufficient training, the protection of qualified immunity and no accountability or justice are solely responsible for the U.S. having the highest death rates by police. If police were required to receive more training and education, the need for qualified immunity would not be necessary.
The Ethical Dilemma of Euthanasia

America, along with the rest of the world, has long struggled with agreeing on politics, both outside and within the medical profession. The morality and ethicality of the medical profession is an extremely important part of society to continuously discuss because it directly affects the outcome of life and death. The Hippocratic Oath, a moral and ethical guide for practicing medical doctors, was written and put in place in the 5th century. At first, many Greek and Roman physicians did not faithfully follow this oath, but this changed over time. Euthanasia, the act of assisting in killing someone who is extremely ill to relieve them of extreme suffering, is supposed to give the patient control over their death, along with a certain level of dignity that they would not have gotten otherwise. In general, suicide is a very personal subject for the majority of the population. However, physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia serve a very specific purpose in allowing the ill, like patients in an irreversible coma, to end their lives peacefully. From the power Christianity had in the beginning of the 12th Century, to the infamous, Dr. Haiselden, and his 1917 film on physician-assisted suicide of deformed newborns, to the countless changes in legislature, this paper will explore the journey of the historically controversial topic of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia.
Student: Mabel White  
Faculty: Suzanne Morris  
Humanities & Communication Arts  

Racism in The American Theatre Industry

Historically, the role of racism in musicals is often directly related to the racial issues of the time. Many issues become further perpetuated when people are apathetic or act as if the problem is irrelevant or nonexistent. Many classical musicals simply avoided the issues, thus presenting fantasy worlds where there is no racial divide. Shows taking place in New York, a very ethnically diverse city, would present almost completely homogenous. And when they didn’t, the musicals would still most often either fail to address racial inequality in the plot, or present people of color in an exaggerated, disrespectful, and inaccurate way. The representation of characters of different races cannot be entirely accurate when written only by white people.

These issues still remain rampant in modern Broadway. While some progress has been made, the industry is systemically stacked against People of Color. While actors of color make up only 18% of people represented on the Broadway stage, performers are still the most ethnically diverse Broadway career, far outnumbering other facets such as crew, creative team, and producers (Clement). This project seeks to explore the ethical issue of racism in the American theatre industry, and how to implement lasting change that will benefit artists of color in the present and future.
The Honor Garden Scholarship

The Honor Garden Scholarship was established in 2013 to recognize outstanding academic achievement in the Commonwealth Honors Program at Massasoit. Each semester several students are awarded a $500 scholarship based on their grades and their application essay. In the years since 2013, more than thirty students have won the scholarship.

The Honor Garden Scholarship has been made possible through the establishment of a garden situated at the Canton campus. Special thanks are due to Leah Zielinski and Nick Palantzas for their vision and their commitment to this unique project. Countless donors have supported the scholarship fund through purchasing “Pathway Stepping Stones” which have been placed in the garden. Other donors have purchased Park Benches for the garden. The garden has been named “The George Georgacopoulos Honor Garden” to commemorate the extraordinary generosity of the Georgacopoulos family.
Essays by winners of the Fall 2020 Honor Garden Scholarship

Cindy N. Mack

October 16th, 2020

My name is Cindy N. Mack, I am 48 years old, currently an Honors student, and in my second year at Massasoit Community College Brockton campus. I am in a dual major degree program pursuing Criminal Justice and Human Services. The past two years at Massasoit has been a very interesting and rewarding experience. I am heavily involved and supportive of many student organizations/clubs on campus. The Student Senate, being the Student Trustee, representing the students of the state on the board of the Students Advisory Council and the OER executive committee have all helped me gain much valuable experience that will continue on in my achievements. Adjusting to the many roles I represent is sometimes challenging, but being an Honors student, Student Trustee, leader, combined with the support of the faculty and staff at Massasoit has helped me greatly towards my approach and positive mindset in my advocacy and success in all my endeavors.

In the almost two years that I have been an Honors student, I have interacted and conversed with other honors students, involved in Honors expositions, support the Honors...
club on campus, better focused on my classes and achievements. I am very proud to be an Honors student, it carries a rewarding history of success and determination. I have received and continue to get the best advice towards my academic path and what I want to achieve. I am a fierce advocate for student representation. I am advocating for Professors at Massasoit with the Director of OER Council, to be compensated adequately for Open Educational Resources (OER) with an increased stipend for each OER course. I was appointed in September 2020 to the OER Executive Council under the Board of Higher Education, my contribution in this venture is focused, clear, and has been moving in a positive path towards providing affordable and free textbooks to all students in Massachusetts.

This semester, the Students Advisory Board of which I am a member, has been working towards changing Massachusetts General Law 15, section 20 to change the verbatim of Student Trustee applicants from ‘Full Time’ students to include ‘Part-Time students’. The proposed bill was introduced into the House of representatives Budget meeting held on Tuesday 10th, November 2020, and is being supported by Senator M. Brady, and Senator Viera in support of our efforts. I was also appointed as the Parliamentarian/ Policy Chair at the SAC Board under the guidance of the Board of Higher Education in October of this year. I firmly believe and support every effort the SAC Board makes to keep our students informed and involved in our Massasoit community, bringing awareness as a Commonwealth Honors student, with every opportunity there is to further their academic success, personal growth, and emotional well being, especially now during this pandemic that we face and studying remotely.

I have been a peer mentor to my fellow classmates, students, and peers since April. Covid-19 has opened my eyes as to how hard it is for students to cope with remote learning, not having the mental strength to be successful, and most importantly asking for help. Being an Honor student makes a difference in culturing and broadening the possibilities for Massasoit students, and It is a part of something greater than just academic success, but leadership and community building. In October of 2020, I donated dinner for 165 homeless persons at Father Bill’s and Mainsprings from a GoFundMe fundraiser I started, encouraging community support. I wanted to share my personal outreach to those in need while encouraging others to do the same, and I am even more committed and passionate about the wellbeing of our Massasoit and local community. We are all in this together, and we will be successful in overcoming all barriers.

Thank you again for allowing me to be a part of the Commonwealth Honors Program and the opportunity to be considered as a recipient for the Honors Garden Scholarship.
Challenges and Opportunities  
By Tatiana Dos Santos

The Commonwealth Honors Program has brought great benefits and an incredible experience for me. However, before joining the Honors program, my life took a big turn, bringing many changes and opportunities. First, I want to start with some details about my background. I’m from Cape Verde, a small country with a tropical climate. In high school, I was a hardworking and committed student. However, I was shy, and I did not like to speak or say my opinions. This characteristic followed me to the United States of America. This country has brought new opportunities and made me a person open to challenges. Thus, I begin to see each day as a perfect day to achieve new goals. Finally, in 2017 I applied to study at Massasoit Community College and started taking ESL classes. Everything was new to me. My English was very weak, and I was afraid to not succeed and learn this new language. As a result, I had to leave my comfort zone to progress in my education.

On the one hand, I was used to writing and speaking in Portuguese. On the other hand, I would have to learn new grammar rules to be able to reach my objectives. Yet, it was a tremendous challenge to write and speak in English in front of my colleagues because I was timid. However,
with my strength of will and help from the professors, everything became easier. Each semester, the classes became more intense and demanding. Today I can say that ESL classes had excellent value and influence in my education and English improvement. Later, I started taking English Composition I with Professor Marconi. She is fantastic, and I am very grateful to her. Professor Marconi makes students like to write and is always available to advise them. She helped me a lot with my English, understanding the rules, and arousing interest in writing at a more advanced level. When she recommended me for the English Composition II Honors course offered the following semester, it was a great and wonderful surprise for me. Even though I was happy because Professor Marconi recognized my effort, I was terrified to join the honors program. Miss Marconi encouraged me to speak with Professor Sanati to know more about the Commonwealth program and referred Professor Keith for the English Composition II Honors class.

I begin questioning my ability to succeed in this program. Also, I thought about not accepting the recommendation and register in another class. However, I concluded that I should give the opportunity to new challenges and try to handle those classes. Besides, since the professor recommended me, it was because somehow, she believed that I could succeed. Although I was afraid of not doing well in class and lowering my GPA, I enrolled in Professor Susan W. Keith English Composition II Honors class in spring 2020. However, when classes started, I realized that we were about 15 students sitting facing each other, so I panicked. This class was different from the other courses. All students scored high on Composition I and were very smart. However, since I was already enrolled in this class, I would have to do my best and believe that I could become a Commonwealth Honors student. This class was one of the most incredible experiences in my life. The course was challenging and pushed me to increase my skills, and I saw that I could progress in written and spoken English. Professor Keith’s class was based on the discussion and analysis of short stories. So, because I was a quiet student and did not like to participate, this honors class made me enjoy the debate and express my opinion. The honors class reinforced my interest in going further and seeking a deeper meaning of things, thanks to Professor Keith’s teaching style.

Now I am enrolled in the second Honors class - Seminar Ethics taught by Professor Morris. The Seminar Ethics class makes me interested in research, and each day has been a great challenge. This class gave me the privilege to choose a topic to research
and discuss the ethical dilemma. Today, I assume that I can do any research and follow all the necessary rules. I am really enjoying the class and all the help from Professor Morris in the development of my research paper. So far, I do not regret accepting the invitation to join the Commonwealth program because if I had not accepted today, I would not have the knowledge that I have. Now, I plan to take my last honors class in Spring 2021 and transfer to a four-year college in the Fall, where I will pursue my bachelor’s degree. All my academic achievements were due to the encouragement of excellent professors that I had. Also, due to the program, I believe more in myself, plus I feel that I can accomplish my academic career much more and be a good nurse in the future. I do not have enough words to say how happy and proud I am to be a student at Massasoit Community College and be in a Commonwealth Honors program.
The Commonwealth Honors Program invests in teaching students leadership skills as well as critical thinking skills suited for implementation across all professional endeavors.

Rachel M. Williams

COMMONWEALTH HONORS PROGRAM
at MASSASOIT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

To learn more about the Commonwealth Honors program, visit massasoit.edu/honors