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## Fitchburg State University Today

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### Celebrating the Class of 2021, in-person and online



Our celebration of the Class of 2021 began last week with the Falcon Graduation Walk, where close to 400 soon-to-be graduates gathered for a professional photo opportunity with their friends and loved ones.

The event was [a great success](#), paving the way for the upcoming [virtual commencement](#) ceremonies, where 900 graduate and undergraduate degrees will be conferred.

- The Graduate Commencement Ceremony will go live at **6:30 p.m. Thursday, May 13**, where remarks will include a speech by Graduate Student Leadership Award Recipient Christopher Brooks.
- The Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony will premiere at **10 a.m. Saturday, May 15**, where remarks will include the address by Valedictorian Joseph Bourgeois.

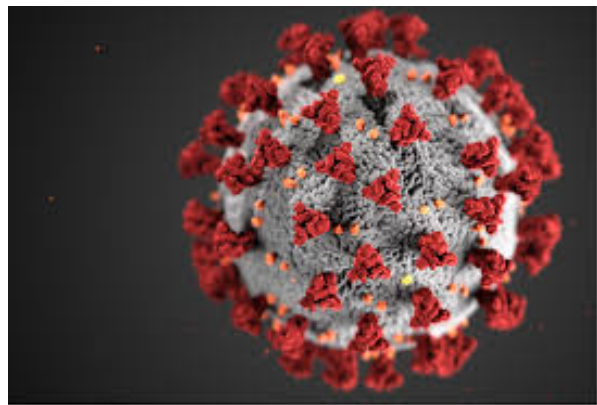
Visit [fitchburgstate.edu/commencement](https://fitchburgstate.edu/commencement) to learn more.

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### COVID vaccinations will be required for in-person attendees this fall

The Massachusetts State University system is [joining](#) a growing number of colleges and universities across the country and Commonwealth requiring students to be vaccinated against COVID-19 before they attend in-person classes next fall.

The presidents of the nine universities in the system unanimously decided to require undergraduate and graduate students who are attending in-person classes, conducting research on campus, living in residence halls, or participating in campus life activities to become fully inoculated with an approved COVID-19 vaccine prior to the start of the 2021 academic year. The presidents expect that all employees will also be fully vaccinated prior to the start of the fall semester.



Additional details will be posted on the university's coronavirus [information page](#).

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## University, Fitchburg Art Museum renew partnership



A newly reauthorized pact between Fitchburg State and the [Fitchburg Art Museum](#) (FAM) will deepen the collaboration between two of the city's most important and enduring institutions, enriching opportunities for programming and professional development for both organizations that are designed to enhance the quality of life for all city residents.

The agreement, signed by President Lapidus and FAM Director Nicholas Capasso, calls for both institutions “to engage in activities that are mutually beneficial, as well as activities that help support the economy, livability, and quality of life in the city of Fitchburg and North Central Massachusetts.”

“Fitchburg State University and the Fitchburg Art Museum have enjoyed a long and significant history of mutually beneficial collaboration, and this new agreement further formalizes opportunities for us to work together on projects that will have meaningful impacts on students, faculty, and the broader community,” President Lapidus said. “I am grateful for the partnership and excited about the potential for growth the updated agreement will help facilitate.”

[Learn More](#)

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## Crystal Aneke to be recognized as one of state's 29 Who Shine

The state Department of Higher Education will once again honor [29 Who Shine](#) - acknowledging a standout graduate of each of its public colleges and universities - with a virtual celebration at 2 p.m. **Thursday, May 13.**

Fitchburg State will be represented by **Crystal Aneke '20**, who graduated in December with a degree in political science with minors in economics and criminal justice.

As the elected student representative to the university's Board of Trustees, Aneke worked to amplify student voices in university affairs. In her role with the Black Student Union, Aneke moderated a powerful panel discussion on Black Lives and Blue Lives that included students, staff, and police officers. This was followed by the launch of a series of “Courageous Conversations” on themes related to diversity, equity and inclusion that brought members of the campus community together in virtual space. And she was a stellar member of the university's Moot Court team, earning national distinction.



The 29 Who Shine event will also pay tribute to Aneke's faculty mentor, **Professor Paul Weizer** (Economics, History and Political Science).

A link to the YouTube Premiere event will be posted on Tuesday, May at 11 at <https://www.mass.edu/system/29whoshine.asp>.

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## University-donated property designated for Abolitionist Park



A green space paying tribute to Fitchburg citizens who fought to abolish slavery is taking shape on Snow Street.

Fitchburg State donated a patch of land at 42-50 Snow St. to serve as the park's future home.

Sponsor support has made the [Abolitionist Park](#) nearly complete, but organizers are looking to the public to help finish the project.

When finished, the Abolitionist Park will stand as a permanent reminder of Fitchburg's role in one of the nation's greatest struggles, helping current and future residents and visitors understand a vital piece of American history.

"Too often history is not contextualized, which results in people feeling disconnected from the amazing stories and valuable lessons that can be learned through the study of community-based history," said **Danette Day**, co-chair of the Friends of the Fitchburg Abolitionist Park and a member of the Education Department faculty at Fitchburg State.

[Read more](#)

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## Speakers Series continues today with talk on religious literacy

The university's Speakers Series continues **today at 12:30 p.m.** with a talk by **Professor Michael Hoberman** (English Studies) on "Don't Know Much About Theology: The Case for Building Religious Literacy into the University Curriculum."

Watch the talk at <https://meet.google.com/ant-dcha-bsv?authuser=0>.

## Undergraduate Conference for Research and Creative Practice a success

The virtual [Undergraduate Conference for Research and Creative Practice](#) was an impressive celebration of excellent student work.

For those who were unable to join at the conference launch on April 22, the featured work is still viewable online. Check it out [here](#).

**BLOOMING IN ADVERSITY**

Though we have all faced challenges and change this year, we come together to celebrate our students' academic achievements. Come see how our students have blossomed during a trying year, and learned to apply their knowledge to real-world challenges.

This virtual showcase of student research and creative work has something for everyone. Join us and be inspired by our students' creativity, knowledge, and accomplishments!

**April 22, 2021**  
This is a virtual event.

FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY  
**UNDERGRADUATE CONFERENCE**  
for Research and Creative Practice

LEARN MORE AT [fitchburgstate.edu/ug-conference](https://fitchburgstate.edu/ug-conference)

## Library's celebration of Open Educational Resources continues



The Amelia V. Gallucci-Cirio Library and Open and Affordable Education Committee are continuing their efforts to educate the campus community about the possibilities available through the use of [open educational resources](#) (OER) at Fitchburg State.

OER are defined as "teaching, learning, and research materials in any

medium - digital or otherwise - that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation, and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions."

This week, [read](#) about the experiences of **Professor Laura Baker** (Economics, History and Political Science).

Professor Baker's story, and other accounts by faculty, will be posted on the library's Open Educational Resources Guide at [fitchburgstate.libguides.com/oer/OER-Stories](https://fitchburgstate.libguides.com/oer/OER-Stories).

### Future Educator Academy designed to support diverse schools

A new initiative at Fitchburg State is designed to address the nation's changing demographics by recruiting and training future educators from traditionally underrepresented populations.

The Future Educator Academy is designed to address ongoing demographic shifts, according to **Lourdes Ramirez**, coordinator of field placements, partnerships and recruitment for Fitchburg State's School of Education. About 40% of the state's public school students are of color, but only 8% of their teachers come from minority groups.



Research has shown that students of color are less likely to drop out if they have at least one teacher of color, Ramirez said. "We know that students who attend urban schools, regardless of their ethnic or socioeconomic background, bring important knowledge and experiences from living in a diverse environment," she added.

[Learn more](#)

### VISIONS 2021 launches with standout Communications Media work

[Visions](#), the annual honors exhibition of student work from the Communications Media Department at Fitchburg State, this year includes accepted works from 2020 and 2021.

The event features exhibits for photography, graphic design, and game design,



# VISIONS 2020 & 2021

Virtual Gallery  
Opens April 28th



along with video showcases for theater performances and film/video short films and documentaries.

The programs are free and open to the public. Event graphics designed by Elena Kehoe.

[Check out VISIONS here](#)

## Save the Date: The Forge Theater Lab presents short plays in June

This summer, join [The Forge Theater Lab](#), in residence at Fitchburg State, for an online showcase of short plays about people coming face-to-face with their past selves. "Past Tense: Six Short Plays" will be presented virtually June 18-27.

By turns comic, poignant, and powerful, these stories explore the challenge of living in the present when you can see the past in the mirror.

Featuring works by Steven William Beck '03, Matt Cogswell '07, Cayenne Douglass, Ken Green, and Ashley Lauren Rogers '06. Featuring Matt Cogswell '07, Mike Daniel '17, Felipe Ferreira '18, Daniel T.

Hankins, Maureen Keillor, Michael Knight '01, Sydney Lipsett '21, Brittany Messuri Rechenberger '18, Nael Nacer, Kathleen O'Connor and Cheyenne Winley. Directed by Caley Chase, Jack Croy '07, Samantha deManbey '12, Lee Douglass, and Rebecca Joseph.

[Learn More](#)



## CIC series on Fellini continues on May 9 and 16



The [Center for Italian Culture](#) will continue its exploration of the films of celebrated filmmaker Federico Fellini with presentations by lecturer Fred Plotkin.

"Fellini 101: Conversations with Fred Plotkin" continues at 4 p.m. Sunday, May 9 with a discussion of *Vitelloni* (1953), and concludes at 4 p.m. Sunday,

May 16 with a look at *Amarcord* (1973). The series began with a look at Fellini's *La Strada* on Sunday.

This series is presented with the generous support of Fitchburg State's Center for Italian Culture and the Sandro and Lillian Clementi Lecture Fund, in collaboration with the Amelia V. Gallucci-Cirio Library at Fitchburg State, the Fitchburg Public Library and the Leominster Public Library.

Learn more, including how to view the films, [here](#).

### Faculty Notes

Professor Daniel Welsh (Biology/Chemistry) organized two sessions at the 2021 Northeast Natural History Conference, one on fish population biology and the other on the anatomy, physiology, and behavior of fish. Dr. Welsh also presented a talk on his own research, entitled "Patterns in variation in fish scale size within individuals and across populations" at the conference.

### See You in the Fall

This is the final issue of the *Fitchburg State University Today* newsletter for the 2020-21 academic year. To keep up to date with university news over the summer, please check out [fitchburgstate.edu/about/news](http://fitchburgstate.edu/about/news).

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