

All About Student Success

Building Relationships on Campus for Student Success

Winter 2020

Letter From the Director, Megan Dugan

Happy New Year and welcome to 2020!

First, I'd like to share a bit about myself since I am new to the AVID/Learning Success Center.

I have worked at MHCC in the library since 2013. I started as a Manager in Public Services, then became Library Director in 2015, and Library Dean in 2017.

I recently supervised the work of



Online Learning, Instructional Services, and the Teaching and Learning Center until 2019 when the college hired a Vice President of Instruction.

Last fall, I was asked to take over management of AVID|LSC and assist in the transition of the department from the Student Services division back to Instruction.

Before working at MHCC, I served the public libraries of the Fort Vancouver Regional Library District in SW Washington from 1990-2013. Please don't do the math!

I have a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Criminal Justice from Washington State University and a Master's in Library Science from Emporia State University, KS.

I have been married to Bryan for 20+ years, and we share two wonderful children, Bodhi and Devi, who are both currently college students. We also have a Bengal cat named Ruchi who keeps us busy and entertained.

AVID|LSC has its most experienced staff ever, a combination of full-time staff, professional tutors and student tutors serving students in more ways than ever before: in math/science drop-in

tutoring, AVID Center success skills coaching, writing tutoring, computer skills help, on-line tutoring in a variety of subjects, and much more.

We're proud of the ever-increasing options offered by our Bridge programs and our new-and-improved models for serving students in the AVID Center and in Writing tutoring.

We are offering services more effectively than ever before and will continue to bring our strongest commitment to making all students feel at home in AVID|LSC.

Looking forward to an amazing year, *Megan*

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Some AVID/Learning Success Center Fall Term Wins (by the numbers)

- Overall, 1,298 students made 9,997 visits to AVID/LSC, totaling 12,627 hours.
- In the writing area, 326 students got 1,278 hours of help, up 13.6% from the comparable period last year.
- 92 students had 143 Learning Specialist appointments to learn success skills.
- Over 400 students received study skills coaching in their classrooms through The Success Series presentations.
- 51 student athletes got customized on-going academic coaching (women's and men's basketball teams, softball team).
- "Summer Bridge" (into fall term) offered four 3-day sessions and gave orientation, success skills, and valuable staff connections to 117 students.
- High engagement student workshops were delivered to 201 students in area middle schools and high schools.
- In coordination with AVID for Higher Education, AVID/LSC offered the Professional Development Workshop: Disrupting Deficit Narratives for 31 staff and faculty. ■

Get Your Students Connected to a Learning Specialist

For over thirty years, students have gotten math, science, and writing help on the 3rd floor of the Library.

But what about help for other courses? Or with strategies for how to learn? How to prioritize assignments to work on? How to maximize results from the study time they have? Or how to prepare for and take tests effectively?

That's where our AVID Learning Specialists shine! These employees have the experience and training to help students hone the non-

Thuy Dang, Tutor for Math & Science, Re-Starts Her Life at MHCC

Thuy Dang was close to graduating from a four-year college in Vietnam. But she realized that her major of Finance—chosen by her family—was not satisfying. She held on to her love of Chemistry (a favorite subject in high school)

cognitive and study skills essential for success in any subject.

Available on a drop-in basis in the AVID Center (AC 3315) or by appointment, they serve as an academic coach, potentially for a student's entire time at MHCC.

AVID Learning Specialists take a holistic view of a student's life and obligations, while providing connection to resources across campus.

Refer your students by filling out [this Student Referral Form](#), that goes to AVID Coordinator, Sarah Aimone. Or bring the student to the AVID Center (AC 3315). We're ready for your students!

and to her dream of having a career she could love.

Though her family life was happy in Vietnam, she despaired of being able to follow her own path there. "I wanted to change to a new place to refresh," she says.

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Thuy Dang (continued)

She relocated to the U.S. in 2015 and began her college career over, starting at PSU and facing the usual challenges of immigrants. “My English was not good, and I was not inclined to look into people’s eyes. But I learned to do that.”

And she faced additional pressures. At PSU, classes were large, and Thuy says, “I didn’t feel involved.” At the encouragement of friends and family in the area, she stopped out at PSU to enroll at MHCC.

“The faculty here encouraged me,” she says, “and told me I could do it.” She got involved also in student life—as a “senator at large” in 2017.

Thuy’s interest in science bloomed with the help of Chemistry instructor, Dr. Joyce Sherpa, and Anatomy & Physiology Instructor, Valery Thatcher.

Her interest in human health, something that began with her father’s death two years ago, grew too. She wondered why it was that her asthma, which she thought was genetic, disappeared after her arrival in the U.S.

Other questions rose too, like how best to help others learn. Since fall term, 2017, Thuy has worked as a tutor for Math and Chemistry in the AVID/Learning Success Center.

“Most people think tutoring is answering people’s questions and guiding them to the answer,” Thuy says. “But you can’t provide the answer immediately, and there’s no way for the tutor to know everything. So you encourage them to think, and you use your own experience.”

She says she’s learned from Tim Bradley, Math and Science Services Coordinator, and from the lead tutors how to get students thinking and how to handle students who are stressed or angry. She says Tim and other tutors “respect everyone and encourage everyone.”

Thuy learns from the students too. “Students show me different ways to learn than what we did in Vietnam. Their work may take more time and more steps, but their work builds skills for later.”

She also takes inspiration from her students’ persistence. “Somehow, when I am good at every class I take, at some point, I’m not good at it. When I see how students work hard at their problems, it brings up a lot of feelings for me. I am lucky to work with the group of people I do.”

Thuy will finish courses at MHCC after winter term, then begin again at PSU, for an expected two years more to finish her B.A. She’ll continue to explore



possible career paths in Nursing and Pharmacy. But one thing is certain, these are “short-term goals.”

For the long-term, after she’s built her experience practicing science, she will return to Vietnam. There are many international schools, she says, that need people who understand both Vietnamese and English as well as chemistry and biology. “I will work there,” she says, “probably in a university. And I will guide others.” ■

Eduardo Sanchez, Tutor, Advances with the Help of Role Models

Eduardo knew from middle school that he had a love for numbers and solving puzzles. Still, he did poorly in school: even in math classes. In middle school and high school, he failed algebra and geometry. He was able to complete high school “with the lowest GPA possible” with the aid of summer and nighttime credit recovery courses.

“I went to school because it was the thing to do,” he says. “I didn’t have any clear path.” In fact, before high school graduation, he had no inspiration from any teacher, and no guidance for his future from anyone.

The first words of help came from a coworker at an industrial bakery following high school. He was a year older and had taken courses at MHCC. “He inspired me to continue my education,” Eduardo says, “So I wouldn’t have to work in the bakery forever.”

The friend helped Eduardo register for his first MHCC class--Math 60, an evening course taught by Connie McDonald.

“If my first math teacher wasn’t so great, I wouldn’t have stayed at MHCC,” Eduardo says. But Connie had just the right approach: clear expectations, accessible evening office hours, strong encouragement for everyone to do all the homework, and a chance to revise one’s past grade on an exercise by showing mastery of it later.

And she encouraged questions, making it a welcome atmosphere even for those, like Eduardo, who were afraid to ask. Eduardo learned to work hard to get the homework done. He went to her office hours to ask frequent questions. He finished the course with a strong “A.”

“That gave me a different picture of myself than I’d had in high school,” he says. “It made me feel I must be good in math.” Eduardo followed Connie to Math 65 and then went on to Seth Eikrem’s Math 95 classroom.

Seth’s strong organization of the class plan impressed Eduardo. “It was winter term, and



even the several classes we missed for ‘snow days’ never made us feel rushed. I felt we had all the time in the world. He taught us by example to be well organized.”

By Math 111, Eduardo’s own work ethic, sparked by Connie McDonald, and honed by Seth Eikrem, began to flare, along with his love of math, self-confidence, and a vision of himself as a part of the math world.

His new teacher, Karen Agresta saw his ability and his light and encouraged him to apply to be a math tutor in the AVID/Learning Success Center.

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Eduardo Sanchez (Continued)

Meanwhile, the guidance and inspiration from faculty continued with Jack Green for math 251 and on to Jon Spindor (for 252), whom Eduardo calls, “the most inspiring.”

“It was a night class,” Eduardo remembers. “I was always tired. But I was amazed at how well the class was taught and how much fun Jon made it. It felt more like a bunch of math nerds talking about math. I didn’t know it was possible to have fun in class while learning. If I want to be a teacher, I definitely want to be a teacher like Jon.”

Eduardo began to get a taste of what it is to be a math educator himself while working in AVID/LSC. On the tutoring floor, he saw students struggling. “There are so many ways to learn things,” he says. “The normal lecture doesn’t help most of our students. So, we guide them and help them to ask questions.”

He credits the Math and Science Services Coordinator, Tim Bradley, with “going above and beyond” to train him how to do this and how to work with students under stress.

He soon realized, “You see students who are not bad at math, but are overwhelmed. Many are

disorganized or just never learned how to learn.”

Eduardo likes to give only subtle hints to students about study skills, preferring to model how to use the textbook and how to do what he himself learned to do along the way: to figure things out on your own using what you have in front of you.

Today, Eduardo is nearing the end of his time at MHCC. He expects to be at PSU full-time by spring term, completing his B.S. He says he has now what he needs to find his way forward.

“All the teachers, staff, and tutors here showed me I can do what I want in life,” he says. “You don’t have to be some gifted person or destined to be successful. It doesn’t matter. You can be what you want if you work hard and are organized and stay motivated. Now that I’ve learned these things, any career I want I can have.” ■

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