

All About Student Success

Building Relationships on Campus for Student Success

Spring 2019

Letter From the Director, Lauren Smith

For my letter this term, I wanted to highlight a few efforts our department has made so that all students feel welcomed in our areas and staff are equipped to promote a student's sense of belonging.

The first effort was a four-hour all-department training day in January. We viewed and discussed videos created by AVID|LSC staff members and students that portrayed "do's" and "don'ts" for quality student service. We also focused on an article that highlighted:

Structuring dynamic group work in which small groups jointly solve a problem in ways that encourage cooperation

Using mindfulness practices to reduce exhaustion and stress

Striving to **find common ground** and similarities with students

Encouraging students to focus on **mastery rather than performance goals** – Cultivating an attitude where mistakes are understood as part of learning, effort is valued, and students learn to appreciate challenges & hard work.

In addition to our in-house training, nearly all of the AVID|LSC Coordinators, area Director, and PFTA staff have completed Trauma Informed Care Training through Trauma Informed Oregon, which has been offered on campus several times over the past year, funded by Title III and AVID|LSC.

Trauma Informed Care **realizes** the widespread impact of trauma and potential paths of recovery; **Recognizes** symptoms of those suffering from trauma; **Responds** by integrating knowledge into policies, procedures, and practices and **resists** re-traumatization.

It is imperative that AVID|LSC and the College as a whole be aware of how trauma happens within our community (including staff member trauma) and consider ways that we can contribute to creating a more resilient, trauma-informed, and responsive community.

We are planning for additional Trauma Informed Care training in AVID|LSC and look forward to working toward a more trauma-informed approach within our

department environment, policies, processes, and procedures.

For more information on Trauma Informed Care and for resources from the recent campus trainings, see <https://traumainformedoregon.org/>.

Lastly, AVID/LSC has also made major steps this year to refine our service model in our writing center. Take a look at the article that describes these important changes.

I wish the MHCC Community a productive and successful spring term, and a wonderful summer ahead!

Lauren

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Writing Tutoring Adopts a “Studio Model” Approach

For years, the MHCC writing tutors have searched for still better methods to build student confidence and skills of independent learning. Beginning winter term, they took a major step forward, using a refined model of service called the Studio Model.

That model uses a flag system like the one in math/science drop-in that allows a student to call for tutor help when needed.

Rather than wait in line for a 20-minute session, students find their needs answered relatively faster, but their time with the tutor may be less.

That “less time” however, is used more skillfully than ever to direct the student in ways to move forward at least a little on their own before the tutor circles back to check on progress.

The Studio Model has encouraged even more intensive use of the Socratic tutoring method--

Leila Umuhoza Tests Her Heart for Strength

Leila Umuhoza is a new arrival looking for a way forward. In November, 2017, the twenty-year-old left Rwanda, itself a temporary refuge for her from her native Burundi, still suffering the after-shocks of a long civil war.

Leaving to join her parents, recent immigrants to the U.S., was a long and difficult process in which the paperwork nearly failed her.

In the U.S., she found her parents well, but “working too much” to support the family, including Leila’s three sisters, ages 24, 23, and 15, and her three brothers, 21, 19, and 18.

intensive questioning of students as a way to promote and reinforce learning.

In a related development, the writing center began employing student writing tutors (7 of them) in winter and spring terms, and will employ similar numbers next year. The student tutors bring personal connections to the writing classes we serve, as well as enthusiasm and some additional language skills (Russian and Ukrainian).

The AVID Center (AC 3315), in which writing tutoring takes place, will soon be getting a “face-lift” with some improved lighting and plants, as well as additional seating: all to encourage students to spend more time in a relaxed way as they develop their skills.

Encourage your students to use the AVID Center and enjoy all that our writing tutors and Learning Specialists are ever more adept at delivering. ■

It was difficult in the beginning. Leila was struck by cultural differences: the way girls and women exposed their legs: something she’d never seen before. And the way young people seemed to have license to insult their parents. She faced medical issues too-- fibromyalgia that began shortly after she arrived--and the more expected problems of communication.

“I knew a little English, but not really,” she says. “I knew how to read, but not with good understanding.” Still, at least she had confidence in her ability to learn languages. She already spoke Kirundi, Kinyarwanda, Swahili, and French.

Soon, she decided that even with imperfect English, she could be of help in the workplace.

Leila (Continued)

She took her language assets to Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization (IRCO), where she served as a translator for other new arrivals from Africa. Soon, for help in her work, she began studying additional languages: Lingala and Spanish.

But even getting to IRCO was challenging, at first. She didn't know the bus system well and didn't have a phone.

She remembers asking people at the bus stop if she could use their phone; some refused. But, she says, "Many others encouraged me. Ninety-nine percent of the people I meet now are positive."

Despite successes at IRCO, Leila knew she wanted more formal education and a path into a future career, whatever that might be.

In MHCC's GED program for the past year, Leila has been working her way up to Level 4 writing and reading.

She attributes her good progress to hard work, but also superb help from GED instructors: Paige Hairston (level 2 writing), Debbie Burnham (level 3 writing teacher, "so kind, so encouraging"), Paull Kaady (math, level 1), and Jon Delifus (math for level 2).

"It's such a great experience to see how teachers help and are willing to give the best to help you even if they don't know you," she says.

She thanks Jon Delifus for something else too: a way to test out her interest in careers. She told him she wanted a life of service, maybe as a nurse. He asked her, "Are you good with blood? Are you o.k. seeing babies crying and people dying?"

"I wasn't sure. I'm scared of blood," she says. "I can't look at babies crying. It's so sad for me. I saw a lot of that in East Africa. But I love to help

old people and also very young ones. He advised me to do volunteer work in an emergency room. If I could handle that, then I could be a nurse."

Leila knows that she has a "Coeur fragile" as the French say: a delicate heart. She thought, "If I find I also have a "Coeur dur," a resilient heart, then I will choose to be a nurse."

"I'm thinking of who I am," she says, "where is my personality, my gift, my strengths and weaknesses?"

Because of the line of questioning John Delifus started her on, after some months, and without experiencing an emergency room, Leila knew she wanted to work with young children as a kindergarten teacher.

Meanwhile, her path of studies has become even more enriched with a referral from her GED teachers to the Learning Specialists in the AVID Center to aid in struggles with her homework.



(Above, Learning Specialist Karla Farr and Leila)
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“I said ‘o.k.’,” she remembers, “I will just come and see it. Right away I was impressed. In my country, someone to help like that, you pay them money.”

Leila started coming every Monday for help in reading U.S. history, making Powerpoints, and writing a resume. “My struggle is that I’m really working hard,” she says. “Sometimes I get confused by what I’m saying, like the right vocabulary. I was making a lot of mistakes. AVID people correct me in a loving way.”

“It’s not easy coming from a different country. Now I could write a whole journal. I am getting comfortable with English. Karla helped me to read and to really understand what I was reading. She taught me how to summarize. She and Sarah and others there are the family I love to be in.”

“I want to tell other students, ‘Please go to the AVID Center. Sometimes, if you come from another country, it’s not easy to try, but AVID Center really helps you a lot. I’m not doing a commercial, I’m just telling the truth. I encourage all to ask if you have a problem. It is your own success, not someone else’s. So be courageous. You can do it.”

She’s looking forward to GED completion in June and hopes she might have a speaking role at graduation. “I want to thank my teachers. And it would be an honor to have AVID Center staff there. I want to thank them in front of everyone. Because of them I am more confident to ask questions. I am more confident to find my own answers too.” ■

Bridge Successes

For the 5th consecutive year, the AVID|Learning Success Center has welcomed and supported new Saints through the Bridge experience! MHCC’s **Bridge Programming** is designed to help new

students become a part of our campus community while building the academic and soft skills that are crucial in the first few weeks of college.

Using high-engagement On Course and AVID strategies, along with good old-fashioned conversation over yummy food, facilitators build relationships with new students to help them get started on the right foot.

With financial support from the AVID/Learning Success Center, First Generation Student Success, and East County Pathways, Bridge Programming is robust all year long:

Summer Bridge: September 2018 – 134 new students, staffed by over 40 from 16 different departments

Winter Bridge: January 2019 - 13 new students, staffed by 9 employees from 7 different departments

Spring Bridge: March 2019 - 18 students, staffed by 10 employees from 5 different departments

Each year, Bridge coordinators Sarah Aimone and Stephanie English edit and refine the curriculum to best meet changing student needs. We expect 2019 to be our most exciting Summer Bridge yet! If you would like more information on Bridge Programming, please contact: sarah.aimone@mhcc.edu ■

Contact Us

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