
Fitchburg State University Today

Moot Court students soar at national tournament

Fitchburg State's storied history in the American Moot Court Association's national tournament continued last weekend when the team of students Benjamin Hill and Maylynn Velazquez scored second in the country in the brief-writing competition.

"I am very proud of this group of students," said **Professor Paul Weizer** (Economics, History and Political Science), and the founder of the university's moot court program. "They worked hard, supported one another through a very difficult semester, and produced great results. I continue to be in awe of the resiliency of our students. They competed against some of the most prestigious programs in the country and made Fitchburg State proud."



[Learn more](#)

Black History Month events begin this week



The university's celebration of [Black History Month](#) begins **tomorrow at 6:30 p.m.** with the [virtual presentation](#) "Radical Self-Love" with author and activist Porsha Olayiwola.

In this world we live in, we are taught to not love our skin, body, or even ideas. We are taught to not glorify ourselves, to be humble, to allow room for others to praise us but never to praise ourselves. This workshop will go against that grain and beckon for participants to glorify themselves. Using writings from Nikki Giovanni, Toni Morrison and Kendrick Lamar, this writing workshop seeks to establish a safe space within ourselves and use radical self-love to explore art in a way that offers up praise to the

people we are and the people we are becoming. Register to join the virtual event at <https://bit.ly/3AjDiKc>.

Porsha Olayiwola is a writer, performer, educator and curator, originally from Chicago and now a resident of Boston. She is an Individual World Poetry Slam Champion and the artistic director at MassLEAP, a literary youth organization. Olayiwola is an MFA candidate at Emerson College and the author of *i shimmer sometimes, too* forthcoming with Button Poetry and is the current poet laureate for the city of Boston.

[Black History Month Programs](#)

University salutes Performance Recognition Award winners

President Lapidus recently welcomed the employees who were acknowledged by the state's Performance Recognition Program, honoring extraordinary contributions to public service.



Campus honorees included the Technology Department's User Services team: **John Niles, Jeff Nardone, Joel**

Rodriguez, Denise Lucier, Lynese Wiafe, and Michael Desmarais. The team was recognized for its support to university staff, faculty and students during the COVID-19 pandemic, facilitating remote learning and telework that allowed the university to continue operations.

Dean of Students Hank Parkinson (not pictured) was also recognized for his commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts on our campus.

Theater Block renovation receives state support



The decades-long effort to revitalize a cultural landmark in downtown Fitchburg took a significant step forward last week when the Theater Block on Main Street was presented a grant for \$3 million by the local legislative delegation.

“The theater is a priority project for the university,” said President Lapidus, who noted the theater will support the cultural economy in the city. “We want to be downtown, we want to help the city grow and thrive. It’s a fantastic city and I

think we’re moving in the right direction.”

The funds were presented during an [event](#) Tuesday by state Sen. John Cronin and state Rep. Michael Kushmerek, where U.S. Rep. Lori Trahan and Fitchburg Mayor Stephen DiNatale also spoke to the collaborations and investments that are making significant impact on the community.

“This is really a down payment to revitalize the Theater Block and make sure that its best days are ahead of it,” said Sen. Cronin, who also saluted President Lapidus for keeping the university “outward-looking” and mindful of the shared destinies of the campus and the

city.

[Learn more](#)

Speakers Series resumes next Monday, Feb. 7

The university's Speakers Series will continue at 3:30 p.m. **Monday, Feb. 8**, with a presentation by **Professor Laura Garofoli** (Psychological Science) entitled "Leveraging an Apprenticeship Model to Improve Reading, Information Literacy, and Learning."

The virtual talk will be held via Google Meet at meet.google.com/mgp-qdmt-wrr or may be joined by phone at (US) +1 304-916-7135 (PIN: 541544547).

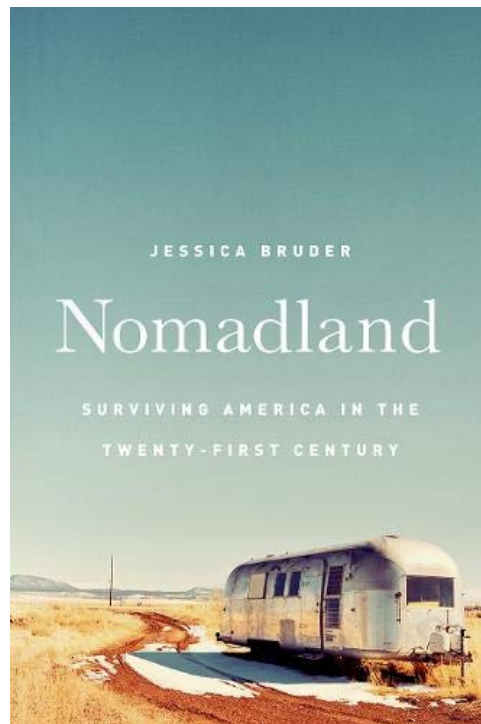
A recording of the talk will be made available for those who cannot join the discussion live.

Community Read events continue in February

The university's [Community Read](#) of *Nomadland* by Jessica Bruder continues at 3:30 p.m. **Wednesday, Feb. 16** with a [virtual panel discussion](#) that will explore the challenges facing older adults in the U.S. to access affordable and safe housing.

Panelists will include Doug Bushman of the Fitchburg Housing Authority and Dr. Jennifer Molinsky of the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, and the discussion will be moderated by **Associate Professor Mark Williams** (Behavioral Sciences). [Register](#) to join this free event at <https://forms.gle/tKxyZirCcR39UJzk9>.

Is the American dream of home ownership crumbling for those 65 and over? Panelists discuss the growing challenge of ensuring older adults in America have access to affordable and safe housing. The program is co-sponsored by the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, Fitchburg Housing Authority and Fitchburg State University. Learn more at fitchburgcommunityread.com.



CenterStage and cultural events



The [CenterStage](#) arts and culture series showcases the work of art and communications media faculty at the annual Faculty Show, opening today and running through March 11 in the Hammond Hall Art Gallery.

There will be an opening reception in the gallery at 3:30 p.m. **Wednesday**, followed by a film/video screening at 4 p.m. in Ellis White Lecture Hall.

Faculty Notes

Associate Professor Katherine Jewell (Economics, History and Political Science) will give a talk at MIT on Thursday, March 10. In "Party City: WMBR, Institutional Change, and Democratic Media," Jewell will delve into the history of WMBR at MIT from the 1960s to the 1980s to explore how the station built a meaningful community institution despite transformations within the university and industry. Learn more at MIT's Comparative Media Studies [website](#).

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