



## Pathway grant sets foundation for students to graduate

Only 41 Title III Grants were awarded across the nation this year—out of 297 applications. The best news is that MVCC is one of the 41 award winners. Our very first Title III Grant, The Pathway to Graduation Project (PGP), is the result of over three years of work with the input of dozens of faculty and staff. The U.S. Department of Education's Strengthening Institutions Program grant, totaling \$2,226,635 over five years, will allow us to enrich the student experience and raise the student success rate from our students' first introduction at the college straight through to their graduation.

"We are grateful and elated for this funding that will allow us to provide academic success services and strategies for hundreds of MVCC students. As the community's college, MVCC is committed to student success; this Title III grant allows us to bring greater strength than ever before to our mission," said Vice President for Learning and Academic Affairs Maryrose Eannace, Ph.D. "Our faculty and staff are the prime movers in using this Federal Grant money for the direct benefit of our students. We are eager and ready to begin this journey."

To achieve the goals of PGP, the grant will fund a variety of strategically-honed and highly-visible changes in how MVCC addresses the individual needs of our students. The Student Success Portal portion of the project will include the creation of a Learning Commons—located in the IT Building's current open computer lab and some of the surrounding space. The Commons will include the Learning Center; a home for some faculty offices and, eventually five Completion Coach offices; Library and IT assistance for students; an ITeach lab for faculty use; and study rooms for student group project work, among other features. This newly-designed, expansive space will be constructed to bring together students, coaches, tutors, faculty, and advisors in an environment suited for studying and teamwork.

A second component of PGP will address the 18 Gateway courses, identified by our Achieving the Dream Program team, and will support 18 teams of faculty in creating virtual toolkits rich with teaching and learning resources for faculty, tutor and student use. These faculty-researched and -designed toolkits will serve as ancillary aids for use by any faculty teaching those critical courses. The toolkits will be designed to address learner needs in multiple, engaging, and effective ways. The first three courses will be addressed in this first year and a half of the grant, with the remaining 15 courses being addressed in groups of five in each of the four remaining years.

Central to the support of PGP will be implementation of predictive analytics/early alert software to allow us to know our students better—even before they start their first class-- and to identify appropriate intervention points along their pathways.



Using demographic information and transcripts gathered by the Office of Admissions, the software will help us identify student needs and strengths and will allow us to coach students through co-created and individualized completion prescription. During the initial pilot, a randomized group of students will be assigned to Completion Coaches, who will help students devise their own prescription for success and will connect often with students for encouragement and guidance in adjusting to college and following through on their pathways. The project will eventually be scaled to include five full-time coaches who will work closely with faculty and who will be available to all students who request help.

What does this mean for the College? The creation of the Learning Commons in a central location on the Utica Campus will help to raise the visual awareness of the academic help students can receive. Faculty, staff and administration will be supported in addressing head-on the core problems of low persistence, low completion and low satisfaction among entering students. Through advanced technology, training, and course enhancements, the Pathway to Graduation Project Team will be guided in working with students to provide wraparound academic and other support services and individual prescriptions that act as guided roadmaps to student success.

The installment for the first budget period, the year beginning this Oct. 1, is \$440,546. In addition to the grant funding, MVCC will be providing the equivalent of \$1,542,950 of the total project cost over the course of the five years of the grant.

# Summer training leads to cyber jobs

For three consecutive summers, MVCC's cybersecurity students have received on-the-job training in technical troubleshooting and problem solving for a local company. But the best aspect of this training is that it has led to the students being hired full-time upon completion of their degree.

Expert Global Solutions (EGS) has enjoyed tremendous success with the partnership with MVCC's cybersecurity students, the company is planning on continue to offer the real world experience at its customer service center located on Genesee Street in downtown Utica. This training was part of MVCC's Software Support Strategies course, which runs during the summer terms.

After completing the course, they are provided the opportunity to participate in a job interview and take a skills assessment as a potential candidate for an EGS Customer Support Representative job. Currently, 12 students are employed at EGS as a result of this program.

"MVCC transforms students' lives through helping them learn to be productive members of the local workforce, and we transform the local workforce by preparing their employees with needed skills and credentials. We rely heavily on partnerships with local employers such as EGS and we are grateful for their flexibility and collaboration in creating new opportunities for students," said MVCC President Randall VanWagoner, Ph.D.

EGS is a global customer service organization, delivering leading outsourced solutions, for customer and financial care. Serving the world's leading companies, EGS helps decision-makers delight their customers and deepen brand engagement. With revenues of more than \$1.1B in 2014, EGS has over 40,000 employees in more than 70 locations across 11 countries.

"This experience has been outstanding for our students. Regardless of their future career path, technical troubleshooting is an important skill to have, and our students are learning from the best. In addition to adding valuable industry experience to their resumes, students enjoy flexible schedules at EGS that allow them to complete their degree program," said Director of Cybersecurity, Computer and Information Sciences at MVCC Jake Mihevc.

The MVCC students who get hired will become a vital player in EGS's customer care support services, delivered through



**FOOT IN THE DOOR** - Michael Suppa, Operations Manager for EGS, and MVCC President Randall VanWagoner talk about the partnership between the College and the call center in downtown Utica that is offering MVCC students jobs.

voice, text, chat, and email, span the customer management experience.

"As always, we value our community partners in the Utica-area and MVCC has been a strong one for us," said Lilly Bueno, site director at EGS Utica. "We enjoy working with these students and providing them the skills and experience needed for a long and successful career."

MVCC's Cybersecurity program combines the study of criminal justice and computer-technology to address current needs in the cybersecurity field. It prepares students to identify vulnerabilities and threats that affect corporate and government computer networks, protect critical information in cyberspace, and effectively design, implement, and support security policies for a large scale enterprise network.

## Students get behind scene look of Bank of Mellon

The Administrative Assistant students went to the Bank of New York Mellon in Oriskany on September 28 to meet with Vice President and Transition Manager Steve Giuffrida, along with Bill VanShufflin.

During this tour, the students learned this branch of the bank does not handle actual cash money, but works with electronic wire transfers – referred to as a back office operation.

To get a better grasp of how their studies would be applied in this working environment, the students met with Senior Administrative Assistant Cheri Conley, who handles travel arrangements, paperwork for the travel agent, schedules meetings and read and answer her bosses' emails. Having been with the company for 26 years, she began as a payment processor and moved up in rank as positions became available.

Conley could relate to the MVCC students, having earned her associate degree in Secretarial Science at MVCC.

The students also had an opportunity to meet with Human



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# Piejko opens new doors for animation students with Sketchfab.com

In the past, digital 3D artists have always faced the challenge of having their artwork properly displayed within their online portfolios. Artwork had to be rendered out into two-dimensional images. This process destroyed the interactive nature inherent within three-dimensional art by forcing the viewer to look at still images. The rendered artwork appeared flat, and many of the fine details that the artist had worked so hard on were hidden from the viewer.

However, today's technology is making it possible for 3D artists to retain the "third-dimension" when publishing their artwork through a website called Sketchfab.com.

"This website is an amazing tool that allows our students in the Digital Animation program to share their work with potential employers, other artists, and friends and family with just a few clicks of a button" said Josh Piejko, a 3D artist who teaches as an adjunct instructor, and works on the Rome Campus as an academic advisor. "This will be the future of portfolios."

By using Sketchfab, artists can show an actual 3D model that uses dynamic lighting, normal maps, and even plays animations right through an internet browser window. The website takes just a few seconds to load a new model and can be viewed on both desktop and mobile web browsers. Due to the website's simple user interface, visitors can quickly view 3D interactive models without needing to have any technical training.

Since discovering Sketchfab, Piejko has integrated the software into his professional portfolio and is encouraging students to do the same. It only takes a few minutes to import a new model and share it with the world, which beats the old and tedious way of rendering out still images of his work and then having to design a webpage for them to be viewed on.

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Resource Administrator Marianne Clark, who also attended MVCC to earn a degree in retail management. Her career has led her to work at Metropolitan Life and Time Warner Cable in clerical positions before landing a position at Bank of New York Mellon, where she is responsible for recruitment and hiring.

"You need to understand and practice confidentiality, be honest, and have integrity. You need to have good typing skills, good organization skills, be professional, and have good communication skills. You don't keep someone on hold on the phone for a long time," said Clark.

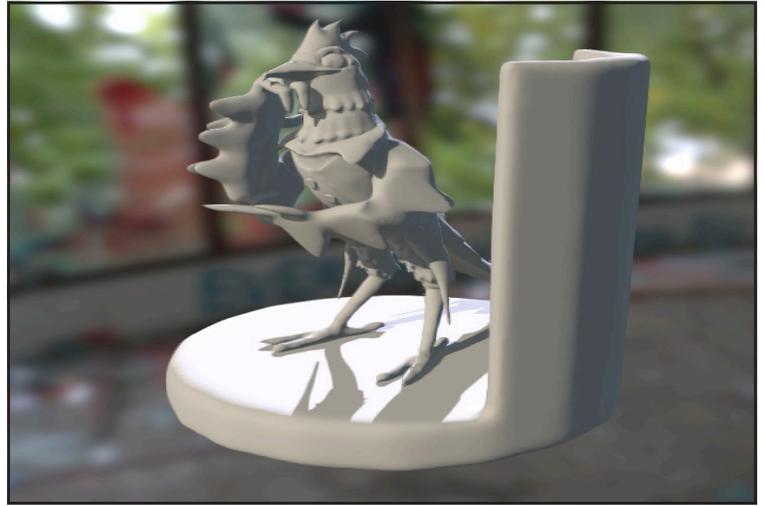
After we completed the field trip, the class went to Sumo's for lunch. The field trip was funded by Student Congress.

The Bank of New York Mellon began its operations in Oriskany in 1988, and currently employs 850 people at this site with another 850 working in Syracuse. Worldwide, the company employs 50,000 people.

"Just like how YouTube revolutionized how we share videos, Sketchfab has revolutionized how people share and view 3D art," added Piejko. "Sketchfab has really taken off in the few short months that I've been using it. Now, I cannot think of a 3D artist who does not utilize this website."

The Sketchfab website also serves as a great creative resource for students as it allows for them to search and view work created by professional artists as well as providing an outlet to share their own artwork. Since all that is required to view the artwork is a web browser, students can receive critiques on works in progress very quickly from people all over the world. Models can even be posted and viewed on Facebook or sent in an email so that young artists can proudly share their hard work with friends and family members.

"In the professional world of art, developing a strong ability to communicate with others is essential to survival. When working in front of a computer all day on digital art, it is easy to become very myopic in your thoughts and processes. 3D art requires a blend of both art and science, and can be overwhelming at times. I want my students to use tools like Sketchfab so that they start networking with a global community of artists early on. Sharing knowledge with other artists and participating in online critiques can only make an artist stronger, opening their minds to better and more efficient



ways of problem solving. Sketchfab has provided a forum for this type of art unlike any other website," said Piejko.

Sketchfab is planning on partnering with MVCC to sponsor events or competitions sometime in the near future.

View some of the work done by MVCC students at: <http://blog.sketchfab.com/post/130204276524/sketchfab-in-the-classroom-mohawk-valley>

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Submit your  
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Communitas to  
[rhaubert@mvcc.edu](mailto:rhaubert@mvcc.edu)

# House on Sunset Ave. gets a new life

## *MVCC, Rescue Mission team up for Skills for Success program*

The house at 1331 Sunset Avenue in Utica has seen better days, but not by much. After the house was gutted to the studs, the students enrolled in the Skills for Success Job Training Program, who are working on the building, realized that there was no insulation between the outside walls and the interior plaster. And with only one or two heaters throughout the whole house, surviving through a winter in Utica couldn't have been easy for the families that have lived there over the years.

That's all about to change...

Through a partnership between Mohawk Valley Community College, the City of Utica, On Point for College, Workforce Investment Board, Oneida County Workforce Development, local contractors, Unions, the Rescue Mission of Utica, and many others, this multi-family house will be transformed from an eyesore to a comfortable, energy-efficient home by the first of the year.

The Rescue Mission purchased the house from the city of Utica through its Urban Renewal Program for a minimal amount to use as a tool to teach students of MVCC's Carpentry and Masonry program.

The students, recruited through the help of the Rescue Mission, are mostly men who would have trouble getting hired in other industries because of their backgrounds, and can't receive financial aid through the State. Some are working to turn their lives around after a struggle with addiction or being incarcerated, and others have never acquired training or skill sets that would make them desirable candidates for jobs.

Ricardo Rosero, Assistant Professor of Carpentry and Masonry, at MVCC, said that while only a couple of his students have been exposed to doing construction work before, it's one of the only avenues for gainful employment for some of them.

"But you can't do [construction] unless you have some skills or at least an introduction to the skills," he said. "The Carpentry and Masonry program allows that to happen. They stay with us two semesters. We give them basic, fundamental training where they have a much better understanding of how construction components fit together, and then con-



nect them out to the different construction companies. I get calls all the time [from employers, seeking qualified applicants]."

Rosero said that helping to rehabilitate the house is the laboratory or hands-on section of the classes the students are taking. The program for the fall semester has already reached its 20-student capacity, and those students will also work on the house, which is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

The City of Utica is making another vacant, city-owned home available for this collaborative effort, which Rosero hopes will continue on a permanent basis.

For now, Rosero said that after they finish gutting this 1930-era house to the studs, it will be fitted with new plumbing, electrical, heating, foam insulation, energy-efficient windows, and a hot water baseboard heating system. The house's hardwood floors are in good shape, and those will be re-finished.

Rosero explained that this partnership and the experience it gives students reinforces what he teaches them—that improving their skills will open up better job opportunities for them.

"I'd rather do this than anything else," he said. "There's no better job, by far, than helping these men, change their lives...there's nothing like it."

Paul Ridley, a student of the program from the Utica and Whitesboro areas, read about a similar program a while ago, and he was looking for a new field to go into. He checked out the program through the Rescue Mission and MVCC.

"It's a great cause. It helps a lot of

people, and you learn a great, new set of skills."

He pointed toward a white board filled with formulas and calculations, explaining that they're using what they learned in the classroom and applying it as they go to determine what materials to use.

"Ric does a really good job of letting us know what we're doing, why we're doing it, how we're going to do it, and then actually doing it," Ridley said.

Ridley said he hopes the skills he's gaining will help him get a good position once he finishes the program, and mentioned staying here, going west, or going south.

Jim Haid, executive director of the Rescue Mission, said that the goal of getting a job anywhere is one of the main pros of this collaboration.

"You can take this skill anywhere," he said. "But what's great about this program is that it's a win for the City, the taxpayers, and especially the students. Construction workers will always be needed, and these students will always have a job at home."

## **Free Dahlia bulbs**

Free Dahlia bulbs (tubers) - Ready to store over the Winter for Spring planting. Plants are about 3 - 4 feet tall, covered with red "pom-pom" type blooms - very "showy". email [scoleman@mvcc.edu](mailto:scoleman@mvcc.edu)