REGISTER FOR RHSA EVENTS

◊ RHSA Spring Kickoff, Thursday, January 31st from 6:30-8:00pm, University Crossing 260, check your emails for an invitation from RHSA!

◊ Chinese New Year Celebration by CSSA, Sunday, February 3rd from 6-8pm in UCrossing Maloney Hall REGISTER HERE

◊ Make your Personal Brand a Major Asset, Thursday, February 7th from 5:30-6:30pm at the UMass Lowell Innovation Hub REGISTER HERE

◊ Table Games and Dodgeball Tournament, Friday, February 8th from 3-6pm at the Campus Recreation Center REGISTER HERE

◊ Networking 101 with Kevin Willett, Monday, February 11th from 6:30-7:30pm in University Crossing 260A REGISTER HERE

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I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.” Nelson Mandela

“RACHEAL’S ADVICE

Please reach out to Racheal at Racheal_Shertzer@uml.edu if you have any questions about your enrollment status, holds preventing you from registering for classes, or general questions about your course of study.

MY EXPERIENCE IN BECOMING A FIRST GENERATION STUDENT

BY SOMERIS RIVERA, SENIOR AST. DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL AID

I was born in the Dominican Republic and immigrated to New York City, specifically an area called Spanish Harlem, at the age of 6. My dad was a factory worker and had a number of side jobs to make sure we had what we needed to meet our basic financial needs, food stamps helped to meet our physical needs. My parents worked very hard to make sure we had better opportunities than they ever did. This is why education was top priority for them, even though neither one of them attended college or understood the language, they wanted to make sure we made it “all the way”.

I attended Martin Luther King, Jr. High School in Manhattan and was fortunate to have very supportive teachers in High School who encouraged me to get involved in various after school programs and extracurricular activities. These helped expand my world view and see possibilities for a future far beyond what I was exposed to within the walls of my neighborhood. During these years I realized that I didn’t have to conform to the limitations of my surroundings, but I could achieve much more – this may sound cliché, but it was so true for me! I finally had a vision for my future and knew that being the first one in my family to graduate college was going to get me there, and also set an example for my 3 younger siblings.

My first year of college was at Marymount College, a small private college in Tarrytown, NY – an all-girl college – I don’t know what I was thinking. I was able to finance my education with the help of scholarships, grants and student loans. During this time, my family experienced a traumatic event, which led to my dad, the sole financial support of our family of 5 be laid off from his factory job after almost 20 years – without a job, they considered moving to where we had family and could start fresh – Lawrence Massachusetts. I decide to transfer out of Marymount and applied and was accepted into UMass Lowell. I was ready to move when my parents decided to stay in NY – I was off to MA on my own.
I was considered an Out of State student while at UMass Lowell, which meant that financial aid was not enough to cover all my costs – I worked multiple jobs, after school and on the weekends to get myself through school. Many times I felt very lost and alone in this whole process, my parents were supportive yet unable to help me figure things out or financially. One day I walked into the financial aid office and met Mr. Richard (Dick) Barrett, I called him my guardian angel, he sat me down, hired me as his work study student (now my third job) and helped me every step of the way. I remember telling him I didn’t think I could do it (finish college) and he told me “even if you have to get your degree in Spanish, you will graduate college”. I am so grateful to Mr. Barrett for helping me to dream again and thanks to his support I was able to earn my college degree.

My experiences growing up and the divine encounters along the way served as my motivation for helping other students, like myself, who dream of a future they weren’t exposed to. I have been working professionally at UMass Lowell for over 13 years now, and I love meeting and speaking to students who are first gen and share similar stories. One of the great outcomes of being a first gen is the privilege of opening doors for others after you. I find the RHSA program is so crucial to providing first gen students the support they need to earn the degrees that will ultimately change the course of their lives and that of their families. Being involved in a small way with the RHSA program, is a great honor.
RHSA STUDENTS: WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Many of you are involved in clubs, activities, community service, and work experiences that bring a robust set of perspectives to the RHSA. For our upcoming newsletters, we’d love to hear from you about what you’re doing outside of the RHSA.

If you’d like to feature something you’re a part of, feel free to include opportunities about upcoming events RHSA students can attend or opportunities to become part of a club or organization. If you’re interested in being featured, please email a paragraph and any photos you wish to be featured to Gerrit.Boldt@uml.edu

CONGRATULATIONS TO NOVEMBER STUDENT OF THE MONTH KIARA VASQUEZ!

Freshmen Business Administration Major Kiara Vasquez has been named the RHSA November Student of the Month! Throughout the Fall Semester, Kiara impressed her business professors with her strong work ethic and commitment to her academics. When asked why she chose UMass Lowell Kiara states, “I chose to attend UMass Lowell for multiple reasons. One being that it was close to home and I would be able to visit my family whenever I wanted. Being an only child, that was very important to me. I also loved the culture. Everyone on campus seemed very united and loving. When I visited the university for the first time, the students were extremely kind and there was a family dynamic that I could sense as I walked around the campus.” In her free time Kiara loves to try out different restaurants with close friends and family. Her favorite part about UMass Lowell? “The culture and the people”.

Reflecting on what it means to be a first-generation college student Kiara states, “Being a first-generation college student means that I am the first person in my family to set an example. I am the first person who will guide the generation after me and I will set a blue print of what is expected. It also means that I am the only person that my family depends on. I am expected to become successful and with that comes a lot of pressure, but I do not mind. It keeps me motivated and driven.”

Her advice to fellow students? “The advice I would give fellow students is to stay focused on your goals. I would say to not let the excitement of being away from home and living the college life distract you from your overall goal and the reason for you being in college. I would also say to find a balance between school life and your social life. It is okay to have fun and go out, but always remember to stay focused and on task as well.”

In the future, Kiara hopes to work in the private sector, enjoy her job, and be passionate about what she does every day.
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR DECEMBER STUDENTS OF THE MONTH!

Congratulations to RHSA December Students of the Month Mecca Hardy and Shadrach AduBoateng!

Racheal nominated Mecca for this recognition, and both Associate Director of University Bands Deb Huber and Prof. Kelly Drummeey quickly seconded your nomination. Mecca has found success both in and outside of the classroom as a student and a member of Marching Band. Her College Writing instructor, Prof. Kelly Drummeey, shared with us that, “I got to know Mecca through her writing, which I enjoyed not only as a writing instructor, but as a reader; her papers consistently shared enlightening perspectives and narratives. Mecca was proactive in communicating and seeking help when she felt it necessary, which I find to be a hallmark characteristic of academically successful students. We are fortunate to have Mecca here at UML!”

And Associate Director of University Bands Deb Huber wrote of Mecca: “As the Associate Director of University Bands on campus for the past 29 years, I have seen a lot of students come through our programs, and Mecca was surely a pleasure to have in the ensemble. Mecca earned a spot performing on Bass Drum in the competitive percussion section of the UMass Lowell Marching Band. A hard worker with a warm smile and kind word for those around her, she was a very positive influence in her first year with the band, and successful in her own constant musical progression.”

Racheal nominated Sadrach for this recognition because of the grit he demonstrated in pursuing his education and goals. The nomination was seconded by Dr. Cathy Levey of the School of Criminology and Social Justice. Dr. Levey had glowing things to say about him as a student in one of her First Year Seminars this past fall: “Shadrach’s essays were insightful and demonstrated an appreciation of the resources offered by the University. My perception of Shadrach is that he is a kind, humble, unassuming, hardworking and serious student. It was a pleasure to have him in class. I believe that he is very deserving of this recognition.”

“She never let the stress of academics get in the way of her ability to serve her community. And her nominees are testament to the varied interests that she has in and out of the classroom.”

“Being at UML was difficult at first but the support I received from my family, hometown, and the RHSA made it easier.”

MEET RHSA PEER LEADER TANISHA BURY

Sophomore Tanisha Bury majors in Liberal Arts with concentrations in Legal Studies and History and cites the school spirit as her favorite part about UMass Lowell.

When asked why she decided to be an RHSA Peer Leader, Tanisha replied, “I wanted to help students make a difficult transition into college. Coming from a small city where most students went to the same high school, attending a school as big as UML was really intimidating. Being at UML was difficult at first but the support I received from my family, hometown, and the RHSA made it easier. I know that for me, it would have been nice to have a student who experienced what I was going through to answer my questions.” Tanisha cites affordability and housing options as the key factors in her decision to attend UMass Lowell.

When asked what advice she would give to RHSA Freshmen, Tanisha states, “The piece of advice I would give to freshmen is that you are not the only one going through challenges. Being away from my family for the first time was hard and made me feel like I was the only student struggling with classes and adjusting. Once I realized that I have a support system at UML, things became easier to cope with.”

In her free time, Tanisha enjoys listening to music, hanging out with friends, and watching TV. In the future, Tanisha hopes to find a job that will allow her to repay her student loans.