Coming Soon…

• Spring Semester Kick-off on Thursday, January 31*- 6:30-8:00 in University Crossing 260. **MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THIS REQUIRED RHSA EVENT.**

• New slate of RHSA events, experiences, and opportunities, including more chances to meet the faculty in your college and spend time with RHSA students and RHSA Peer Leaders!

• Check your email, our Engage page, and our social media pages for updates.

• Keep letting us know how we can support you in having a successful first year – we’re all part of your support network.

RHSA students at the Celebration of Supporters Brunch on 12/14
Quick Tips for Winter Break Success:

- Check your UML email. You may not be here, but we still are and have important information to share with you.
- Check your grades. If anything looks off, communicate directly with your instructor. Do not wait until you get back to campus in January to reach out.
- Order your books for the spring. Planning ahead keeps you prepared.
- Make sure to complete your FAFSA for the 2019-2020 Academic year, and to stay on top of your To Do List and Financial Aid documentation. Don’t miss out on money and opportunities because you’re on break.
- Finally, check your schedule once or twice this winter. Sometimes things change. We’d hate to see you go to the wrong class or buy books for something that had to close.

We’re here, so if you have any questions please reach out!!!
Enjoy your time away, and give yourself a break, even if it’s small. You DESERVE it!!!
I attended a small, women’s college where I received scholarships, loans, and grants. I flourished! I majored in human services, took advantage of leadership opportunities, engaged in community service, and became an RA. While I worked two jobs to pay for college expenses, I developed excellent time management skills and regularly made Dean’s List.

My mom and dad were married at a time when women stayed home and raised their children while men worked and made money to support the family. My parents divorced when I was very young resulting in my mom, with no formal education, raising two kids on her own. She did her best by working as a waitress, switchboard operator, and secretary. My dad helped to support us but money was always tight and I have vivid memories of watching my mother decide which bills she would pay each month. I knew I never wanted to be in that position and vowed I would make enough money to support myself and my children. While I was happy to marry I never wanted to feel dependent on someone else for my livelihood.

Despite the desire to be independent I was a terrible student. I went to a large high school with thousands of students and I was lost. I skipped class and had to attend summer school twice. I clearly remember feeling like I was in a deep hole and there was no way to dig out. My wake up came in December of my senior year when I knew I needed to make some changes or I would end up exactly where I did not want to be….struggling to pay my bills and dependent on others. I managed to graduate and, surprisingly, was accepted to college. I had a chance at a “do over” and I went full steam ahead.

I have worked with many first generation college students and I am always impressed with their grit, drive, and desire to make their families proud. Supporting the success of this population, seeing them achieve their goals, and learning from their experiences is why I love working with the RHSA. It is incredibly rewarding to be part of something that has a far reaching impact on my community. I look forward to the future as the program continues to grow and develop.

~Karen Humphry Johnson

Mikhayla Croteau (Chemistry) and Kiara Vasquez (Business) have been selected as the River Hawk Scholars Academy November Students-of-the-Month!

Mikhayla has impressed us with how engaged she’s been in the RHSA and how diligent she’s been in handling all of her responsibilities. Her nomination was supported by Lt. Col. Jaramillo, who shared with us Mikhayla’s successes so far this semester as a member of the Air Force ROTC at UMass Lowell: “Although Mikhayla is a first-term freshman, she’s had a significant impact in our program, notably in our recruiting and retention pillars. She currently ranks #1 of 24 first-term freshman and is the only freshman serving in a leadership deputy position (Recruiting Team Deputy). As such, she has helped represent UMass-Lowell and Air Force ROTC at various events including the Merrimack Valley and Nashua Regional College Fairs. Within the program, she has helped on-ramp several members, especially those who’ve started late. Mikhayla has and will continue to have a direct effect on our ability to exceed UMass Lowell 2020 goals in the future.”

Kiara has also gotten her UMass Lowell career off to a great start. As Dr. Deborah Finch of the Manning School of Business shared with us, Kiara has made a great impression in her college, both in the classroom and beyond. Dr. Finch told us that, “Kiara Vasquez has been a standout term freshman and is the only fresh term freshman, she’s made a significant impact in our program, notably in our recruiting and retention pillars. She currently ranks #1 of 24 first-term freshman and is the only freshman serving in a leadership deputy position (Recruiting Team Deputy). As such, she has helped represent UMass-Lowell and Air Force ROTC at various events including the Merrimack Valley and Nashua Regional College Fairs. Within the program, she has helped on-ramp several members, especially those who’ve started late. Mikhayla has and will continue to have a direct effect on our ability to exceed UMass Lowell 2020 goals in the future.”

We offer our congratulations to both Mikhayla and Kiara for all they’ve already achieved. And we offer it to each of you as well for making it this far. You are SO close to the successful completion of your first semester here at UMass Lowell! This first semester is not easy, and no matter the challenges you’ve each faced – and you each will have your own story to tell about your first semester in college – crossing that finishing line of the semester is a big accomplishment. Take joy in that.

Best wishes to you all in your final weeks before the break!
Continued

Sophomore Sound Recording Technology major Alex Cook shared his thoughts on how learning and failure are intertwined. In Alex’s words, “When we see a 13/25 on a quiz, we don’t see a golden ticket to success. We see a rating of ourselves, of our own intelligence. When we see our GPA, we see that as the end-all, be all judgment of our success and value as a person. What I am inviting everyone here to do is to forget about all of that - to stop belittling yourself because of your grades. What really matters is that you are trying and that you are learning. That you are making the choice to go to class, pay attention, and work hard—not to be afraid of failing, but to invite the opportunity to learn.

Dr. Tim Crain, a Music History Professor at UML often says, ‘If you aren’t uncomfortable, you aren’t learning.’”

Sophomore English Literature Major and RHSA Peer Leader Emily Crespo spoke about how her RHSA group’s supporters encouraged everyone throughout the semester. In Emily’s words, “All of you in the room have made it. I am not only speaking to RHSA students but parents, siblings, grandparents, friends, teachers, and any supporters who have their loved ones to get where they need to be. I want to say thank you, and I want to encourage you to continue being there.”

Following these remarks, students were invited to share extemporaneous remarks thanking people who helped them succeed. Freshmen International Business Major Sophia Governo provided insight into who was ultimately responsible for RHSA students’ success. In Sophia’s words, “With all the wonderful words that were said about our incredible supporters, it is important to discuss one supporter in particular: yourself. As a student, I believe that the support you find in yourself is tremendously important. They say you are your own worst critic; you can also be your own best supporter. At the end of the day, we’re the ones doing all the work when we’re working long nights at the library. You got all of it done because you put your mind to it and completed this semester. Your supporters enhance the support you provide for yourself.”

What’s Happening in the RHSA?

On Friday, December 14th, RHSA was proud to host its annual Celebration of Supporters Brunch. The event gave students the opportunity to celebrate the family members, friends, faculty, and staff that helped them succeed throughout the semester. Following opening remarks, several RHSA Peer Leaders spoke about what having supporters has meant to them and the wisdom they’ve acquired from their time at UMass Lowell.

Sophomore Business Major Twisha Mohapatra spoke about the value of having supporters who care about care you. In Twisha’s words, “Supporters are some of the most valuable and important people in your life. My parents, my friends, and my family motivate me daily by just sending me a small text in the morning asking how I am, or helping me stay calm amongst the stresses of college. We all have supporters like this in our lives. When I think about supporters I imagine everyone walking around carrying an invisible suitcase. This suitcase is filled with all their problems, stress, and everyday struggles. At times the weight of the suitcase can get too heavy for one person to carry themselves. It’s easier when someone comes and gives you a hand. These people are supporters. Without them you would still be trying to lug your suitcase around. Supporters make your lives easier, they go out of their way to make sure you are doing well. They get excited hearing about all your cool accomplishments, take interest in your interests, and inspire you to be the best version of yourself. Matt and Racheal, thank you. Thank you for encouraging me and motivating me to be my best self and do my best work. Thank you for helping me carry my suitcase.”