

Written Testimony
Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
February 28, 2011

Manchester Community College (MCC) has a great impact on the lives of the student who attend here. For some MCC has been an important part of turning their lives around, whether overcoming adversity or addiction, looking for a new career path or simply fulfilling their love of learning.

Our students chose to attend MCC because we offer a quality education at an affordable price. Our small class sizes, variety of courses and degree programs and flexible scheduling e all contribute to making MCC a high yield investment for our students.

At MCC, faculty and staff are committed to helping students achieve their educational, personal and career goals. By providing assistance for new students transitioning into the college environment, offering extra assistance in subjects that may be difficult and giving them real experience while working within the college and local organizations, we are helping them gain confidence and guiding them to the successful completion of their college education.

Any cut to the budget for higher education – particular that of the community colleges – will severely affect the quality and quantity of courses and services that can be offered. Here are the stories of just a few students who could be affected.



Julie Larkin

Major: Psychology/General Studies

Hometown: East Hartford

A love of learning brought Julie Larkin back to college 35 years after graduating from high school. She began thinking about attending college around the time her daughter started her college career. Julie decided to attend Manchester Community College (MCC) based on the diversity in cultural experiences, the curriculum and the flexibility in schedules.

Since it had been quite a while since Julie attended school, she also felt more comfortable beginning at a two-year college. She participated in the Adults in Transition program which was very helpful to Larkin as she adjusted to her new routine as a college student.

“What I like most about MCC is the flexibility in scheduling, the variety of courses and degree programs offered and the feasibility in cost to attend the school. Also, the faculty and staff that I’ve interacted with genuinely care about their students,” said Larkin.

Julie is very busy these days; she still continues to work as a Parish Administrator while working towards her associate degree in Psychology here at MCC. She is an active member of Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society and serves as Student Senate President. It is Larkin's desire to give others the same experience that she has had here at MCC, to pay it forward and encourage students to believe in themselves, that is what motivates her to be so active here at MCC.

Larkin stated that her biggest accomplishment so far has been to develop her leadership skills and strengthen her confidence in what she can achieve at school and in life. She plans to pursue her four year degree in Psychology after graduating from MCC in 2012.

"Education is important to me because I believe that there is always something a person can learn. I don't think anyone can learn enough and I've always been excited about educating myself in as many areas as possible," said Larkin, "I am a more well-rounded, accomplished person as a result."



Tom Kilroy

Major: Respiratory Care

Hometown: Manchester

Fresh starts are something that Tom Kilroy knows about. After years of living in Boston and working as a plumber at Harvard, Tom decided to move to Connecticut in order to assist some ailing family members. At the time he wasn't sure what he wanted to do but knew he wanted a career change.

His family encouraged him to go back to school so he decided to attend MCC and major in Respiratory Care at the suggestion of his cousin who went through the program 20 years ago. That was in spring 2009 and now Tom is starting his clinical rotation at Hartford Hospital.

Kilroy participated in the Adults in Transition program which he said really helped him get mentally ready to be a student again.

"MCC gives you every resource you need in order to succeed," said Tom. "MCC's resources such as the tutoring program and librarians are all so helpful."

Tom has been quite successful here at MCC, as well as personally. He is doing well in his classes, is on the Dean's List and just received an MCC Foundation Scholarship from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. He stated biggest accomplishment however has been losing 220 pounds by eating right and exercising. The snowball effect helped as he started to feel better and he kept on rolling.

Kilroy plans to graduate in May 2012 and hopes to continue his studies at a four-year college such as the University of Hartford. His end goal is to begin his new respiratory care career and would love to work on Life Star.

Tom highly recommends MCC to friends considering returning to school stating, *"Education is important because with a better education you can make better decisions. Your future begins here"*.



Tracy Poplasky

Major: Drug and Alcohol Recovery Counselor (DARC)

Hometown: Hartford

Tracy came to Manchester Community College back in 2004 with only the clothes on her back and the determination to turn her life around. After years of struggling with drug and alcohol addiction, Tracy's daughter confronted her asking her when she was going to stop. Something clicked for Tracy who realized she wanted to live.

She entered yet another rehabilitation program but was still unsure what she would do when the program ended. One day a friend told Tracy that she was attending Manchester Community College (MCC) to become a Drug and Alcohol Recovery Counselor and Tracy thought, *"I can do that"*.

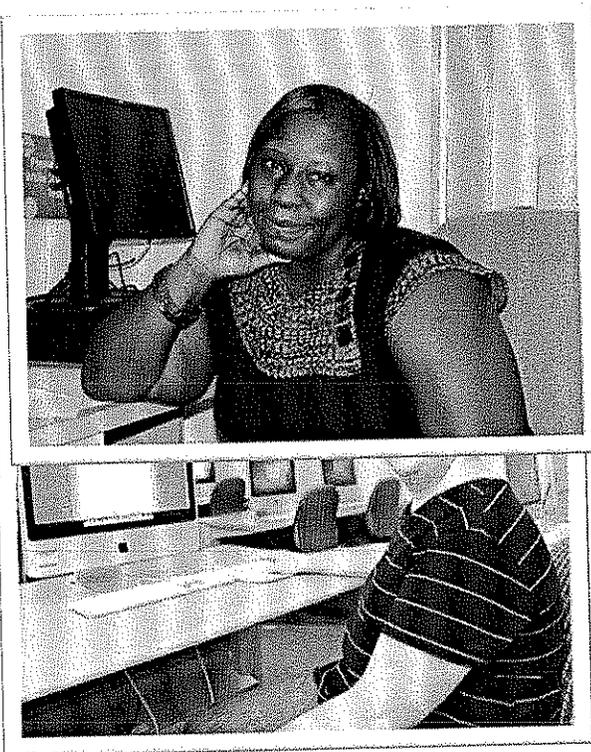
Poplasky came to MCC at first to keep busy and start forming new good habits to replace her old bad habits. She would commute to MCC each day by bus from her apartment in Hartford, spending many hours on campus taking classes, studying and at her work study job.

In the beginning she was scared and worried that she wouldn't fit in but said, *"It wasn't like that, there's a diverse group of people here at MCC with so many different backgrounds, all working toward a common goal, education and a better life. Everyone is so nice and they truly care."*

According to Tracy, MCC gave her a new life and credits her success here to the faculty and staff who have helped her along the way.

Tracy's determination has paid off and she says, *"I got lucky coming here. Fifteen years ago I never imagined I'd be where I am now."* She graduated in May 2010 and is currently working as an Allied Health Careers Assistant here at MCC and enjoys working with other students. She plans to continue her education and is taking a computer class during the Spring Semester.

When she isn't here at MCC, Tracy likes to spend time with her family and her two cats. She can often be found feeding stray cats in her neighborhood and would love to open a "Kitty Rescue".



Tracy's offered this advice to anyone thinking of changing their life, *"Stop thinking about it and just do it, it's worth it. Never give up!"*

Jeremy Michaud

Major: Accounting/General Studies

Hometown: Coventry

Attending Manchester Community College (MCC) was an easy transition for Jeremy Michaud who graduated from Great Path Academy (GPA), a middle college high school located here on the MCC campus. He decided to attend MCC mainly because he was a GPA student but also because it is close to home and has a great sense of community.

A self professed *"typical teen"* Jeremy was a GPA sophomore when he started an internship at the Testing Center. Georgette Hyman, Test Administrator, said, *"Jeremy is responsible, smart and great with students and the general public. I have seen Jeremy grow into a dedicated and professional student worker."* As an MCC student, Jeremy is now working in the Testing Center under Federal Work Study funding.

Michaud had planned to major in accounting but after exploring classes that appealed to him, now plans to pursue a different career path. *Jeremy had long been interested in sign language and decided to take a course here at MCC. His sign language professor provided such a great experience with sign language that he was inspired to continue further in that field.*

He hopes to attend Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. to obtain his bachelor's degree in American Sign Language beginning in the 2012-13 school year and hopes to someday teach a Sign Language course or become an interpreter.

According to Jeremy, his biggest accomplishment so far has been graduating from high school. Jeremy stated that education is important to him because he believes you can never have too much knowledge. *MCC was a great starting point for Jeremy who credits his success to the good community and helpful staff.*

Janel Parker

Major: Social Services

Hometown: Hartford

Janel Parker decided to come to Manchester Community College (MCC) at the recommendation of her high school teachers who told her it would be the perfect place for her to start. Janel, who graduated from Pathways to Technology Magnet School, has been taking classes in Social Services here at MCC ever since and will be transferring to a four-year college next semester to study Child Psychology.

Parker seems like your average college student, she takes classes, has a work study job in the testing center and loves to act and dance. What isn't obvious is that Janel has a significant visual disability and is legally blind.

Janel has found ways to overcome her disability and credits her success to her high school teachers who taught her how to advocate for herself. She now uses the skills she learned to advocate for both herself and others with disabilities.

While attending MCC Janel has made many good friends and feels that the staff is nice and helpful. *The teachers here at MCC have been key to her success and she stated that her professors have been very supportive and taught her what to "really" expect.* She would recommend MCC to a friend saying *"It's a loving community with a lot of support."*

Education is important to Parker who believes that without knowledge it is hard to be successful, *"I want to help people and I need the knowledge to help them."* In the future, she hopes to obtain her master's degree in Clinical Psychology and hopes to incorporate her love of acting into her work by forming a program that would empower area youth by helping develop their confidence and providing guidance to help them fulfill their dreams.

Janel offered this advice to anyone considering furthering their education, *"No matter where you come from or your situation, if you have the will you can do it, dreams are possible."*



MaryAnn Carrasquillo

Major: Drug and Alcohol Recovery Counselor (DARC)

Hometown: Stafford Springs

MaryAnn Carrasquillo plans to graduate from Manchester Community College (MCC) in May 2011 after which she hopes to continue her studies at Central Connecticut State University. Getting to this point has not been an easy journey for MaryAnn but it is one that she has dreamed of since she was a little girl.

Carrasquillo spent her early years growing up on a farm in Colebrook, CT but left home at a young age to escape an abusive family situation. Over the years MaryAnn has lived in Florida, Puerto Rico and Arizona, to name a few, and is the mother of nine children. She is now living on her own, raising her youngest son in Stafford Springs, CT.

She initially came to MCC because she was interested in the Surgical Technology program, but was not approved for the program due to back problems; luckily, she found the Drug and Alcohol Recovery Counselor degree program was a good fit for her.

MaryAnn, who says her biggest accomplishment was going back to school, has enjoyed meeting other people her age here at MCC and making new friends. "Being back at school, the whole process of being a student worker, has been inspirational, it really helped build my self esteem," says Carrasquillo.

MaryAnn is very busy these days taking classes part-time, completing her work study in the Office of Transitional Programs (OTP), volunteering at the Stafford Teen Center and serving as team 'mom' for her youngest son's football team, all while achieving part-time President's List status.

One person here at MCC that MaryAnn credits with having a great influence on her is Linda Devlin, a former teacher, the person she works for during her work study in the OTP. *"She (Devlin) takes a lot of her time to help me with math. In fact, everyone down there goes way beyond the call to help the students they serve,"* said MaryAnn.

Five years from now MaryAnn hopes to have a bachelor's degree in Social Work and would like to go on for her master's degree in a field that will allow her to work in Pastoral Counseling with an emphasis on Substance Abuse.

"Most little girls dream about walking down the aisle to marry the love of their life. My dream has always been to walk down an aisle and receive my diploma." This is what has kept MaryAnn focused on achieving her goals here at MCC.