

Spring 2020

# HCC Horizons



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# Risks Outweigh The Relief

By Mia English Staff Writer

Juuling (and vaping) is a teenage frenzy that has reached the point of no return. What was once known as a safe and healthier way to quit smoking has now been revealed to have life altering risks and found to be very addictive. Juuling is affecting HCC students and risks their health and safety.

HCC student Anthony Rodriguez has been juuling for over a year. Rodriguez says, "I used to smoke a pack of cigarettes a day. Then I turned to juuling to help lessen my smoking problem, which it did." When he first started juuling, he believed it was a healthier option and didn't believe there were any health effects.

His mother hated the smell of smoke in his house, so she told him to try a different way, like juuling, to lessen the smell it left. Little did she know that it would lead to her son to having an even worse nicotine addiction.

One juul pod contains 20 cigarettes worth of nicotine. The Cen-

ters for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a health advisory on August 30, 2019, urging people to avoid e-cigarettes and other vaping devices.

An outbreak of severe lung disease related to vaping has caused severe illness and death in many U.S. states. It is reported that 1,299 people were reported to have been linked to vaping related illnesses and had 26 deaths linked to it.

Victoria Sorrentino, a student at HCC, has been juuling since August of 2018. What started off as a fun and cool way to fit in with people turned into an addiction she can't stop.

"When I first started juuling I didn't think there was any health risk or that it was bad for you. Now that I know it still doesn't make me want to stop," she said.

Nicotine is known as a very addictive substance found in cigarettes and juuls, which is very hard to quit because once your body starts ingesting it, your body will crave more.

Sorrentino's mom fears for her and wishes she would stop juuling, especially because of what they see on the news, but Sorrentino isn't ready to do so yet.

"I tried to stop but two weeks later I bought another juul, so that didn't work out well. I would probably stop if they discontinued the pods, which I know they're working on, or if I didn't have the money I would," she said.

And even when teens try to quit the juuling habit, it's an easy habit to fall back into it.

So what is being put into effect to stop this from continuing? Recently the Food and Drug Administration has taken steps toward JUUL labs, the maker, that included "issuing warning letters to retailers for selling the product to minors." "The FDA also asked JUUL Labs to turn over documents related to marketing, health effects, and use among youth," stated the Truth Initiative website.

Although things are moving in a positive direction, things won't

truly change until the FDA fully regulates e-cigarettes and establishes a strong pre-market review process to prevent these kinds of products from being sold in the first place.

"Truth Initiative and five other public health and medical groups called on the FDA to take action on JUUL in April. The groups specified five actions, including removing certain JUUL flavors, suspending internet sales and prohibiting branded merchandise."

Kimberly Reyes, an HCC student, is a juuler who has had a smoking habit for as long as she can remember: "Juuling is just a relaxing pastime for me, and it's an alternative to smoking cigarettes," she said.

Reyes started her journey believing juuling would help with her cigarette addiction and fix her health problems, but with all the recent evidence against this

claim, she seems torn between a dangerous habit and getting her health back.

"Honestly it scares me, I've seen people being hospitalized over it and I fear that's where it might lead me, so I've decided to slowly quit more and more each day till I get to the point where I'm done completely," she added. Reyes plans to start next week and hopes she can be strong enough to finish.

What started out as a "healthy" way to stop smoking cigarettes and a cool way to fit in turned into a life risking addiction that has been seen all over the news. If you know somebody who juuls or vapes, try to make them aware of the health risk so that they can make better choices for their health.

**"I tried to stop but two weeks later I bought another juul, so that didn't work out well."**



Photo by Pexels: Thorn Yang



# SUFFERING IN SILENCE

By Stephen Gonzalez  
Staff Writer



Photo by Pexels: Segopotso Makhutja

The “major” holidays have officially come and gone. It’s still cold. It’s still ugly outside. You still have a few bottles of coquito left because your tio went a little overboard. At this point, you start to worry for him. Was he just trying to have a good time or was there more to it? Did he go through another divorce? Did he lose his job? Again? You don’t want to be pushy, but it’s clear that his coping methods are destructive. Your tio is just one of just myriads of men of color who struggle to discuss their mental health and cope with such in a healthy way.

The concept of a “real” man has plagued generations of men. Men not falling into this strict archetype has resulted in a mental downfall. Society has turned this idealized fantasy version of a “man’s man” into reality and are constantly reinforcing such. Masculinity is not concrete. It is fluid and however one man decides to express that masculinity is up to him and if he does not wish to explicitly express that, that does not make him less of a man.

Due to the potential mocking and societal pressure for them to be someone they aren’t, plenty of men have suffered in silence. The constant bottling of emotions has resulted in men’s mental

health at all time low.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, “nearly 1 in every 10 men have shown signs of mental illness and less than half of that group have reached out and received psychiatric help.”

The real issue at hand? An inability to open up.

Men have always struggled with this but it has been exponentially harder for men of color for a variety of reasons.

The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health shared a blog written by Ike Evans. “How to Make Real Mental Health Changes for Men of Color” details the struggles that men of color often deal with and how those struggles harm their mental health.

“The expectation that “real men” avoid asking for help provides only a partial answer. For men and boys of color, additional risk factors include higher exposure to poverty and violence, lack of economic opportunity and higher rates of incarceration,” Evans writes.

Men of color have a much different life experience. So many risk factors come into play that can ultimately contribute in deteriorating their mental stability.

Men of color often live life with something to prove. We feel like we HAVE to dedicate our entire lives to ensuring we are more than another statistic. Constant pressure to be more than just a man looms over their shoulder with malicious intent.

Failure is not an option. Never has been.

Alex Gonzalez, college graduate and my older brother, has witnessed such pressure throughout his college experience.

“I came from a two-parent household, so I never felt this immense pressure. However, I’ve seen friends that have come from single parent households, having to step up to be the ‘man’ at 16 and that eats them alive,” he says.

“You can’t live that way. Or at least

you shouldn’t have to.”

How can we, as men of color, make a change?

To HCC’s Carlton Gill, the first step is acknowledging.

## Suffering in Silence leads to more Despair...

Gill serves as the Success Coordinator at HCC’s Men’s Center and his main goal is to create a space where men of color can openly talk and express themselves in a way they may have never been able to before.

“The first step will always be to talk about it. It’s very difficult to do such which is why I often try

to get students to use art to express that, specifically music,” Gill says.

Gill also talks about how he has seen hip hop be effective for students in his adolescence, citing that it has created “brotherhoods”.

When it comes to a solution, Gill believes that we should all stand together.

“In order to fix the problem within our group, we have to reform our minds,” Gill adds.

As young men of color, we are responsible for how the culture will progress. The only ways for us to change the tide is to be more open about mental health and remove the stigmas surrounding emotionally vulnerable men. Then and only then can we paint a better future for boys of color.



# Discover the World

By Arielle Rivera  
Senior Staff Writer

Everyone knows that when you reach the halfway point in the semester that's when the pressure starts to build up: midterms, tests, projects, and homework. All these things are a cocktail for stress and anxiety, but the beginning of the semester tells a different tale. In the beginning of the semester, whether you're a returning or a new student, the first two months always appear to be the least stressful for students. In the beginning, you're meeting your teachers, making new friends, only worrying about one or two assignments, and those projects aren't due until the end of the semester. Needless to say, students have plenty of spare time on their hands.

Although spare time is often a good thing, students often have trouble finding productive things to do with their newfound time and end up being on their phone for the majority of it. That's where Housatonic clubs come in. Housatonic offers many new or returning students the chance to immerse themselves in activities, develop new skills and try their hand at new experiences.

Housatonic student Mwiche Siwingwa, who used to run the ASL (American Sign Language) club, talked about how although the club was unknown, its main goal was to involve the students in deaf culture, in order to help students to understand it.

"It was a lot to organize, and it was hard because there were some students who didn't want to learn but it was nice to see some students want to learn and study hard to get better," said Siwingwa.

Although the club is no longer active, Siwingwa explained that the next time she starts a club, she will focus

more on the social aspect of the club.

Students sometimes worry that they won't have enough time to join a club, but according to student Jeffery Razor, a member of the Performing Arts Club, depending on your schedule, joining a club shouldn't have a negative effect. Razor also explained that ever since he joined the dance club, he's been able to learn new skills as a dancer.

"You can also meet other students in the club who have the same interest as you and can help you to improve your dance skills by teaching you new moves," he said.

Razor also talked about the local events that the club is participating in, along with their upcoming performance in the Cabaret Theater.

He also mentioned how the dance club was thinking about participating in competitions.

That's another advantage students gain when they join a club: they're able to go above and beyond, doing more things than other HCC students.

At HCC, some clubs offer students a chance to step outside their comfort zone and experience something new. These clubs allow students to simply explore their interests and do things that they love.

Tomas Rosenbluh, student and founder of the Dungeons and Dragons Club, talks about how in the beginning, his group didn't have anywhere else to play their game, only his home or the Lafayette cafeteria.

From San Gregorio College National Museum

The cafeteria wasn't an option because it was too loud and people always came over to start a conversation so they had decided to get a room just for playing D&D.

"It's nice, it's like we have our own little community and I'm happy I get to explore something that I'm passionate about," said Rosenbluh.

According to Student Life worker Jocelyn Eagle, there are many reasons as to why Housatonic has school clubs because many students come from different backgrounds, different places, focused on school; students need a safe place where they can be themselves and relax a bit. "Clubs help to bring out a different side of a students' creativity and they even help students broaden their horizons with informative conversation," she said.

At HCC, clubs don't just appear out of thin air-- the Student Senate are usually the ones who handle the approval of all clubs at Housatonic. According to the leader of the Student Senate, Jaylen Dan-



At HCC, some clubs offer students a chance to step outside their comfort zone and experience something new.

bers just enough to consist of a president, vice president, secretary and treasurer and right after that you go through the proper procedures, then when you come to the Student Senate, it will be

both looked over by our director of Student Activities and then our student Senate will vote on what we want to make it happen," he said.

He also explained that if a club is no longer active that they keep it on file, in case another person wants to reopen it.



the goal of the Student Senate is make sure that every club has activities and if any club needs funds the student senate helps with that.

"In order to be approved, you first have to have an idea of what your club's going to be about. Then you have to have at least four mem-

If you simply have too much time on your hands at the beginning of the semester, consider joining a club. You could end up having more fun than you expected.



Photo by Andrew Pinto

# Becoming the Straight A Student

By Lucas Pursell Staff Writer

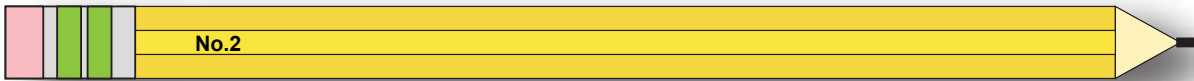


Image created by Laura Robak

All too often, students regret not going the extra mile at the start of the semester, finding themselves in turmoil during the following weeks.

According to a study by [classesandcareers.com](#), “1,125,000 of those students cannot find their momentum and end up dropping out of college altogether each year.” Professors have seen it all—students fail and drop out, students succeed and transfer to a four-year university, kids start off rough but improve, and so on.

Nobody wants to get behind and end up failing their courses, thus it’s safe to assume that you have probably entered the new semester wondering what you can do to get ahead.

Have you ever wanted to receive tips from qualified sources to help you better your study habits and approach to the new semester? With adequate research and the help of a variety of sources, the following is a number of tips to help students get that jump start they need to propel them ahead at the beginning of January’s spring semester.

In an article for the Washington Post, Valerie Strauss identifies a major phenomenon among

college students: the fact that they do not know how to study. In the same article, Strauss claims that “some students leave college because classes just aren’t going well.” However, most students have never been taught how to study and the strategies they devise on their own don’t work. For example, a student might highlight their textbooks to signal what they should review later, but if they’re reading difficult material for the first time, they probably can’t identify what’s important.”

It’s apparent that being unaware of what is important in their notes— not knowing what to study and what to ignore—is a common problem identified by college students. It could be said that this problem springs from a disconnect between professor and student. Students are no longer asking the questions they should be asking about the assigned material, surely contributing to the fall in grades.

The tendency of students to withhold important questions from their professors has been observed by HCC writing center tutor Tamara Febus. Febus claimed that students “not knowing what is going on in class,” is a major reason students fall behind in classes.

The lack of organization, according to Febus, coincided with students “not knowing what’s going on in class” or “not understanding the instruction.”

Sometimes students are shy, or maybe anxious, which possibly plays into them keeping questions to themselves and not asking professors for help. Febus hinted at the possibility of a “lack of confidence,” which the HCC tutoring center seeks to improve.

In addition to helping students with the material itself, Tamara shared that the tutoring center’s role is also helping students construct “emails, communication methods, and talking points with professors.”

Approaching and communicating with professors is just as important as learning the material they give you. With the help of the HCC tutoring center, you can devise methods of communication with your professors and never fall behind due to not knowing the material.

“I used to be afraid to ask the professor about things that I was already supposed to know the answers to— it made it very difficult for me to stay on top of things” says HCC student Brandon Binetti. “Looking for answers to the questions you have about the material, without anyone’s help, outside of classroom time, can be a daunting task because you don’t even know where to look. I mean, yeah, you could always check the syllabus or Blackboard, but you can’t always depend on those platforms to hold all the information you need to complete a task,” says Binetti.

Many others can relate to Binetti’s frustrations; searching for information that can be found by staying an extra 2 minutes after class is a waste of time.

Brandon said what changed to make him more

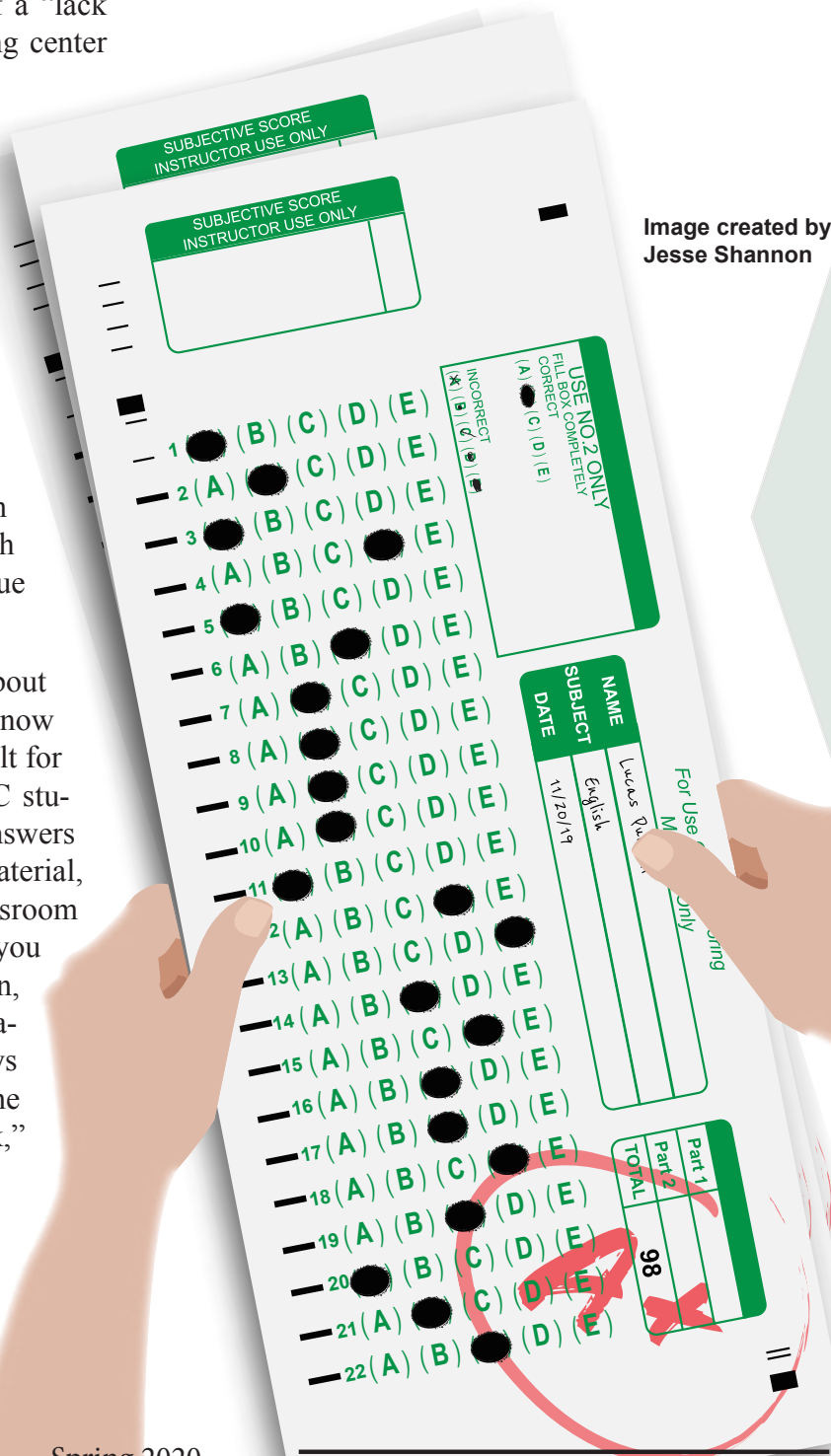


Image created by Jesse Shannon



vocal with his professors was becoming more successful as a result of communicating with them.

“I saw the improvement in my grades instantly when I started staying after class to talk to teachers about the homework,” he says. “I could never go back to the days of leaving class with only half the information I needed to complete an assignment. We are only human, we cannot possibly retain every single detail that our teacher gives us about the assignments due at the end of class; There are some things that we are going to forget, no matter how good of a student we are... Ask questions, man, it’s well worth it.”

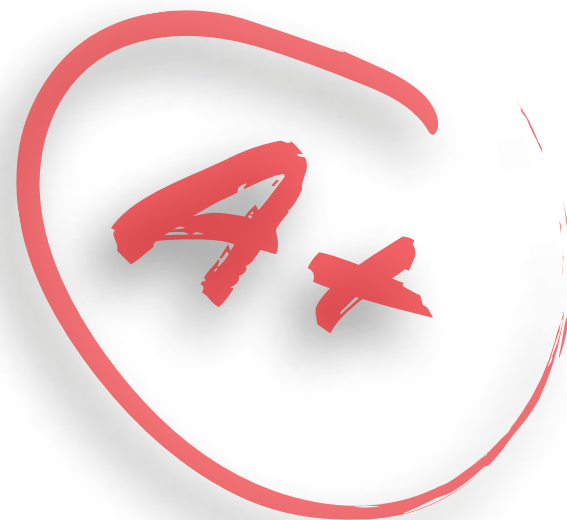
Liz Guthridge, a member of Forbes Magazines Coach’s Council (a community of top business and career coaches), wrote an entire article on the direct correlation that asking more questions has on people’s success. In her article, Guthridge makes the claim that “you can benefit by expending more energy asking questions and learning instead of worrying about how others perceive you and your talents.” This is a testament to overcoming social anxiety that may prohibit you from reaching out to your professors. Guthridge claims that asking questions is a very “low-risk, high-reward” habit to have.

Guthridge also speaks on the effort factor that goes into asking questions: “when you make an effort to learn, you expose yourself to new ideas, people and situations. You also can feel a sense of accomplishment for pushing yourself to try new things and experiment, which encourages you to continue learning.” In other terms, the learning that comes from asking important questions, as well as the sense of accomplishment, becomes addicting.

Once you see the positive impact that asking questions has on your grades and life, you will continue to keep the habit. Asking questions eventually becomes part of your daily classroom routine.

Getting ahead in your classes is seemingly more effort based than anything else. Changing your habits is only part of the plan. Try to stay on track of what is assigned and be willing to ask questions, even if you assume that they are questions with obvious answers. No professor wants to see their students get behind at the beginning of the semester.

Instead of digging yourself into a hole that you must figure out how to get out of later on, use the information above to stay on top of things throughout the entirety of the semester. This will create a padded cushion for your grades to constantly be in the “safe zone” or in the B to A range.



# My Mind is Never Really All There.

**By Christian Rivera**  
**Senior Staff Writer**

**T**ake one step into Housatonic, and ask yourself what you see. Not the place itself, but the people. What are they doing? I’m sure eight out of ten people are going to have their heads down and looking right at their phones. Shocking, right? Excuse the obvious sarcasm, but it’s a pretty common sight around campus. I’m no stranger to it either, but it definitely gets out of hand rather quickly.

I have a bad habit of never knowing when to keep my phone in my pocket, so I can pay attention to something else. I’m one of “those” people. The type of people that have a hard time giving my attention to anything else for more than five minutes. The same people that start messing with their phone, doing God only knows what, instead of listening to something that is most likely much more important. It doesn’t take a genius to identify those types of people.

The embarrassing part about it is that my parents picked up on this and decided to make a habit of taking my phone away, so I can get work done at home. Imagine being a twenty-year-old college student and getting the high schooler treatment. The sad part is that they aren’t wrong. I actually get work done a bit faster when they do that, but that isn’t to say that it doesn’t irritate me.

I have to wonder if anyone else has to deal with that sort of problem and isn’t really “all there” like I am, most of the time.





Photo by Laura Robak



Photo by Caio Resende from Pexels



Photo by Shivkumar Dharmoji from Pexels



Photo by Pixabay

# NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

By Z'Jada Harris Staff Writer

The start of a new year causes people to reflect on the professional, academic, and personal areas of their lives. And those reflections cause those people to make New Year's Resolutions for themselves that they will fail to achieve.

Failure to achieve resolutions has caused many people to stop making resolutions. "I've never made New Year's Resolutions because I always knew that they were a waste of time. And people fail to achieve their New Year's Resolutions," Robert Fabbri, Adjunct Instructor of History, said.

HCC counselor, professor, and Counseling and Wellness Center Director Lisa Slade agreed with Fabbri. "I don't make New Year's Resolutions because I think they're wimpy. I set goals and make action plans," Slade stated.

Even though a lot of people stopped making New Year's Resolutions, they still achieve the resolutions they set for themselves. HCC counselor Dr. Indira Reddy talked about the resolutions that she makes for herself every day. "I don't wait for the year to come to make resolutions. I make daily resolutions. And at the end of the day, I find out if I've accomplished the resolutions that I've made for myself that day, take it in stride, and try to do better

"I don't make New Year's Resolutions because I think they're wimpy. I set goals and make action plans," - Lisa Slade

the next day," Reddy said.

HCC receptionist and student Khadejah Riggs developed Dr. Reddy's mindset when she decided to lose weight a year ago. Since then, she has lost weight by watching what she eats, eating smaller portions, exercising, and drinking more water.

Khadejah has also learned a lot of valuable lessons since she's started her weight loss journey a year ago. "I've become excited and motivated by my progress, realized that nothing is truly unattainable, that the keys to doing things depends solely on a person's determination, that motivation and courage are requirements for people to get things done, that my biggest sup-

port system comes from within me because I'm my biggest cheerleader and that I better myself when I accomplish my goals," she said.

Some people encounter roadblocks that prevent them from achieving their resolutions. And some of those people decide to set and achieve more attainable resolutions for themselves.

Former HCC security guard Raishia Harris wanted to be a registered nurse. And when Raishia discovered that she couldn't become a registered nurse because she couldn't afford the required classes, she became a caregiver for the elderly.

Harris loves taking care of the

elderly because she wants to help them and enjoys being around them, but she still wants to become a registered nurse. She wants to get her finances in order, get financial assistance, or have additional finances so that she can take the required classes to become a registered nurse.

New Year's Resolutions are unachievable resolutions created by people who have idealistic yet unrealistic thoughts and euphoria due to the New Year. Achievable resolutions are created by people who create realistic resolutions for themselves all year round. And that is the truth about resolutions.

Photo by Julie Tupas on Unsplash





Photo created by Laura Robak

# Be a Rainbow In Someone Else's Cloud

By Gabriella Castorina  
Staff Writer

When it comes to helping someone out, you are accomplishing a good deed, and at the end of the day it makes you feel better emotionally and mentally. When it comes to being a rainbow in someone else's cloud, good things come into play such as happiness, amazement and solutions to the problems people encounter from time to time.

Have you ever had a friend who needed some advice or inspiration? You figured out that nobody else was around so you turned out to be the selfless one and stepped up to the plate since no one else would bother helping? Many people have been in that position before.

Marilyn Wehr, who works for HCC's Accessibility Coordinator and a counselor, says, "When it comes

to how advice can help and inspire students, there is such a thing called collective wisdom and for most students, it is not a good decision to make at all. The best choice to do is think it over, and to have the right plan." With what Wehr said in elaboration to this is to balance out the odds and what you feel is right.

When it comes to making these types of decisions, it's hard to think about how you should or should not deal with them. What is important was if there were any beneficial strategies that can guide students throughout life and without being specific, Wehr talks about something that is known as information gathering. This strategy is a way of having those specific students or whomever talk through and guide themselves to their own decision, and even develop skills joined with the advising process; even discussing through each scenario that came into action that

the person had overcome for the time being. Information gathering is where a counselor, psychologist, or therapist can sit down with you and have you talk about what happened from the beginning to the end, almost as if it was a sequence of events from a story you are trying to interpret.

Alfredo Rivera Jr, an HCC graduate, talks about the aspects of advice and what his viewpoint is on it. "What I can say about it is that it lets me know that I'm not alone in this world, and that when I need something, I know I always have somebody to go to if necessary. I feel like advice can be helpful depending on who you get it from. Some people are good at it, and others...eh...not so much."

If you know someone who is going through a lot and you consider helping them out, be a considerate person with that halo above your head; and do the right thing. Tell their parents immediately because it was either, would you regret not saving a friend's life if something happens or give someone hope for humanity?

For example; Quickbase.com, a website states everything on how advice can help people. It starts off with the pointers, framing, the validation and confidence, accountability and support, legitimation and the engagement of the topic of helping someone who is in need. The pointers section for example basically points out how an advisor can highlight those types of potential roadblocks, or obstacles that might come into play.

From the Harvard Business Review article, writers David A. Garvin and Joshua D. Margolis talk about the art of advice and how you are able to seek it, and how it is central to what is known as having leadership. However there are different types of advice such as Discrete, Counsel, Coaching and last but not least, Mentoring; and what these all have in common are enhancing new beneficial ways to guide that specific person through something.

"Receiving guidance is often viewed as the passive consumption of wisdom," which means there are words of wisdom that can somewhat or somehow sink into your head that will possibly benefit you with the problem you dealt with, or are dealing with. Brooks, W., F. Gino, and M.E. Schweitzer from the Management Science article elaborates "how everybody seems to conceptualize advice-seeking as a type of help-seeking behavior and when an individual seeks help, she is asking to expend resources to help have some benefit for herself." Many people see advice as a way to get information and with what was said, the person in the article wants to have resources such as a therapist, psychologist or a counselor, mainly anybody that would be able to guide her through what she encountered, or what she is encountering now at this very moment. We should take advice from them because they point out the basics, and provide the most beneficial information when it comes to diving deep into the topic. As it comes down to this, giving advice and guiding others when situations escalate can be challenging sometimes or turn out to be a happy ending.

If necessary, contact the Counseling Department or speak to a psychologist or even a therapist. If you have a problem, then this is the place to go to! This place is located at Lafayette Hall Room A108. Remember you are not alone!

Have a friend or somebody guide you through something before the worst case scenario hits you like a bus. Being a rainbow in someone else's cloud for that one time would be the most beneficial choice for you to do, and even be considered as a fantastic accomplishment that you will complete.



# THE BEST DEATH-BY- CHOCOLATE RECIPE

WRITTEN BY  
JUSTIN FIGUEROA  
STAFF WRITER

“it's  
time  
to start  
cooking”



Death is inevitable. If you're going to die, you might as well go out eating chocolate cake. Here's what you need to make the best death-by-chocolate, and hopefully not what you need for funeral services.

Ingredients: Devil's Food cake mix, toffee bars, vanilla pudding (chocolate pudding works as well), whipped topping, 2 eggs, 1 cup of water.

- Step 1: Freeze toffee bars
- Step 2: Mix cake mix, eggs, and water in bowl
- Step 3: Pour cake mixture into baking sheet. Bake at 350°F until fully cooked
- Step 4: Refrigerate cake
- Step 5: Once cool, break cake mix into pieces/crumbles
- Step 6: Begin to layer with crumbled cake on bottom layer
- Step 7: Spread vanilla/chocolate pudding on second layer
- Step 8: Use more crumbled cake for third layer
- Step 9: Spread whipped topping onto top layer
- Step 10: Remove toffee bars from freezer, crush in wrapper
- Step 11: Decorate top layer with crushed toffee pieces
- Step 12: If any leftover ingredients, repeat steps 6 - 11

Now that you know how to make the perfect death-by-chocolate, it's time to start cooking!



# IT'S NOT SPRING BREAK

By Shamar Dyer  
Staff Writer

If you're anything like me, the first fall semester as a college student was a learning process. Coming to an all-new school with unfamiliar faces will be rough for anyone. The workload we are now getting is not comparable to the workload of previous years.

Most students' senior year of high school consisted of unscholarly things, especially as the school year dragged on. What happened with a lot of students in high school is that they burned themselves out. Their first semester they run into the dreaded senioritis the remainder of the year. Leaving school early, skipping class, and hanging out with counselors in their office are some of the leisure activities I enjoyed the second half of my senior year.

However, college is a faster-paced environment with no one holding your hand through these two to four years. So what knowledge can first year students benefit from having about finishing their second semester strong?

Multiple people within Housatonic all shared useful information that followed a pattern. Their advice followed a common theme: it's all about time management and self-dependence. Students try to do way too many things at once, which ultimately screws up any type of scheduling they hoped to have. Students don't leave enough time for each class to receive the necessary attention required to pass. And with first-year students coming fresh out of high school, being

babied by teachers and administration is all we know.

Lis Rosario is a midwife major in her fourth semester here at HCC, and her story is one that some students may be able to relate to. Rosario hated high school because she felt like she was being forced to be there, and was boxed in.

"Attendance was part of your grade and I almost failed because of it. I would miss every Monday and most Thursdays until I had to go," she said.

Her story is one that I relate to personally because of my terrible attendance during my senior year. Due to my mother living in Bridgeport and my high school being in Stamford, every Monday I would miss my first three classes or the entire school day in general. The other days I skipped school were because I felt like it was pointless, and I was just wasting my time. The thing that Rosario loves about college, though, is that it is an option and that it makes you more self-dependent.

She ended our interview with a message some may find unexpected: "Don't put too much pressure on yourself. If needed, take a break. School isn't for everyone. If I didn't take a year off after high school, I would have dropped out".

At the start of the semester, students might fall into the habit of not going to class. Lots of HCC students com-

mute, relying on their trusty UPass giving them free transportation on busses, and trans. The cold weather and snow will affect the students' desire to go to class, opening a black hole for their grades and attendance to get sucked into.

College is not a place to waste time. If you do, you'll get left behind. My sister, Shauna'Lee Dyer, also an HCC student, advises students to "constantly remind yourself that you don't want to take these classes again next semester" She learned that the hard way, as she failed anatomy and physiology class and is now retaking it. Time is money, especially

when you're paying for education. Shauna'Lee feels that the biggest drawback to the spring semester

## "GO TO CLASS!"

is that it's easier to lose steam because of the shorter break in between semesters. The short break stumps the groove you got into at the end of the fall semester, and you'll disengage quicker. "You have to learn how to teach your-

self. Teachers will go over some things with you, but it's up to you whether you're going to go home and study or not," she added.

Self-dependency comes back into play, with everything being left in your hands, everything including whether you want to go or not. Shauna also states, "Don't get into the habit of skipping class. Nobody wants to lug themselves to class in cold, and when it's nice out, everyone wants to hangout with their friends.

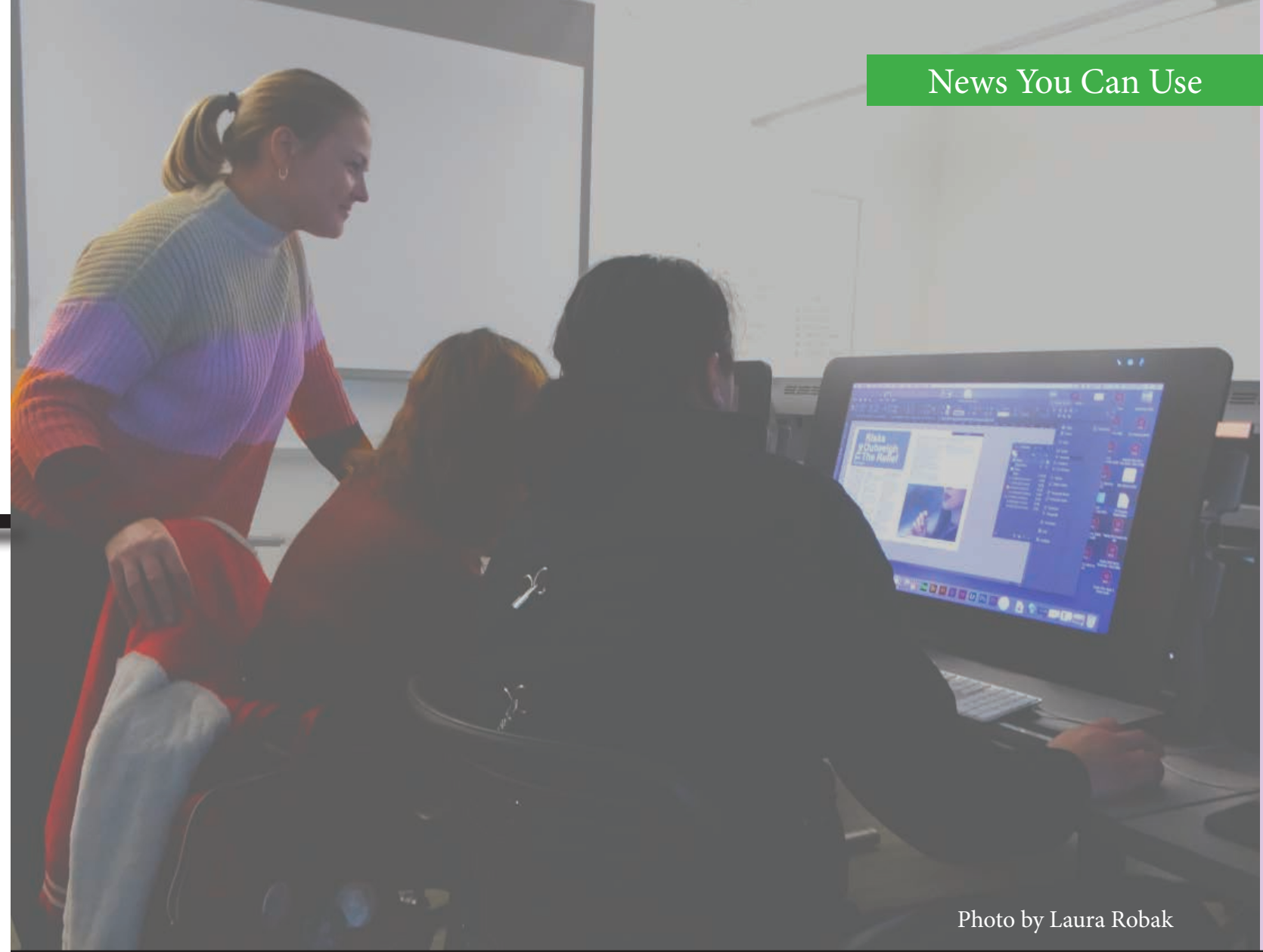


Photo by Laura Robak

GO TO CLASS!”

Making sure that your work is done is only your priority. It’s not your parents, or the professor’s responsibility to make sure your assignments are turned in. In fact, Christine Alexis, a second-year criminal justice major, feels that the only person who cares about your success may be you.

“Everything falls on you. You have to get the work done. Teachers don’t give a f\*\*k if you pass or fail. They’re getting a check regardless. If you have a bunch of extra time, take another class and try to leave as fast as possible,” she said.

Stella Litwinowicz, a professor of Engineering and Mathematics, disagrees. She always offers a helping hand to all students if needed, and encourages students to reach out to their professors, even if they no longer are in a class with them. “You have to lean on the community you build for yourself. If you bonded with a professor or an advisor, turn to them for advice. They are always there to help,” she said.

The spring semester is no joke. With all of the factors that are in play, it might be the toughest one yet. However, with relentless effort students can power through it. Turning in assignments and trying your hardest to get to class every day will go a long way. Having a carefree summer is the best reward for ending the spring semester with a bang.



Photo by Laura Robak

FOLLOW THE MONEY:

How the Future of Connecticut’s Administration Will Affect Your College Experience

By Chrissy Getts  
Staff Writer

“Why is the school getting more expensive when we aren’t spending nearly as much on education?”

It’s no surprise that Connecticut’s government is in recovery-mode after the last economic recession that ended nine years ago. Due to the increase in debt, has education lowered on the priority list for Connecticut’s top representatives? How will their policies affect us, the students of the CSCU through tuition rates and access to better facilities and financial aid? Supporters of the current budget put forward ideas of improved financial aid and scholarship programs, where critics shine light on the misuse of the federal budget to benefit CSCU administrators, rather than the students it is meant for.

Let’s get the facts straight first: over the past four years, the Connecticut education budget has risen from 30 million to a whopping 46 million dollars. The ‘Viewpoints’ section of the CT Mirror, a community provided source of facts, has found that Connecticut is one of the top five wealthiest states in the country, so this high of a budget should not be surprising. However, the shocking factor is when you discover that tuition rates have also increased at a rate of 41% since 2008. In the same time frame, Connecticut’s education related appropriations have decreased, 19% below where they were in 2008. Let’s put it this way: why is the school getting more expensive when we aren’t



spending nearly as much on education as we were in 2008?

Before talking about solutions to these problems, we have to understand where the money comes from. Connecticut State Colleges & Universities President Mark Ojakian explains that as it stands now, the budgeting process begins with annual legislature that appropriates a block grant, which is eventually split up among the various colleges. Each school gets a different piece of the grant, and the amount is decided using a formula that's been developed over time, taking into account enrollment, the number of full time students, and other various expenses. The most important part of this process is that our needs as students are heard at the system office meetings. Not to worry, representatives from each campus meet to discuss the various changing financial environments at their schools.

One of the biggest problems at Housatonic's campus is the graduation rate: a mere 12% of enrolled students graduate successfully, as calculated by Niche, a valued college assessment website. Compared to the national graduation rate for community college students at 57%, our numbers here at HCC are incredibly low.

According to USNews, the average starting salary for Housatonic graduates is \$24,000.00. Could Housatonic students drop out early due to a promise of better income from popular union jobs, such as working at Sikorsky Aircraft or the Federal Express and UPS delivery jobs?

Ojakian provides a possible solution to this issue, a program he calls "seamless pathways" between the state colleges, such as Southern Connecticut State and Housatonic. "If we improve the relationships between the community and state schools, that may inspire students not only to stay in school but to also achieve higher degree, which will produce a higher annual income for them

when they graduate," says Ojakian.

The most noticeable problem at community colleges such as Housatonic is probably the increase in tuition, but decrease in upkeep on campus.

Ojakian responds to critics who have also noticed this trend with equal frustration, attributing the lack of school funding to declining state support over the past five to ten years. His goal is to create a program in which each school becomes financially sustainable on its own, while improving student's resources, such as libraries, study areas, technology, and academic resources for basic skills.

Ojakian does recognize; however, the need for what he calls a "responsible increase" in tuition, amounting to less than one hundred dollars annually.

A major program that was introduced to the New England Commission of Higher Education is the "Students First" Initiative. The goal of this program is to adapt to what serves the students best, including better faculty and academic departments.

A separate goal is also to maintain a sustainable influx of funds, which Ojakian believes is attainable by combining all twelve CSCU institutions into one. This will thereby create a smaller centralized administrative group to service a singular institution, instead of funding twelve separate administrations. The money saved by this action, according to Ojakian, will be dispersed directly back to the students. The Students First Initiative, though met with some criticisms online and from the Commission, does suggest some alternatives to save money and fund student-needed resources on campus.

Ojakian says, "we've been talking about this [funding issue] for two and a half years. We've seen very little movement here and this is the only plan on the table. It's worth trying."

In addition to the Students First Initiative, there are also some expected changes in the Financial Aid department. Omar Livingston, the Director of Financial Aid Services at Housatonic, spoke about his expectations in regard to financial aid in the upcoming year.

Currently, according to the 2018-2019 data gathered by the Financial Aid Office, \$26 million in awards was granted in the form of loans, grants and scholarships. The good news about this is that the biggest section of this number is pell grants, grants in which students are not required to pay back.

This is unlikely to change in the upcoming years, even with the installation of the Students First Program.

However, there has been a problem in the past with financial aid that students should know about. When taking out loans, applicants are typically provided with a set amount per semester, at which time they can choose to take out all or some of that amount. In many cases of loans, students accept the entirety of the loan and, after paying for school-related expenditures, use the remaining money for personal expenses. This, according to Livingston, is a big problem.

Often, he states, students are unaware of the penalty of having to pay back large loans with interest. Luckily, this problem may be resolved by Ojakian's Students First plan, as students will be encouraged to take out loans only for what they cannot pay out of pocket. Livingston, who is located in the Financial Aid Office if you have any further questions, pleads to students: "My job is trying to make financial aid plain and simple for students. The process can be difficult, and we want to make it easy. The full time staff here has a primary goal of helping students get money for their education."

All considered, there appears to be a bright future for CSCU students, as President Ojakian is "committed to each and every one of you. I spend a lot of my time on campuses talking directly to students. As a leader it can be difficult to move

forward an initiative that may not be the most popular, but in everything I do I want to make sure students have the opportunities they deserve."

Within the next few years, and by 2023, when Students First is expected to be put into action, advocate for changes you think should happen on campus. Do we need new desktop computers? Better wifi? Safer parking for night classes? More resources in the library?

As students, it is our campus wide duty to spot where improvement is needed and bring our concerns to those who will lobby for us at system office meetings in Hartford. Lobbying is not always done in the Capitol Building--it can be done right here on campus!

# Words Often Fail Us, and Language is a Difficult Barrier to Cross

By Emily Peslak Editor

Did you know that art therapy is offered as a fine arts major here at HCC? Being an art therapist could give you the opportunity to take your love for art and helping people and squish them together into a colorful, influential ball.

According to the Art Program Coordinator and Professor John Favret, the art therapy program at HCC was developed because “many students asked” if the school offered one, and the school delivered.

Favret says his career path is perfect for you if you have a passion for art or psychology, or both. Maybe you just like helping people and want to make a difference in someone’s life.

According to the American Art Therapy Association website, art therapy is “a mental health profession in which clients, facilitated by the art therapist, use art media, the creative process, and the resulting artwork to explore their feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, manage behavioral and addictions, develop social skills, improve reality orientation, reduce anxiety, and increase self-esteem,” Art therapy helps various people find relief and freedom of self-expression through art. It helps those who have trouble dealing with dark or confusing inner emotions from past or current conflicts. It also aids people dealing with mental illnesses such as PTSD, anxiety disorders, or depression. It can also just help someone cope with any type of illness.

Karen Guevara is a passionate HCC art therapy student, who believes that “it’s important for people who are struggling with their mental health to have a way to express how they are feeling without causing harm to themselves or others.”

“I’ve had my own struggles with mental health since I was 12, I’d feel helpless if I didn’t have drawing as an

outlet,” says Guevara.

It’s no secret that art is an impactful form of self-expression, but it also has the power to heal.

Art therapy takes various forms of art--painting, coloring, sculpting--and helps people express themselves through these creative outlets. “Coloring would be a release,” says HCC journalism student Channell Collins about her time in art therapy.

Art therapy focuses on finding people’s inner, submerged emotions. Art therapist Cathy Malchiodi states in her book, *The Art Therapy Sourcebook*, that art therapy focuses on “developing and expressing images that come from inside the person, rather than those he or she sees in the outside world.”

A typical art therapy session could involve a depressed client following the therapist’s instructions, perhaps coloring in a circle full of rings. Each ring is supposed to be colored in a different colored shade. Each ring’s color would hold a deeper, psychological meaning. For Collins, “the ‘outer [rings were] exterior and the inner [rings were] self.’”

Each color was interpreted as the person’s feelings. A black inner ring, for example, could signify the person’s depression. From there, the therapist could help counsel them.

Collins recounts feeling a sense of accomplishment after a coloring in a circle: “I wasn’t ashamed of what I drew...[or] how I felt on the inside. Wow, this is what I accomplished.”

She recommends art therapy for those “who have trouble expressing themselves.”

For those battling mental illnesses such as PTSD or anxiety, art therapy provides an outlet for expression

## Art Therapy

Photograph Britannica ImageQuest



and support when talk therapy isn’t enough. “I believe that a lot can be said and learned from art from the colors, mediums, and texture the artist decided to express themselves in” says Guevara.

“Words often fail us, and language is a difficult barrier to cross,” she says. At HCC, art therapy students take classes such as Art History I-III, various psychology courses, painting and sculpture courses, and a graphic design course. Students can expect to master the basics of drawing and design, learn various artistic outlets (such as painting and sculpting), and learn to identify and discern people and their behaviors.

“Art therapy requires a Master’s Degree,” says Favret. Students who study art therapy at HCC can apply to Albus Magnus, a four year college in New Haven, after graduation to get their bachelors degree in art therapy or psychology. Favret confirms that the “majority of required courses are offered every semester at HCC.”

HCC has worked closely with Albertus Magnus to create an easy transfer path for HCC students. According to Albertus

Magnus’ college catalog, “After completing either bachelor degree a student can apply to the Master’s Degree in Art Therapy at Albertus.”

Those who become art therapists typically practice in “hospitals, psychiatric

and rehabilitation facilities, wellness centers...schools...crisis centers.. private practice[s]” and more, says the website samsfans.org, an organization dedicated to helping “children facing life-threatening illness.”

Art therapy is a career that centers on helping people overcome seemingly impossible mental, emotional, and sometimes physical obstacles. Art therapy could be the major you’re searching for. Or maybe it’s the outlet for help that you need.



# Let The Good Times Roll!

By Channell Collins  
Staff Writer

Christmas has just passed and New Year's Resolutions have been broken. School just started back up and while the freshmen are ready for redemption, the sophomores are ready to do it all again. We feel a bit trapped in until Spring break, and our first essay was sprung onto us in the second class. Our lips are cracked, we're being weighed down by heavy jackets and boots. The line at the bookstore took forever, and the halls are crowded. No one wants to walk across the yard, it's freezing.

As college students in Connecticut, we don't have the luxury of time. Mardi Gras lands right in the beginning of our Spring semester, so flying out would affect our studying, the money in our pockets, and overall performance. Housatonic threw a Mardi Gras party with food and masks. That's not the only holidays we celebrated here.

In February at HCC, we have Black History Month where we have a fashion show. Every year we have a Thanksgiving luncheon open to all the students in the campus. In 2015, we even had a Winter Glow Bash for Christmas.

Valentine's day is being thrown in our faces in this frigid weather, while it's probably 60 degrees or so down south.... In Mardi Gras! You know where it's warm at though? Louisiana! That's right!

Every year Louisiana throws a big festival in New Orleans for people of all ages to attend. The celebration is intended to celebrate "Fat Tuesday," where they indulge on fattier, richer foods before the last season of Lent. The colors of Mardi Gras are purple (justice), gold (power) and green (faith).

Now, Mardi Gras has its own history that dates all the way back to Medieval Europe. Fun Fact: Mardi Gras was not celebrated in New Orleans. It wasn't until French-Canadian explorer, Jean Baptiste Le Moyne Sieur de Bienville, came to New Orleans and named it "Pointe du Mardi Gras." While it was celebrated, the parades and overall tradition wasn't as boisterous as it is today.

"Masks are required by law for float riders! Yep, it's illegal to ride on a float without a mask! The original purpose of the mask was to get rid of social constraints for the day, allowing people to mingle with whomever they choose," says Dani Morgan of US105fm.

Mardi Gras is known for a good time, and guess what? Attending this huge event is absolutely FREE! There are local restaurants for you and the family to try down the streets of New Orleans. People from all around the country fly out to New Orleans to celebrate the Holiday.

If we bring colors, beads, masks, and the food to campus, we are bound to bring in light. Many of the events held at Housatonic tend to bring out the lighter side of our stressed out colleagues. HCC student Heallah Morris, who is interested in Mardi Gras coming to HCC says,

"The spring semester is the longest and toughest semester for most college students and can feel gloomy. By having Mardi Gras at the campus, it would allow many students alike to have an outlet for expression during one of the most challenging and study intensive semesters."

While many think beads and colorful masks, Heallah had his own take on the matter.

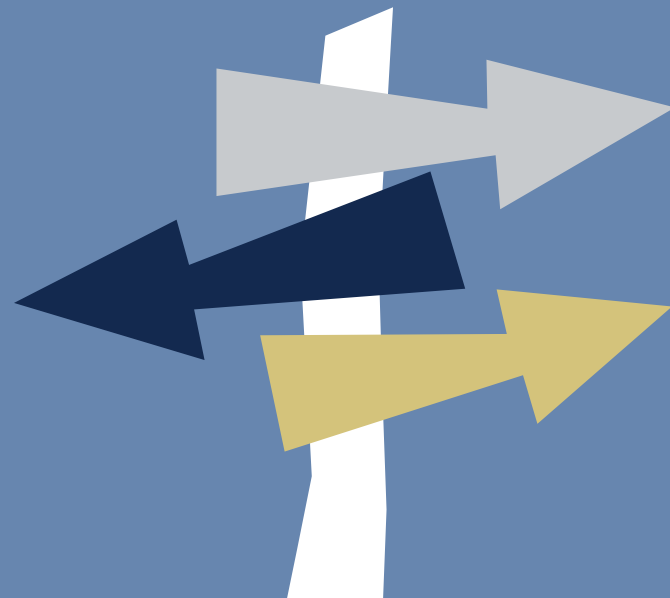
"My ideas for Mardi Gras party/parade at campus would be to incorporate the Housatonic school pride into the spirit of Mardi Gras."

Morris also feels as though a Mardi Gras celebration would bring our community together, ending that he would love to have jambalaya at the celebration.

"The purpose of all of our events is to allow the students to step away from academics and enjoy themselves. It provides relief for the students," says our Student Activities Director Medgine Bright.

Bright is open to any ideas you may have. Whether you bring yourself or a group of people, our Student Activities Director will take your ideas and go through the process to get approval and make it happen.

# Take a Career



## Assessment Test

By Brianna Ocasio  
Senior Staff Writer

Are you a Housatonic student exploring majors? Do you have any idea where to start your job search? Would you like to get started on planning your future education? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may want to consider taking a career interest assessment test. “Umm... What’s an assessment test?” says Teyjan Hopkins, a general studies major at HCC. Career assessment tests are a set of systematic questions based on your personality, skills, interests, and thinking preferences that can determine a suitable career path or subject focus. A career assessment test compels applicants to inspect their own personal character in order to discover what fields of study or career paths may be a personable fit to them. This can inspire them to explore a major in college or get experience in a particular job environment.

Housatonic students should really take advantage of their opportunity to take this career assessment that

is available to them online. Taking a career assessment test only requires just a few minutes of your time to discover a range of different possible fields of study that they may want to consider.

In == “All About Career Tests, Career Testing, and Career Assessment Testing,” Michael T. Robinson, a career coach and founder of CareerPlanner.com says, “Your final career decision should include a large amount of intuition and gut feel, but only after you have thoroughly explored your career choices.”

College students can absolutely benefit from taking a career assessment test, especially those who are feeling

overwhelmed with narrowing down which particular major they want to study in college. An assessment test is able to narrow down some feasible options by breaking down one’s personality traits, talents and abilities. School facilities should require college students to take a career interest assessment test for the sake of creating practical options in a student’s mind.

Photo by Jennifer Vargas



HCC students who need a bit more help getting on track to begin their career path may need further guidance on how to take an aptitude test or what to do afterwards. A career assessment test can possibly influence your career interests and capitalize on your innate qualities.

At HCC’s Career Services Center, you can receive even more help with finding opportunities that are related to your major and figuring out how to get real world experience.

For many students in college, the thought of having to assume a major can be quite difficult when you have a variety of diverse interests, or are unsure of your interests at all. For students that fall into the category of being unsure of what they want to do in life, a career assessment test may bring them closer to understanding what field of study or career choice is suitable to them.

Many people feel pressured to conform to a general career type because of cultural norms, parental expectations, or income capabilities. They may feel unsure of what their passions or capabilities are. By taking a career assessment, people may relieve themselves of the stress that comes with narrowing a single career type on their own. Career assessment tests can show a range of different options they may want to consider.

Students interested in a certain career path can analyze what may qualify them to be suitable for a certain position. Even more so, one can figure out what experience and education is needed to get ahead in their field of interest. Many college students are in a position in which they want to explore their interests and get started on their career path already. However, sometimes it is difficult to figure out where to get started in this process. It is important

to think about your future career goals now because college is the place to learn more about a specific field of study to gain knowledge and experience in that field.

School facilities should promote and strongly recommend that college students participate in taking a career interest assessment test. By analyzing one’s individual personality and traits, students may discover a greater purpose in engaging in a specific career field. As a result of choosing a satisfactory career path, one may feel much more productive and self-fulfilled in life. At the end of the day, people can still choose to do whatever it is that they want. However, aptitude tests may be helpful in creating guidance in finding an appropriate career path of interest that they may not have even been aware of.

If you would like to take an aptitude test now, you can go look up this link <http://www.focus2career.com?Portal?Login.cfm?SID=1484> to take a self assessment test that corresponds with your own

personal attributes. Students may use the code: “Hawks” to get access to the website.

Any Housatonic students who need more guidance with this process can schedule an appointment to get in contact with Anisha Thomas, the Career Services Director, whose office is located in the Career Services Center in the Lafayette building. Thomas is also reachable through email at [athomas@housatonic.edu](mailto:athomas@housatonic.edu).



# Do Students Really Know

By Christian Rivera  
Senior Staff Writer

College students and young adults tend to be people who merely live in the moment. They see work and responsibilities as a drag and tend to not think about them. This backfires in the future, as they struggle to figure out themselves and their plans for the future. Even though I am no different, I think it would be in their best interest to stop this sort of behavior. I'm sure that this will only lead to ending up jobless after graduation, and with staying with parents for an unknown period of time.

I'm sure a lot of students know this already and will be sick of hearing it again, especially from a fellow student. It's obvious that thinking of a career is important. They have to make money somehow and any part-time job they might have had at the time won't be enough for things like an apartment, a car, and other essential items. What I worry about is actually getting a job.

According to Labombard Robert of CNBC, from a survey conducted, "75 percent of responders said that they don't know what positions fit them." It's not an easy thing to think about. I have always been stuck with the idea of what job and position I want, but can never stay at a solid answer. It's something I'll be doing for the better part of my life, which is a fact that didn't help me think about it.

It could sound like that I am worrying too much. I know a good amount of students in college could be thinking the same thing and aren't thinking about this as hard as I am. They'll most likely wait until they are further along into their college careers or after graduation to think about what they want to do. I've been guilty of this mindset, in the past, but recently I've been thinking differently and found myself questioning where I am heading, a lot of the time.

Maybe I'll develop interests outside of journalism. I could find myself wanting to do things like writing for movie and video game scripts or maybe start pursuing a career in being a novelist. But will that make the time I've spent in my current courses pointless?

When I talked to Anisha Thomas, Director of Career Services, she said, "A college degree shows an employer the student has been exposed to opportunities to develop critical thinking and written and oral communication skills, which are very important in today's workplace." Even if someone like me were to change their interests or major they were still exposed to those experiences and gained knowledge to use in their new goals.

For a student to know what job they want is a good thing because a lot of them stay at this road block for a good while. However, know-

# What The Future Holds?

ing what they want to be and becoming it are two different things. To make an example of this, say that someone studies to become an investigative journalist with hopes of making it big. Let's also say that this person is so focused on the end goal that they don't focus on how to reach it.

According to Anisha Thomas, "Students who are successful and stay on the path will realize quickly that the process is a journey and not a sprint. Careful planning of coursework, gaining work experience and practicing good time management skills have been the key to success for many students."

Accomplishing big career goals is something that takes years of work, dedication, and eventual failure to bounce back from, things that aren't very attractive to a lot of people including myself. No one likes to experience failure just like no one likes to think of the idea having to do tedious task like coffee runs or doing the work no one else feels like doing.

Unfortunately, this may end up happen-

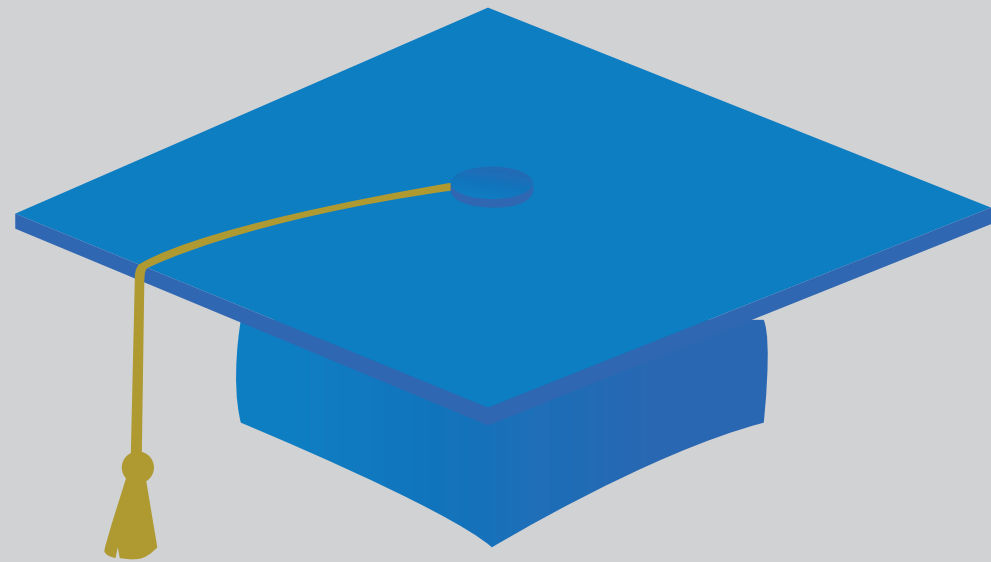
ing right after getting out of college. Where else is there a place to get started? Berr Jonathan, of CBS News, showed a survey done by Gradstaff in late 2016 of graduates with inefficient career preparation. "More than

half of all companies (60 percent) said new grads lacked critical thinking skills and attention to detail (56 percent), while 44 percent found fault with their writing proficiency, and 39 percent were critical of their public speaking ability." I didn't need to be

a graduate myself to learn that it isn't easy to get into the workforce or to land the career of my choice.

When it comes to the future, I am a little anxious. As both a student and an aspiring writer I want to make a good career by using the ability to put words down on paper to give back to others, either as a journalist or as a sort of storyteller. I don't know yet, but that's why it's important to decide now rather than later, so I won't trip over myself all over the place and not know how to proceed in life.

"Knowing what they want to be and becoming it are two different things"



# DON'T HATE MY BRAND

By Arielle Rivera Senior Staff Writer

"Oh, I went to a community college." Those words may seem harmless to a former college graduate, but to the boss of a highly respected company, or to someone who has graduated from an elite university, the words "community college" already have them seeing you as less than. However, this stigma couldn't be more wrong.

Community college graduates have a better grasp of how college works; therefore, if they choose to transfer to a four-year university, they're already prepared for the large amount of work that will be thrown at them.

Community colleges offer students far more affordable options, thanks to FASFA, scholarships, grants, and the fact that classes are FAR cheaper. Community colleges also offer a certain flexibility, meaning that students who are currently in the midst of finding out what career path they wish to take have the ability to change their major without fear of wasting as much money as they would in a four-year university.

Kathalina Andreus, a former Uconn student, explains the factors that made her want to leave Uconn and attend Housatonic. "I think it was mainly because I felt like the school is too big for my needs. They don't have very much time to reach out to each individual student...which can be hard sometimes. I feel like smaller schools are a good transition to get the attention that I need while also taking time to find what major suits me," she said.

At Housatonic, Andreus said, she enjoyed the calm atmosphere, and the fact that she doesn't feel rushed to complete her education and get a degree.

"Here, I feel like I can make a mistake and not feel like the world is ending," said Andreus.

Yet, for most students leaving high school, Housatonic is not first on their wish list.

Elie Laurena, a current Housatonic student, explains his reasons for coming to Housatonic instead of going straight into university. "When

I really wanted to go to school in New Hampshire called Franklin Pierce. The problem was going there would have cost me a lot of money...I decided to give Housatonic a try...It's good to have at least one degree under your belt in the beginning because I have something to work with," said Laurena.

Laurena also mentioned how students are able to gain the experience they need in order to handle universities. "Here you kind of get a feeling of what the college experience is like. Housatonic is like a pit stop for a college student because while you're here, you're able to pace yourself, choose the teachers that you want, and you're able to learn how to manage your time better which is an important skill in college," she said.

People talk about universities as if going there automatically provides students with a job and the future they've always dreamed of.

In reality it's the connections at the university that provide students with opportunities that benefit their career.

Jeanine Gibson, an academic advisor at HCC, talks about her experience as a university graduate. "Career-wise, I would not say that university itself helped me, I would say the relationships I had with my professors from going to a small institution help me because... you're able to maintain a relationship with a professor and so when I applied for a job or to grad school and I needed a letter of reference, I had a relationship where I could just email my professor," she said.

She said that the stigma associated with community colleges could be because people simply don't understand the difference.

"It could be because of students lack of knowledge of certain institutions. For example, if a student comes from a family where they all went to prestigious universities then your info only relates to that of prestigious universities rather than community colleges. Sometimes students don't question other options like why should I go to this university when this one has a better program for what I'm studying. Students are often afraid to explore other opinions because they don't want to stray from the path set for them or they simply don't have enough information about other institutions," she said.

Gibson also discussed the benefits community colleges has for students: "Community colleges are generally very affordable, but the difference I believe with community colleges especially Housatonic is that you have to want to be here."

This is very true. Many students who come to Housatonic have other responsibilities that take up their time, such as child care, work, or even caring for an elder. This is why community colleges tend to have a higher percentage of

part time students because Housatonic is flexible with their schedule. "The percentage of full-time students at four year schools are way higher because some students do not have those barriers or do not have those responsibilities," Gibson agrees.

Community colleges, despite what some say, offer students a leg up, an advantage that universities don't often have. So for those who continue to speak poorly of community college, I only have one reply-- don't judge community college unless you've experienced its opportunities firsthand.

"Community colleges offer students far more affordable options..."



# Facing Major Pressure

By Emily Peslak  
Editor

Photo by Wallace  
Chuck of pexels.com

Spring 2020

## Opinion

"Go back to Housatonic. Take a few classes. Anything. Just so you're doing something." For the many months following my drop out of HCC, I felt my dad always had lines such as these at the tip of his tongue, ready to spew out when he saw me sitting home alone, doing "nothing." He just wanted me to try. I got that. I just couldn't do it.

Occasionally I really was just sitting there, staring into the light blue wall in front of me. I had been out of school for a year now. I didn't drop out of HCC completely. I was simply unsure and frustrated with what I wanted from my future. So I didn't register for spring classes in 2018. And I wouldn't have the guts to try again until Fall of 2018.

This is for the best, I thought, on many, many occasions. But was it? Or was I just wasting time? Occasionally, I got the uneasy churn in my stomach. My mind would race but go slack soon after. My mind and body kept telling me I was wasting time. As if there was some pressing business I should be tackling. Maybe I should be back in school? I thought that if I was in school, maybe I wouldn't feel like this.

I left HCC after realizing I didn't have the guts for the Criminal Justice field. It had been a rough semester. I was taking a Criminal Law class, trying to keep up with all the terms. The codes. The laws. It didn't take long for me to realize that this field wasn't for me.

I chose Criminal Justice because at that time, it's where I felt I belonged. I imagined a future in which I was working as a paralegal, assisting a tough, yet compassionate lawyer take care of important case files for his clients and so on.

Many of us young and confused college stu-

dents have experienced pressure to choose what we want to do with the rest of your life at around age 18, whether from ourselves, family, or friends. I can remember answering the school and life questions on our big family dinner on Christmas Eve of 2017.

I was out of school and done with Criminal Justice at this point. I stammered replies to my family. Anything to satisfy their questions. I might have lied. I felt the need to lie because I didn't want to look like a failure. I wanted to seem self-assured to my family and personally wanted to feel as though I knew what I was doing with my life.

Eventually, I was able to stop lying and find resolution within myself to try again.

I may not have discovered the perfect major or career over-night, but I found an escape route, of sorts. A path that I still hope to this day will lead to some form of success.

**"I was  
simply unsure and  
frustrated with  
what I  
wanted from  
my future"**

Spring 2020





Photo by Pixabay

I decided to take up Journalism. It took time to realize I should do this. It sort of occurred to me that words have always been my friend. Books and writing have been a constant companion my whole life.

During my hiatus year, I had a lot of time to think. I knew I wanted to stay in school and get a degree, so I researched degree programs at HCC. The Journalism program caught my eye because of all the writing classes, and I loved writing with my whole heart. So I signed up. It was a good start, because I would be happy writing for these classes and I would also get a degree out of it. I thought to myself that maybe I could be a writer some day. Or work for a writer or a publishing company. I felt as though I could be happy with that kind of job. I still do.

My father has told me that with his current job and schooling, he's on a path towards his goal. He knows the job he wants and what he needs to do to get there. I so envy this certainty in anybody.

For me, it's not going to be a straight path to success. I expect to continue experiencing days where I come home from school exhausted to the core, asking myself why I even bother.

A day not so long ago, I was driving with my boyfriend, venting my frustration and anxiety to him after a long, tiring day of classes. I was feeling all colors blue and my eyes were starting to haze over. My hands were still shaking and there was a dull thudding in my head. I had school projects that were making me feel as though I was about to tip over the edge. I wasn't sure if this was my hysterical-crying edge or full-on-freeze-panic edge yet. I was learning that taking five classes--including a fantastically frustrating Algebra 1 class--working part-time, balancing a relationship, taking care of a frisky kitten, and desperately trying to find time for class projects was actually difficult.

"I just don't know if it's worth it," I told my boyfriend, "I don't see a purpose, like I see people with degrees who stick with their awful jobs and don't use them." "What's the point in having a degree these days?" I asked. To myself I wondered, will success ever come to me?

He encouraged me to stay in school for many reasons, including its "social aspect," the adventures of learning, and overall future value. "I'm just saying it's got value," my boyfriend sweetly said to me. I was desperately clinging to any ounce of his advice to keep putting my foot through the door of HCC.

Sometimes a "Babe, you got this" from the man I love is all I need to pick my chin up. Most of the time, it's sheer undeterred strength of will.

Even though there are days where I just want

to run away to an isolated island and live off of fresh fruit and camp-fire roasted fish, there have been amazing days where I felt like I was learning so much and improving my writing day by day, class by class.

My Publications classes have especially fueled my love of writing. This class probably convinced me I was in the right program at HCC. My first semester back I took Publications 1 and from day one was inspired by Professor Mark and classmates to write good, strong pieces for the student magazine.

It's the hard yet fun work of putting together news articles and other pieces for this class that inspires me to keep going.

Today, as I sit in my classes at HCC, I try to remind myself that each class will teach me something. That "something" may be for my future job or for life itself.

As a student you have to find your own motivation to stay in school. You do this by finding out what's important to you and what you want in life. If you can keep learning, do it. Even if you don't know what you want to do with your life, you just might discover it along the path of learning.

I stay in school because I don't want to become stagnant in life. I want to advance. I want to create a future I love. Get out of hell,

also known as a retail job, where I don't see a future for myself, nor want to. I want to find a career that I will embrace and love and over-work myself for. This is my goal.

**"As a student you have to find your own motivation to stay in school"**

Photo by Luis Fernandes





## Triggered “Trannies”

## Why One Trans Person Thinks

## Gender Dysphoria Should Remain a Mental Illness

By Anonymous

Transsexuals are people who emotionally and psychologically feel that they belong to the opposite sex. To transition from one sex to the other, the person must undergo a lengthy process to receive the medical treatment required. This includes therapy and the diagnosis of Gender Dysphoria (or GD). I have been socially transitioning since 2014 and medically transitioning since 2017 from female to male.

In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association released their fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders where they changed the wording of the old diagnosis, Gender Identity Disorder (GID) to the new GD.

This changed the definition from feeling like the opposite gender to feeling the disconnection between the mind's gender and the body's gender. Once they transitioned and no longer felt the disconnection, they were able to drop the label and stigma of having a mental disorder.

In 2018, The

World Health Organization released a new edition of the International Classification of Diseases and now declassify GD as a mental disorder. This made therapy prior to transition optional.

While this sounds like a step in the right direction for the trans community, in reality, it can lead to uninformed people transitioning and making permanent changes to their bodies. Even now, with therapy in place, there are cases of people detransitioning (transitioning back to their original sex).

After transitioning, some people feel they made a mistake and, in turn, give themselves GD by transitioning in the first place. Being trans could be seen as a phase and without the diagnosis of GD, there is no proof of being transgender. This legitimizes trans people and the severity of their “condition.”

Currently, gender therapy is required before hormone replacement therapy (HRT) can begin. HRT is very serious and some changes are irreversible. With a therapist's note and diagnosis of GD, an endocrinologist can prescribe the sex hormone of the opposite biological sex to the individual.

Geoffrey Reed, a professor of psychology at the

National Autonomous University of Mexico, says, “They [insurance companies] wouldn't have a diagnostic code that conveyed eligibility.”

HRT is usually the first, but in most cases, the biggest part of medical transition; the hormones put the individual through the opposite sex's puberty.

These changes include voice changes, hair (body, facial, and head) growth or thinning (depending if taking testosterone or estrogen), fat redistribution, and more.

These hormones are prescribed and taken for life to keep all the changes, which can become very costly and important for insurance to cover.

In the article, The New Normal, author Beth Schwartzapfel says, “the change includes a loophole that allows clinicians to make the diagnosis after patients no longer have symptoms in order to get their treatment covered by insurers.”

If patients want the mental disorder removed once their dysphoria is gone, insurance providers will no longer cover the costs. They are stuck with the diagnosis regardless.

There should be better health coverage for trans people, but removing the label of mental disorder will do nothing to further progress towards that goal. In fact, the removal of GD as a mental disorder would make

hormones more easily available without therapy, which can lead to an increase in cases of detransitioning.

Gender therapy prior to transition is currently mandatory and should stay that way. Therapists evaluate their patients and make sure GD is the issue at hand and not any other factors. In most cases, GD is the issue but there are other outside influences that can have an impact on these feelings, like sexual abuse or anxiety.

The removal of the mental disorder GD would add more negative stigma to the trans community. In the past, most transgender individuals looking for medical treatment were middle aged men. Now, a new wave of young teenage girls have been seeking these treatments.

In the trans community, these people are widely known as “transtrenders.” They claim to be trans, even when they have no diagnosis of GD, or claim to feel no dysphoria at all. If there is no disconnect between the mind and body's gender, there is no dysphoria and the person is not transsexual.

Patients going to clinics and claiming they are trans is not enough for a diagnosis. Because of these transtrenders, being transgender is continuously viewed as a choice by some people who don't understand what living as a trans person is like.

Transtrenders have no reason to

transition, yet they do anyway. They are also usually the most vocal in the trans community, so when society sees a transtrender as the face of all trans people, actual transsexuals with GD are viewed as a joke.

As a trans person, I don't want to be associated with transtrenders. They have the most vocal voice in the community but don't speak for all of us. Since they are the most vocal, society assumes all trans people have correlating views about gender and politics. I personally struggle with gender dysphoria on a daily basis and find it offensive for people to claim they are trans when in reality, they just make a choice to present themselves a certain way.

Clearly, the removal of Gender Dysphoria as a mental disorder would be detrimental for trans healthcare, increase cases of detransitioning, and would continue to add negative stigma to the trans community.

Although being treated as mentally ill when there is nothing causing you distress is unfortunate, it's better than having no label slapped onto it. Until further research is done, the label needs to stay. Researchers are awaiting funding but are planning to gather gene samples of trans people to see if there is a common link, making it genetic rather than a mental illness. Hopefully, these results can then replace the link of transgender individuals having a mental illness.

This article was originally written in 2018. The author chooses to keep his identity anonymous because of some of the stigma that still surrounds the transgender community, and the controversial views linking gender dysphoria and mental illness.



# NO LOVE RENAISSANCE

By Louis Verderame Editor

“You can’t just go up to someone and talk to them anymore,” I say as I argue with my friends about dating-- “it’s all different now.” Sure, some people can get away with that and talk to people, but for the most part, it never works out. To put the blame on one thing may be too much, but to make it clear, social media has ruined dating in the 21st century.

Our current society focuses on getting something immediately.

Sometimes, people don’t take the time to appreciate moments as they should. When you’re out on a date for the first time, not only is there a pressure to have a good time, but you have to be absolutely perfect in the eyes of your date, which is a crazy amount of pressure.

Huffpost.com says “Men and women go out on a date and if just one thing isn’t right, well, in the olden days, it used to be very simple. You know, let me figure out this person a little bit more. Let me see if this person’s really great. Maybe this thing that I don’t like tonight might have just been because they’re nervous or excited.”

With that thought in mind, HCC student Kat Andreus says, “I think social media has definitely made

dating harder. It’s that thing of being so easily accessible that there’s not much opportunity to learn more about other people through talking and making experiences together, because you already pulled up their Instagram feed and already know how they spent last summer.”

In today’s dating society, if one thing is off (instead of trying to figure it out and giving your date the benefit of the doubt), you know in your head that there is someone else only an app away.

The big boom of “social media dating”, started early on with MySpace. (Oh my god, what a throwback.) MySpace was the first “connect with people you don’t know website,” which was basically what dating was before the internet. In the past, you could walk up to someone you don’t know and try to strike up a conversation, but not anymore.

Facebook, similar to MySpace, offered much more as a website than MySpace. You’re wondering right now, “what does this have to do with dating?” Having a platform that allows you to be behind a keyboard as you “shoot your shot,” as the kids say, is a whole lot easier.

Being rejected in person makes you question everything. “Did she

see me walk up? Did I walk weird? How did my face look? Did she like my clothes?” The overthinking that goes into a face to face rejection is brutal. From my own personal experiences, can’t you tell?



Southern Connecticut University graduate Carlos Barranco, added that

“social media to a degree has made dating harder, because in a way, I think it has caused us to isolate ourselves.”

The key word there is isolate. Since

many of us isolate ourselves from human contact, we don’t know what to do when actual human contact comes our way. Some people have that quality, but the people that don’t far outweigh the people that do.

Despite the continuing popularity of choosing Facebook as a platform to start conversations, the dating world has moved to Tinder. Let’s give it up for Tinder...a round of applause, that’s an appropriate response.

Tinder launched in September, 2012, and basically cut right through the b.s. and got right to the point. You swipe right, you want to talk. You swipe left, not interested. As cruel as the swipe left sounds, you are not seeing the other person who is swiping left on you, so you don’t feel that rejection. Even with Tinder, the majority of people you match with either

A. Don’t take it seriously and use it as an ego boost.

B. On it because their friends made them or

C. Are too nervous to make the first move.

This seems to be affecting millennials the most, growing up in an age where we were literally raised side by side with iPhones and technology; we never stood a chance in the so called “dating world.” Being a millennial,

Barranco said, “I think the phenomena of dating apps [and social media, is that] people expect online dating to be the only option to find a significant other. For millennials like me, I find myself and my peers’ activity on multiple dating apps to find dates.” He continued, “Rarely do I hear of my peers asking an individual that they are interested in to go on a date in person.”

Doubletrustdating.com says, “despite the promise of

online dating, one study found that 70% of Tinder users didn’t even go on a date from the app!” You have people who use the app for fun and people who take it seriously. That’s a very fine line in the sand, and it’s virtually impossible to figure out which it is.

An article found on Huffpost.com in regards to dating through Tinder states, “now we evaluate each other immediately. Wait, she’s got a lazy eye. I don’t like that, I’m going to back on the dating app and I am going to swipe for somebody who’s perfect.” We have this imperfect representation of dating in 2020 that-- plain and simple-- just isn’t right.

“It’s kind of interesting how narrow and sometimes superficial our list of the perfect partner can become,” says Andreus. “I know the current thing is height where it was a super important thing that a guy had to be over 6 feet tall to even be considered a possible Tinder match”

Andreus continued, “it’s hilarious, but in a very serious way because we all know that’s not what really matters, but technology has created this perfect breeding ground for all these extreme things to thrive.”

However, despite the negative attention online dating has gathered, using social media to find potential dates isn’t all that bad.

My brother, former HCC student and Southern Connecticut State University graduate, Nicholas Verderame, met his wife through Facebook. “Had it not been for social media, I do not think [my wife] and I would have crossed paths. Though we lived in the same town, we attended high schools 30 minutes apart. The probability of our lives intersecting was virtually zero. We couldn’t see each other in the halls, couldn’t have class together, couldn’t be on the same bus. All the common avenues of high schoolers [and college students] connecting didn’t exist for us. Social media was the only way we could have ever connected,” he said.

Though our world is filled with advancing technology, all hope isn’t lost for face-to-face dating. People are starting to realize the grimy-ness of social media and what it is doing to our culture. We are becoming so shut off to everyone. It’s difficult because their are stories you hear and you understand why our culture is like that. We need a change in behavior, and it starts with each and every single person. Connect with respect.



# An Open Letter to My Favorite Community College & the People Who've Made it Great

By Elizabeth Mercado  
Editor in Chief

2020

If you told me two years ago that I would be graduating from Housatonic Community College in December with an Associate's Degree in English, I wouldn't have believed you. When I was in my senior year of high school, I was 17, unconfident, unmotivated and felt that I wouldn't fit in with the college scene. I decided that despite the stress and anxiety I faced at the thought of attending college, I would jump on the opportunity. What did I have to lose? This sporadic, last-minute decision to attend college turned out to be one of the best experiences I have had in my life. My two years at Housatonic were the most exciting (and stressful) two years out of my 20, and I have a lot of people to thank. To Steve Mark-- thank you for your guidance, and always

having confidence in me. I've been working on Horizons since my first semester at HCC, and it has changed my life. Because of your passion for teaching, your class quickly became my favorite, and I discovered that I loved having the opportunity to write things I was passionate about, and remember that thrill I felt when I saw my first piece published.

You saw a potential in my writing, and offered me a position as an editor during my second semester in your class--an opportunity I jumped at. As the semesters went by, I worked my way up to Editor-in-Chief, and developed an even greater passion for the publishing world. Last April, I had the chance to attend a student editor news con-

“*My two years at Housatonic were the most exciting (and stressful) two years out of my 20, and I have a lot of people to thank.*”

ference in the actual New York Times building, an experience I would have never had if not for you and your class. Because of your encouragement and my work with the magazine, I want to further explore the publishing world, and am planning on working towards a career in editing. To Karyn Smith--thank you for being a great professor, boss and mentor. I loved working as a tutor in our writing center, and everything I learned from you will help me in my future endeavors. You've made me feel welcome in the writing center and always had your door open when I needed to talk about stressful classes, difficult sessions, or a creative writing assignment I didn't quite get. Thank you for always pushing me to be a better writer, as well as a tutor, and giving me great advice.

You've helped push me out of my comfort zone, and your leadership has inspired me, especially when you lead our writing center team to present at the New England Writing Centers Association (NEWCA) Conference last March, something I was extremely anxious about.

I hope incoming tutors and students have the opportunity to work closely with you, and have the same, wonderful experience I have had.

Finally, I want to thank Tamara, Claud and Rose, for not just being amazing writing tutors, but for becoming my best friends. When I began college in 2017, I was still unsure of myself, and lacked the confidence I was so desperately seeking. For two semesters, I went to class, then went home, and never really had the chance to form friendships with anyone from school. Needless to say, I was lonely-- my two best friends from high school lived on their school campuses, and I rarely got to see them.

That finally changed during my third semester at HCC, when I started working in the writing center. When we met and started to get to know each other

during our shifts, I felt that instant connection. Now, one year later, I couldn't imagine my life without you. Who else would I turn to for advice on transferring, handling professors' course loads and the challenges of being a 20- year-old? Maybe it was just a coincidence that brought us together, or maybe it was fate, but whatever it was, I'm glad it did.

Goodbye Housatonic, I'll miss your two cafeterias, your library, and of course, the writing center. I'll miss the convenience of your two building campus, and the people who have made my two years at HCC ones to remember.



Photo By Tai's Captures, courtesy of unsplash.com

Photo by Laura Robek

# Why Taking a Summer Class is Beneficial

By Louis Verderame  
Editor

Summer classes, I know, what? Why would anyone want to take a Summer class? It's Summer break! I know, I know, Summer classes aren't looking like they're worth it. Well, if I hadn't lost you yet, read, as I am going to change your mind.

Students think taking a summer class wastes part of your summer. If you have never taken a summer class, that is exactly how it looks. Taking a summer class and getting through it, you see that not only is it NOT a waste of time, but it actually helps you in areas of schooling you never even thought of.

The first thing that Associate Professor of Psychology Laura Turiano says about summer classes, is "please be prepared to be immersed in the subject."

A summer class typically takes you on a quick two hours a day, four day-a-week or two days-a-week for an 8 week ride (depending on which one you choose) that

would normally take 15 weeks (a normal semester) to complete. Summer classes are typically broken up into three sessions. The first session take place the first week of June and ends the first week of July. The second session starts the first week of July and ends the first week of August. The third session takes place the first week of June to the first week of August and that Summer class schedule is two days a week (like the one I mentioned before).

"The amount of time might be scary, because it is a semester's worth of classes in only a few weeks, but being there everyday makes it easier to retain information and do better in the class," says HCC student Miguel Perez. So, as you can imagine, it's a lot of work.

Being there every day, like Perez stated, is beneficial because you pick up right where you left off from the previous day. Where typically during a semester, you go to a class and then the next day you're going to

a different set of classes. That is a positive for summer class.

Taking a class over the Summer break for five weeks (I recommend taking only one summer class) is actually great, because "students can focus on one subject," says Turiano

You do get a lot of work, I really want to emphasize that; but if you're diligent and focused on the class, it will be just like any other class.

"Students do well, not only because they are immersed [in the subject], but because the professor can focus on the student more too," says Turiano. "I have found that retention is often higher because students who take a summer class are dedicated and determined," Turiano continued.

I would recommend taking a Summer class after taking a semester or two in college. That will help you get acclimated to college level school work. College classes have a way of throwing a lot of work at you all at once and students struggle to keep up. With taking a summer class you have the experience of getting a lot of work for only ONE class, which helps because you will have more time to focus and not be overwhelmed. So when you attend the following semester, the work you are given doesn't seem as daunting.

Once you get through your summer class and ace it, you're going to have the ability to take a lot of notes, learn a lot of information at once, and be able to learn things quickly. These newfound abilities will help in your future classes.

For me, taking a summer class has made the following college semesters less scary. Knowing I was able to get through a summer class and pass it has given me a confidence I never knew I needed to succeed in my following semesters of school.

*I would recommend taking a Summer class after taking a semester or two in college.*

"Taking a summer class has been an invaluable experience. It enabled me to take a course I would have normally struggled with during a regular semester and shrunk it down to a manageable amount of time that allowed me to excel in the class" Perez agrees.

Best of all, at the end of the summer class you get three shiny new credits to add to your degree.

"Fast credits" says Turiano.

"I think it definitely helps when it comes to scheduling, it can minimize the amount of time needed to be in school," Perez adds.

This means that you can be out of college faster, and most importantly, take on your life.



# READING'S ADVANTAGE



## In our Technology-Crazed World

By Emily Peslak Editor

Image created by Chris Bukoski

Books are a timeless form of escape in a world full of endless outlets of entertainment.

Our world offers countless forms of entertainment, mainly through technology. Many relax by binging a Netflix show, watching movies, playing Pokemon, or browsing social media on their phones. Then there are people like me, who can't seem to travel anywhere without a book in their bag.

For those who think books are "boring" or a "dying breed," reading will always be relevant, good for you, educational, and can be super enjoyable if you find the right genre and book. Amy Watson from Statista.com gave the statistic that, "675 million print books were sold last year in the U.S. alone."

I think it's factual to say that print books are a living and loved breed. Personally, books are a lifeline of sorts. If I'm bored, maybe lonely, I'll pick up a book I'm in the middle of, and become immersed in the character's story. It's like I'm best friends with them.

I love the adventure of browsing Barnes and Noble, scanning the spines and covers for the newest released YA fantasy novel.

According to an article published online by *Psychology Today*, when we read a novel, the story "enhances connectivity in the brain and improves brain function." Reading has even been scientifically proven to be good for you. Reading physically alters your brain

Reading a great novel requires thinking, reasoning out situa-

tions happening, and even causes you to get emotional. I can't count how many times I've laughed, cried, cheered, or covered my face in embarrassment from a character's actions.

According to the study, "reading fiction was found to improve the reader's ability to put themselves in another person's shoes and flex the imagination..."

In comparison, Melissa Chu, author of the article "How Books and Television Affect Your Brain Differently, According to Science," says that a study by Gregory Burns and his colleagues at Emory University found that reading the novel *Pompeii* by Robert Harris resulted in test subjects having "increased connectivity in parts in parts of the brain that were related to language." fMRI brain readings showed that

"there was also increased activity in the sensory motor region of the brain, suggesting that readers experienced similar sensations to the characters in the book," says Chu.

Sad or intense scenes in books make me cry. Sometimes authors like to kill off beloved characters. This definitely makes you feel sensations similar to those in the book.

Anyone read John Green's *The Fault In Our Stars*? That book will make you feel many emotions.

Reading a novel may actually help you to become more compassionate and empathetic towards the people around you. This has to do with what researchers call the "theory of mind."

*Psychology Today* calls this the "ability to attribute mental states--beliefs, intents, desires, pretending, knowledge, etc.--to oneself and others to understand that others have beliefs, desires, and intentions that are different from one's own."

Reading an immersive novel has

the power to change your mind for the better. It can sharpen your analytical skills, and has imaginative and cognitive benefits.

This is one of the reasons parents encourage their young children to read early on. They learn early how to be kind, read and be concerned with other's emotions, and of course, they develop their vocabulary and reading skills.

Chu also writes that a 2013 study by the Tohoku University of Japan "found that the more TV the kids

## "Books are a way to escape the world around you."

watched, parts of their brains associated with higher arousal and aggression levels became thicker."

Personally, I've always preferred the feel of a physical book in my hands, where my fingers can flip over the paper pages in anticipation. Today, we have ebooks and audio-books. Ebooks can be easily downloaded onto a tablet, store hundreds of books at a time, and can be carried around easily. Audio books can be listened to anywhere and at your own convenience.

According to an article written by Amy Kraft for CBS News, "Individuals with poor eyesight or reading

disorders like dyslexia can benefit from e-books because they provide a range of options for changing the text size and spacing of lines."

Despite the benefits e-books have on those who struggle with reading disorders, studies have shown that for the average reader, reading physical books seem to have healthier effects on your eyes.

According to Kraft, "several small studies suggest that reading on paper instead of an electronic screen is better for retention and focus." An electronic screen is bright and can wear on your eyes, especially after long periods of time.

Personally, reading from a tablet makes my eyes ache and gives me headaches.

Looking at an electronic screen for a long time can contribute to "fatigue, a condition marked by tired, itchy, burning eyes," says Kraft. Reading ebooks can also decrease amounts of melatonin (sleep hormone) in the body.

There's some amazing books out there. One popular example would be the *Harry Potter* series. Who doesn't love the magic and adventure stories of the *Harry Potter* books?



Boy immersed in a high fantasy novel titled *The Cruel Prince*, where good and evil faeries with magical abilities meet the mortal world.  
Picture by Emily Peslak.

Even though *Harry Potter* was successful in transporting some of the magic of the books to the screen, a lot of book-to-movie adaptations fail to do so.

Movie special effects fall short of your imagination. Even if millions of people read the same scene from a *Percy Jackson* or *Hunger Games* book, that certain scene will be interpreted uniquely to each reader. You may picture a character's physical appearance differently, hear their voice high-pitched or low-pitched, and imagine. The images and sensation you feel when reading a novel are personal to you.

Books are a way to escape the world around you. When I'm hooked on a book, it takes every ounce of will-power to put the book down. I become immersed in the story and character's lives.

According to Carol Fitzgerald, author of the *Book Report Network*, “in a number of pages, the story will open...and close, and a lot of what’s going on in the world today is not like that. You’ve got this encapsulated escape that you can enjoy.” While the drama and sadness of the world is uncontrollable and seemingly endless, a book can give people a sense of beginning and ending. The story may have trauma and sadness within its pages, but there is always some kind of resolution to the story.

Consider picking up a book the next time you want a good story. Reading can be fun and enjoyable for anyone. Finding a genre and book can take some work, but once you find your niche, it's worth the energy. Try picking out a few novels that grab your eye--often I'll feel an inward tug of appeal just by reading the dust jacket. Then the book turns out to be amazing. I dare you to feel for that tug.

# Stunted Self-Reliance

By Christian Rivera Senior Staff Writer

When a person is in college and is growing into adulthood, they start to grow more independent from their parents. A clear sign of this is when they start going for their driver's license. Accomplishing such a task is a big step in a young adult's life because they will no longer need to depend on their parents to drive them around places and can come and go from their homes as they please. However, not everyone has an easy or good time doing this.

For example, I'm almost 21 years old and I don't have a license. Instead, I have to rely on both my parents and the public bus for transportation. The bus has been exclusive for going to my classes and coming back home. My parents work early in the morning, before I even get out of bed. They can't take me to class and it's on a rare occasion that they do. I tried to get a license before, in high school, but failed the written exam. I don't remember what questions I got wrong, but I know that I didn't even get half of them right. They asked a lot of specifics that could easily go over my head. I think I'm glad I did fail. I'm

not sure if I would be able to put myself behind the wheel. That's how much I don't trust myself to not mess up on the road.

Since high school, I had a slight fear of the idea of driving a car. This was because of an accident my brother and I got into, on our way to school, one morning. My older brother got his license a few months before the accident and his own car around the same time. It allowed him to drive us to school at our own pace, without having to rush to meet the bus, although he did have me take the bus home a few times, so he can go out with his friends. On our way to school, my brother drove a bit faster than I would have been comfortable with and kept glancing at his phone at times. He wasn't fully absorbed into it, but I was still nervous about him doing that. He did this at an intersection, when we had the right of way, but a car suddenly pulled up in front of our path. My brother saw the car in time to hit the brakes and avoid any serious accident (unless someone counts a fender bender to be a serious accident).

I wasn't paying attention until he hit the brakes and that's when I saw the car we bumped into. What if it had been worse? That was the question that kept running through my head, while I was sitting in the passenger seat and watched the aftermath of the fender bender.

The idea of driving hasn't been a pleasant one, since that small accident. For a while, my heart felt like it would jump out of my chest every time we go through an intersection. That wasn't all. I would also grip the safety bar and the front of my seat belt, at the same time. I thought that another crash might happen, one worse than the last and that grabbing onto anything could keep me from being thrown from my seat. It didn't help that both my brothers were reckless drivers at the time, and that Bridgeport is home to many terrible drivers. I know people can get by without driving, so I planned on doing the same. Now, I'm not so sure.

I got used to using the bus fairly fast, but the schedule is something that I needed more work adjusting to. I usually have to wait at least 20-30 minutes for my

bus to pick me up at the stop. It then takes another 20 minutes to reach the stop it drops me off at, including all other stops before mine. That's at least an hour wasted just to get home. Getting a ride with a car can take less than ten minutes by taking the highway home. The worst part is that I can't really change this. My class schedule and the bus don't work off of one another, unless I'm lucky. For my drawing class, for example, get out from there at 11:45 and only wait ten minutes before the bus I used to get home comes to get me.

My current lifestyle could be a lot easier if I had a car and a license, but I don't. My fear of being behind the wheel is still lingering, but not as strong as it was in high school. This could be because my parents are better drivers than my brothers and how the accident wasn't a serious one, in the first place. My parent's cars are too expensive, my dad's truck is too big, not a lot of open spaces around, I don't want them to micromanage me, I don't want to accidentally put a dent in their cars. Those are all just excuses that I have been telling myself to this day. These are excuses that only work for a moment before I remember that my parents are safe drivers and have no problem taking the time to show me how to work a car, something that can be done in an open parking lot, with no chance of me ruining their car.

All of my excuses have been debunked and my fear of bad driving is almost behind me. The only thing stopping me now is being lazy about it. I'll have to take another one of those written tests again, but I don't plan on doing that for a while, not because of my former fears, but because of how annoying they are.



# Climbing Mountains

By Louis Verderame  
Editor

Last summer I decided to make a change in my life. I was gaining weight, I was unhappy and I hated going to the gym. I realized no one is going to take my hand and say “you need to do this” or “let’s go.” It was up to me. The sooner that I would realize that the sooner I would get up and get out exercising. As I turned to hiking, something in my head changed. A gear was shifted. Hiking wasn’t like going to the gym. It wasn’t running in place for thirty minutes; or in my case a struggling ten. It wasn’t comparing yourself to others who are lifting more or who are running faster. It was a wide-open-to-myself workout, with many ways to explore and to conquer.

As much as people complain about Connecticut, there are a lot of good hiking spots in the area. I wanted to conquer some of them before the fall semester started up again. I asked my friends if they wanted to go for a hike and none of them, not one, ever wanted to go. I thought, “Damn, why does no one want to go with me?” It bothered me and worst of all, I let it bother me and it controlled me the first couple weeks of summer. The smoke cleared one day and I said “if no one wants to go with me. I am going to go by myself!”

Great! So now I was going on my own, but I still had one problem. I had no hiking clothes or any hiking gear, and, if you’re going to be a hiker, you need the right hiking gear. I got brown hiking boots, hiking shorts, and I also got a water pack that I would honestly wear all the time if it was socially acceptable to wear in public.

Sleeping Giant in Hamden is probably the most popular hiking trail in all of Connecticut. I have climbed it many times before, but not with all my hiking gear; and I know that sounds dumb but, I was feeling good and with my brown boots, shorts and water pack; I felt unstoppable. What changed this time was I was determined. My mission for this summer was to find the spot that overlooks Quinnipiac University’s campus. I have seen pictures and have always wondered how people got there.

Before I jump into that; let me take you back a couple years ago. I was a young naive 20 year old and thought I could find this spot no problem. I read online that it was up the blue trail and that was all I needed to hear. My mom told me “Don’t go by yourself if you don’t know where you are going.” What do moms know? Apparently everything because I got lost; like really LOST.

I remember from my previous hikes to the tower seeing on the wall before you go into the tower, a blue arrow with a blue number 23. I looked around and I consulted with my inner compass and thought “Okay, if I continue this way (pointing off to the right, with the tower on my left) I should be near the spot in a couple minutes.”

As I continued down the backside of the mountain I found cool little lookouts and rock formations but not the specific lookout I was looking for. As I was taking it all in, I started seeing rocks with purple markings on them. Did y’all know there’s a PURPLE TRAIL!? I found out about the purple trail that day; and I kept going.

I ran into another hiker coming from the yellow trail, yet another trail color I

found out about that day. I asked him about the overlook, and he unfortunately didn’t have any idea where it was. I then asked him, “Where did you start your hike?” He pointed in the direction behind him and walked away. Awesome, thanks guy, you came from the place you’re walking from. Can you sense the sarcasm? I did kind of walk into that one, though. I would of been mad at that but at the time with no answer as to when I was going to find this overlook; I was starting to get a bad feeling that I was going to get lost in Sleeping Giant.

I walked some more until I suddenly heard a whooshing sound of a car drive by. It was the greatest sound in the world. I started to hustle up my walk and I see a road. I ran full speed to the road; bugs flying in my mouth, losing my balance as I am stepping over rocks, my sun glasses sliding off my face. You name it, it was happening, but I did not care.

I get to the road and I pull out my phone and open the Maps app to see where I am. I put in the Sleeping Giant address and it shows that I am two miles away from the main parking lot. I looked around, shrugged my shoulders and walked back. As I was walking back, I walked pass Quinnipiac’s Campus in all its glory and I think to myself “well there it is.” I walked in front of the campus for about twenty minutes (it’s a big campus) and the whole time I felt like it was mocking me.

Now fast forward, summer 2019. I am a much older but still naive 25-year-old, but this time I did more research and I found the Quinnipiac trail does go up the blue trail, but it connects with the white trail. The best way to get to the trail would be to go up the main tower trail and about halfway up on the right the blue trail emerges. Information that would of really helped twenty- year-old Lou. Twenty-year-old Lou didn’t have hiking gear back then, but he has it now!

It was a hot, blue sky summer day, but a glorious day at that; a perfect day for a hike. I got there around 10 a.m., and I started up the mountain. After a couple turns up the mountain and just like my research showed, I see the blue trail bearing out to the right. I go into the blue trail and it is steeper than the tower trial. I was ready for the challenge, I was not going to let this overlook elude me again.

I got to a marker that is half blue and half white and pointing to the right. I consulted with my inner compass, and it told me to keep heading right. Also; because my research told me it was on the blue and white trail but my inner compass needed a win because it let me down. As I am walking, I keep seeing these little look outs and it is giving me hope that I am close. I get to a peak, I’m tired, I’m

sweating, and I’m almost out of water in my water pack. I am trying to savor it just in case I get lost again.

Just then, I look to my left and I see what appears to be another look out. I knew in my heart that this was it. I jump off the rock I was standing on and I run through a couple branches and it was a wide open view and the view was in fact...The Quinnipiac overlook!

I am not ashamed to admit I John Bender fist pumped when I got there. I sat down and looked at the view for about 30 minutes, admiring the landscape and looking as far as my prescription sunglasses would let me see. There’s nothing quite like a good view.

As I was sitting up there, I looked down at the road that I had walked two miles on when I was twenty and thought I made it up here. I finally found it.

When my mind wanders back or when I look at the photos on my phone of the views, I think about the time I ran to the road not even knowing where it was. I think about getting so close to my goal but yet not even being near it. I think of not having any hiking gear! (yes, it does make a difference) All those things helped me get to where I needed to be. If you don’t set goals for yourself then you’re just standing still. Setting goals is what gets you out of bed in the morning, in this case what got me to continue to keep going to Sleeping Giant to find this overlook. So I climbed my mountain. Go climb yours.

Photo by Louis Verderame







By Arielle Rivera  
Senior Staff Writer

During my freshman year at Housatonic, when I first wandered into the cafeteria in the Lafayette building, my nose was instantly assaulted by delicious smells wafting from the kitchen. Breakfast burritos, chicken sandwiches, curly fries, burgers, Philly cheesesteak: the menu had a large assortment of yummy things to choose from. I chose the classic Philly cheesesteak, which soon became my go-to meal whenever I had lunch. Sure, once in a while, I brought the occasional homemade lunch, which consisted of a simple sandwich, bottled water, and something in chocolate, but most of the time I craved that delicious cheesy meat filled sandwich. My mother had warned me that not only was that

sandwich unhealthy, but eventually over time I would get sick of it, so I should save my money and start bringing more homemade lunches to school. But at the time I refused to listen and just kept on with my unhealthy eating habits.

However, eventually I started to notice that after I ate my sandwich I felt sleepy and didn't want to move around much. I didn't know it at the time, but I was experiencing a symptom that was known to happen for people with unhealthy eating habits. An article from "Eat This Not That: 20 Things That Happen To Your Body When You Eat Fast Food" explains that when you eat foods that are high in fat and calories, you're more likely to become lethargic. In truth this did in

fact happen to me. After every sandwich, I could feel myself become lazier, which set off some red flags for me. You see, I soon learned that by becoming lazier I could potentially be putting my schoolwork at risk because if I didn't feel like doing anything, then what was to stop me from procrastinating? The article supports this by explaining that it is true that eating foods that contain high saturated fats can affect how your brain functions along with your memory. Since I would much rather remember the facts for an upcoming test or be able to come up with stories on the fly, I decided that it would be best to stop the Philly cheesesteak habit.

In addition, it wasn't just the



Photo by Magda Ehlers from Pexels

Personal Essay

health issues that made me want to eat better but the fact that I was spending money once a week on lunch. Although the food in the cafeteria was decently priced if you add up a sandwich, with a side of fries, a drink or any other food combinations and then add that to the amount of times that you buy food, you'll find that you're spending a lot more money than you realize. It's because of this that I was pushed into bringing homemade lunches.

I also started to come up with healthier homemade lunches so I could start feeling more energized. It was hard at first to get used to the habit of making my own lunch, but eventually I started to either make my lunch the night before or make it early in the morning. However, here's the important thing to remember when it comes to making your own lunch: even if you do it, it

doesn't guarantee that your eating healthy. For example, when I first started bringing lunch, I would pack a sandwich, an apple, water, and a bag of chips or brownies, or whatever suited my fancy. Sometimes during my lunch I would ig-

*"I find myself more full of energy..."*

nore the apple, which sort of made my lunch a bit more unhealthy than I intended. It also didn't help that I was always tempted to go back into my old habits of ordering food.

According to an article from Insider.com: "11 ways to Build a Healthier Lunch," the best way to have a healthier lunch is to load up on vegetables because they offer

important nutrients and are easy to make tastier with a few seasonings. The site also states that it is okay to snack on something, whether it be peanuts or even sweeter options like fruit.

I do in fact follow this trend with my newly organized lunch plan; now the only things that stay the same are my sandwich and water, but I always make sure to pack a container full of grapes and a bag of healthy pretzels.

Scientific research shows that by eating healthy we have better memory skills and have better moods. I'm happy to say that ever since I've changed my eating habits for lunch I find myself more full of energy and I'm remembering a lot more things for school. So my advice to everyone, if you want to have more of an edge in school, eat healthy because it'll offer you more advantages than if you don't.



I wasn't sure if I would ever see them again.

# Lost and Found

By Brianna Ocasio  
Senior Staff Writer

It felt as if the hot, strong wind was blowing me further and further away from my family. I felt as if every step I took was in the wrong direction. Tears continuously rolled down my cheeks before they fell to the ground. My feet burned as I walked across the relentlessly hot sand from the scorching sun that day. I frantically searched anywhere to find my family, but I couldn't recognize a single face. I was six years old when I got lost at the beach. To this day, my recollection of the time I went astray remains clear and vivid in my memory.

Up to that moment, it was the perfect summer's day. The water looked like a mesmerizing oasis under the gleaming sun. My siblings and I were playing in the water before I realized I had drifted away. I figured I would walk back towards the area where we originally laid our blankets, where my mother would have been waiting for me. I kept walking further down until I reached the boardwalk. This was when I realized that I was all alone.

I kept walking to distract myself from this feeling of helplessness in the pit of my stomach. My instant reaction was to cry. I cried frantically, hoping my mother could recognize my screams. She did not; I was too far away.

Two people waved me over to them. Nearby, a young woman who had clearly been sunbathing all morning noticed me at the same time that another man, who was watching children that appeared to be his own, called me over. I had to make a split decision as to which person I could trust more. When I looked at the woman, I thought of my own mother. My mother is much more nurturing than my father, so I assumed that I could trust her more.

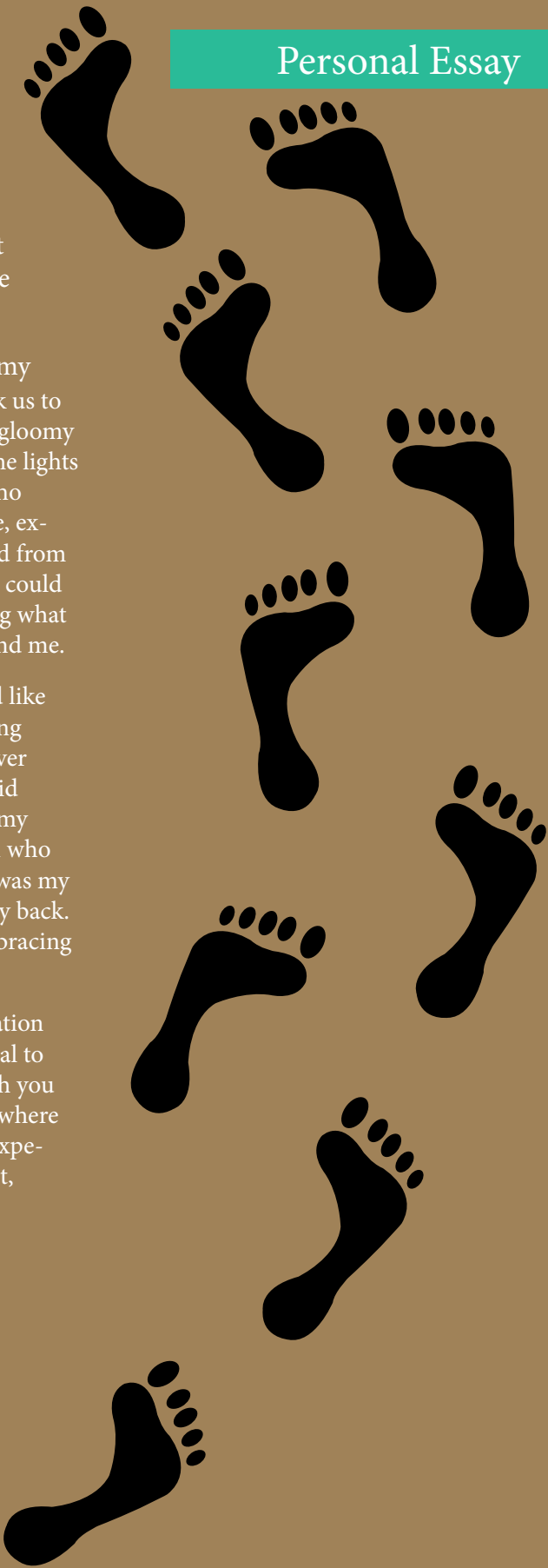
She told me to stand on her blanket because she immediately noticed that my feet were burning up. Although this relief from stepping on the hot sand made me feel better, my cries still continued. She proceeded to put on her slippers and carried me to search for my mother. My panic arose with

each unrecognizable woman that I looked at. All I could think about was how desperately I wanted to be with my family.

This woman I was with explained my situation to a police officer, who took us to a nearby police station. It was a very gloomy atmosphere. We sat there, watching the lights flicker on and off. There was a boy who looked only a few years older than me, explaining how he got lost and separated from his family as well. I wondered how he could remain so calm while I was wondering what would happen if my family never found me.

We sat on this bench for what seemed like forever. Finally, I saw a woman running towards me from a distance. I had never felt so relieved in my entire life, as I did when I realized that this woman was my own mother. I'm sure the only person who could understand how I felt that day was my mom. We didn't talk much on our way back. Instead, we held each other close, embracing our satisfying reunion.

Many people can relate to the desperation that occurs with feeling lost. It's natural to panic in this type of situation in which you don't necessarily know what to do or where to go. One thing I learned from this experience is that when you are feeling lost, not to lose hope. Difficult situations are not the end of the world as I once thought. Life is full of choices. Just as I had to make a decision in regards to accepting help from another person, it is important to recognize opportunities, and to make decisions in order to move forward.



The 2019 film Joker is dark, brilliantly written, cinematically beautiful, and raises awareness for mental health problems as well as some of the stigmas associated with it. This moving and emotional movie is Arthur Fleck's dark journey to becoming one of Gotham's most infamous villains: the Joker.

As the adult bullies repeatedly kick Arthur (Joaquin Phoenix), crumpled into a ball in a dirty alley-way, I couldn't help but imagine the kicks as my mental demons, with Arthur representing my mind.

This was the movie's opening scene, and I was already in tears. The movie's beautiful and moving cinematic experience swirled metaphors all over my eyes and into my mind.

Beware that this movie can be triggering to those with mental illnesses. This movie doesn't pull any punches. It has several graphically violent scenes, but is a stunning and mesmerizing story from beginning to end.

This film tells a tragic story through artistic and realistic cinematography. There's suspense throughout. Arthur's deeply sad and complex character continues to spiral as he transforms into the Joker.

This movie also feels like a warm hug of understanding and acceptance for those with mental health problems, as the stigma is recognized and relatability is felt towards Arthur's experiences.

For example, in an emotional scene, Arthur scribbles across his therapy notebook these words: "The worst part about having a mental illness is people expect you to behave as if you DON'T." Stigmas surrounding mental illness are still so prevalent.

## Joker and Mental Illness

By Emily Peslak  
Editor

Photo by Jhefferson Santos

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Horizons is a student-powered, student-led, student-produced media outlet for news and info. of interest to HCC students, written for students.

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We provide important news, helpful advice topics like health, success as a student, fashion, fitness, relationships, arts, music, entertainment, updates on campus activities/events, profiles of HCC students, faculty, and staff, personal essays and opinions pieces on a range of subjects.

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We publish this magazine at least **TWICE** a year.

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