

Closing MVCC not an easy call



OLD MAN WINTER – Students quickly hustle along the walkways to their classes while trying to fend off the bitter cold winds of winter. Last week's snowstorm dropped 27 inches on the Utica campus and much more on

the Rome campus, forcing MVCC to close the college on Wednesday and Friday. Classes were delayed until 11:00 a.m. on Thursday. This is the first time in at least four years the college closed due to snow.

Many circumstances contributed to final decision

When it comes to closing MVCC due to inclement weather or for any other emergency, the decision is not made lightly. That was the case last week when the college closed on Wednesday and Friday along with a delayed opening on Thursday due to a combination of a major snowstorm and lake effect snow that dumped nearly three feet of snow. This was the first time in at least four years the college closed.

"The challenge is to try and come up with a reasonable assessment to warrant the college to close or delay its opening in a timely manner," said Denise DiGiorgio, Vice President for Student Services.

While the administration, department heads and many of the longtime faculty/staff members may know the procedure,

there are many new personnel who don't know or understand the process.

The process begins long before the first snow flake falls. Each September, the college's three vice presidents are designated as "lead administrator" for particular months of the year. This means it falls to them to collect all the necessary information in order for a decision to be made.

This year's "lead administrator" for January and February is Ms. DiGiorgio, while Dr. Dan Larson, Vice President for Instruction, is for March and April. Ralph Feola, Vice President of Administrative Services, is the third member of this group.

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The process it takes to close MVCC

When a snowstorm is expected, John Zegarelli, Director of Facilities and Operations, begins his day at 4:30 a.m., contacting the Utica, Oneida and Herkimer Counties highway departments along with New York State Thruway for road conditions throughout the region. He also contacts the Rome and Utica police departments about any special circumstances involving either of the college's campuses and the National Weather Service for updates on the forecast.

This information is then relayed to the "lead administrator," who then confers with the other two vice presidents to make a decision on whether to delay the college's opening or to close the campuses completely. This decision should be made by 5:10 a.m. in order to allow time for getting the message out to the region's news media. When it comes to making the announcement for evening classes, the decision should be made by 3:00 p.m.

According to Ms. DiGiorgio, the decision to close MVCC on Wednesday wasn't difficult due to the severity of the weather forecast. The challenge came Thursday when determining the amount of time students and faculty/staff would need to dig out from the storm and drive to campus for classes. For this reason, it was decided to open both campuses at 11:00 a.m.



The decision to close MVCC on Friday was by far much more difficult as weather conditions were changing hourly and deteriorated rapidly. For this reason, the college began with a delayed opening of 10:00 a.m. that eventually changed to a closed status.

"It was determined the snow was coming down faster than the city plows or the college grounds crew could remove it," said Ms. DiGiorgio.

Getting the word out

Once the decision was made to close the college, it fell to the Department

of Marketing and Communications to contact radio and television stations with the announcement. Each of these media outlets have a school closure procedure in place, with each station being unique. These procedures typically request a designated person(s) from the college contact the stations via telephone, email, fax or through a combination.

"While the local media is good about getting the information out there, the biggest challenge is getting these media outlets to relay the information quickly and accurately," said Joan Andrek, Director of Marketing and Communications.

Because school closures are a community service and not paid for by the institution, the message doesn't always get out exactly as it was delivered to the media outlets.

For the most up-to-the-minute information on the status of college operations, check the College's web site first.

If Internet access is unavailable, local radio stations are the most prompt in delivering messages to the public.

The third most reliable would be the local television network – either WKTV in Utica or WTVH-5 in Syracuse.

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Tipping our hat to MVCC employees who go above and beyond

We salute Theresa Paladino & Mike Alsheimer

As everyone who works in the Student Service Center knows, Theresa Paladino and Mike Alsheimer provide excellent student service “above and beyond” on a consistent basis. Both of them are endlessly patient when it comes to explaining financial aid issues to students and their families, and they take the extra time to explain things in easy to understand language to students and staff alike.

They always stay calm and provide a non-anxious presence especially when students or parents are upset by the realities of their financial situations.

Even in a very busy and experienced Financial Aid Office, Mike and Theresa stand out for their commitment to “close the loop” with students and to help them resolve their problems.

Notably, they often pick up the phone or walk over to the Business or other offices to help solve complicated

issues, get questions answered, and finalize processes.

We frequently hear praise from students for both Mike and Theresa, because of their helpfulness, and their willingness to follow through until the aid has arrived, in spite of the many steps involved.

We tip our hats to Theresa and Michael for their excellent student service and thank them for the many times that they have helped us help students, too.

**Submitted by Jennifer DeWeerth,
Director of the Student Service Center;
Kathy Kresa, Business Office**

If you see or hear a colleague going out of their way to be helpful, please drop a line to Rich Haubert or Joan Andrek for inclusion in *Communitas*.

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And finally, the College’s auto attendant will also have the most-up-to-minute information on the status of college operations. The main college telephone number is 792-5400 for the Utica Campus and 339-3470 for the Rome Campus.

Challenges for Facilities

Mr. Zegarelli and Michael McHarris, Assistant Director of Facilities and Operations, were responsible for organizing the college’s grounds crew to clear snow from all the parking lots, sidewalks and access roads on both campuses.

“Our guys have been here around the clock trying to keep the walkways open and driveway entrances cleared. They’ve been keeping the main walkways cleared during the day and then coming back at night to clear out other sections of the campus,” said Mr. McHarris, as the college’s ground crews battled to stay ahead of the recorded 27 inches of snow that fell on Wednesday. “You have to keep up on the snow. You can not wait to the end because it would be just too much.”

Because of the workload, the college had to call in its mechanics to provide much needed help. Crews began as early as 3:00 a.m. and worked well into the evening.

The college’s custodial staff have diligently kept building entrance ways open by shoveling and putting down salt. They also had to continually mop inside the buildings where sloppy snow was tracked.

“Most of the work was done with our own equipment and now we are trying to schedule some dump trucks for removal of the huge snow piles in order to open up extra parking spaces,” said Mr. McHarris. “We have been piling the snow into parts of the parking lots. You can only push the snow so far.”

Keeping MVCC safe

When it comes to snow emergencies on MVCC campuses, Chief Joseph Palmer makes it clear: If you don’t need to be here, stay away because you will just be in the way.

“Our biggest problem was getting the cars out of the parking lot so that the facilities guys could plow,” said Chief Palmer, Director of Campus Safety and Security.

“If they close the college, people shouldn’t be coming here. If they slip and fall while trying to climb over a snow bank or on a snow covered sidewalk, then we have an emergency situation that could have been avoided,” said Chief Palmer.

Along with locking down and securing the campus buildings, the campus safety personnel also had to make sure all fire lanes were adequately cleared and that emergency access routes to the college dorms were open.

The campus security office also fielded dozens of calls seeking information on the college’s status.



MVCC Nursing Program hosts re-accreditation visit

MVCC's Nursing program will be evaluated March 6-8, in a re-accreditation site visit conducted by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission.

MVCC's Nursing program is one of the oldest Associate Degree programs in New York State and was last evaluated in 1999, and earned full re-accreditation. The visiting team is composed of two evaluators, chaired by Dr. Joanne Leski, Department of Nursing at William Rainey Harper College, Palatine, Illinois.

During the three-day fact-finding visit, evaluators will interview MVCC administrative personnel, faculty and students. They will also observe classroom activities, visit clinical facilities and tour the Utica and Rome campuses.

A public forum is scheduled for 4:00 p.m. on March 7, in Payne Hall, Room 300. Professor Nancy Caputo, Department Head of Health Services, will host the forum, which is open to anyone interested in attending and in sharing comments about the MVCC Nursing program.

Community members unable to attend may send written comments to Nancy Caputo, Professor and Department Head, MVCC Health Services, MVCC, 1101 Sherman Drive, Utica, N.Y. 13501.



BOOT CAMP – Pam Fess and Fran Vitale of MVCC's Health Services with keynote speaker Donna Ignatavicious at conference in New Mexico.

Boot camp for nurses in New Mexico

Pam Fess and Fran Vitale, Health Services, recently attended "BOOT CAMP for NURSE EDUCATORS" in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The conference focused on integrating evidence-based practice into today's nursing curricula. Strategies were offered to assist in transition from teaching to student-centered learning.

The keynote speaker was Donna Ignatavicious, MS, RN, the author of the medical/surgical text used by our senior nursing students. Donna and the other presenters actively engaged the conference participants in lively discussions and debates.

An added feature was a scheduled tour of Santa Fe, an enjoyable and educational adventure. The early February weather in New Mexico was cold and windy. There was even snow in Santa Fe, much to the delight of our colleagues from Florida and Georgia.

Pam and Fran appreciate the support of Nancy Caputo, Department Head, and Staff Development for making the trip possible. We look forward to implementing creative strategies to enhance student learning.



MVCC Calendar of Events

Tuesday, February 20

- Police Academy, IT 225, 8:00 am
- Yoga, ACC 116, 5:30 pm
- Night Hawk Café, MV Commons, 7:00 pm
- Ballroom Dancing, ACC 116, 7:15 pm

Wednesday, February 21

- "Can You Dig It?" Fossil Hunt/CCED, AAC 116, 9:00 am
- Bowling at Schenectady CCC, 3:00 pm
- Student Congress, ACC 212, 4:00 pm
- DFAS Computer Training, PC 221, 6:00 pm
- Night Hawk Café: Video Game Tournament, ACC 116, 7:30 pm

- Men's Basketball hosts SUNY Cobleskill, 7:00 pm
- MVCC Concert Band Practice, ACC 116, 7:30 pm

Thursday, February 22

- Operating Room Tech Classes, PC A10, 8:00 am
- "Can You Dig It?" Fossil Hunt/CCED, AAC 116, 9:00 am
- Singer/History speaker, MV Commons, noon
- Defensive Driving Program, RA 306, 5:00 pm
- DFAS Computer Training, PC 221, 6:00 pm

- Ballroom Dancing, MV Commons, 7:00 pm

Friday, February 23

- Chess Club, ACC 114, 3:00 pm
- Defensive Driving Program, RA 306, 5:00 pm

Saturday, February 24

- Oneida County Civil Service Exams, AB 119-233, 9:00 am
- Defensive Driving Course, PC 207, 9:00 am
- Black History Celebration, PC Atrium, 11:00 am
- Women's Basketball at Fulton-Montgomery CC, 1:00 pm
- Men's Basketball at FMCC, 3:00 pm