Framingham State

Writing the Next Chapter

The tasks ahead of Framingham State’s new president, Dr. Nancy Niemi, are big. So are her energy and enthusiasm.
Dear Alumni and Friends,

The past few months have been some of the most exciting and rewarding of my career as I’ve begun my role as President of Framingham State University. I am grateful to the many people who have welcomed me into the FSU family and offered their support and guidance. The level of enthusiasm and affection our community has for FSU is palpable.

I will be counting on that support as we navigate a challenging landscape for higher education. The national conversation around the value proposition of earning a college degree has turned decidedly negative. Demographic declines and the pandemic have negatively impacted enrollment. And yet, college graduates across the country tout the economic and life-enrichment differences that education has made for their lives. We must extend this vision, now, to our communities, demonstrating the potential and value that Framingham State continues to provide through its educational opportunities. Too many people still do not envision themselves as college graduates, and it is our responsibility to help many more people see themselves as belonging in higher education.

No one can speak to the life-changing impact of this institution better than our alumni. Your personal and professional success stories are one of the best ways we have to let the next generation of students know how powerful an FSU education can be in their lives.

I look forward to getting to know more of you in the months ahead and learning about how Framingham State has made a difference in your life. I welcome your thoughts and ideas on how we can work together to help Framingham State become an even greater version of itself.

Sincerely,

Nancy S. Niemi, PhD
President
Framingham State University
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“I hope to further help communities and develop my own civic engagement...”

— LEIGHAH BEAUSOLEIL '23

Leighah Beausoleil '23 honored as Newman Civic Fellow
Framingham State’s Leighah Beausoleil ’23 is among the 173 student civic leaders from 38 states, Washington, D.C. and Mexico who comprise the 2022–2023 cohort of Newman Civic Fellows.

The Newman Civic Fellowship recognizes students who stand out for their commitment to creating positive change in communities locally and around the world. The fellowship is named for the late Frank Newman, one of Campus Compact’s founders, who was a tireless advocate for civic engagement in higher education.

Beausoleil is an English major at Framingham State with a concentration in journalism and minors in Chinese and political science. In addition to being an outstanding student, she is the editor-in-chief at The Gatepost student newspaper, where she has written many noteworthy news articles. The Gatepost is one of the key opportunities for civic engagement at FSU, and one of the most demanding student leadership commitments. She began at the paper during her first year and has risen quickly through the ranks as her peers recognized her ability, commitment, judgment and maturity.

“Many studies have shown the vital role local newspapers play in the promotion of civic engagement,” says Beausoleil. “As a journalist, I have the opportunity to inform communities on various issues and opportunities for change by giving the public a voice. As FSU’s Newman Civic Fellow, I hope to further help communities and develop my own civic engagement as well as encourage that of others.”

FSU Teacher Preparation Program Graded Among Top in the Country
The undergraduate elementary teacher preparation program at Framingham State University has been named among the best in the nation when it comes to ensuring future elementary teachers have the essential content and skills they need to teach mathematics. The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), a national research and policy organization that regularly evaluates the core requirements and practices of over 1,100 programs that prepare future elementary teachers, released a new report today in which the undergraduate program at Framingham State University earned an A+ designation for its requirements in elementary mathematics. Framingham State University is among only 79 programs in the nation to earn this distinction as an “exemplar” in the new report. NCTQ evaluated programs for their coverage of both the key mathematics content that elementary teachers need: Numbers and Operations, Algebraic Thinking, Geometry and Measurement, and Data Analysis and Probability, as well as how to teach those concepts (Math Pedagogy). The recommended minimum instructional time that future elementary teachers need in these essential math topics was set based on guidance from the National Council on Teacher Quality. Framingham State University stands apart from all others by meeting 100 percent of the instructional goals across each of the elementary mathematics topic areas.
Mancuso Scholarships Provide Life-Changing Impact

Tanisha Tanis of Leominster knew that paying for college was likely going to mean taking on a fair amount of debt. To reduce the impact on her family and herself, she started searching far and wide for scholarship opportunities and found the Mancuso Scholarship at Framingham State University.

Now, she has the chance to earn her degree for free.

“It means so much to have this opportunity to be able to study and not have to worry about the cost,” says Tanis. “It’s a blessing.”

Tanis and Wendy Pierre, of Malden, are the third pair of recipients of the Mancuso English, Humanities, and Social & Behavioral Sciences Scholarships.

They will enroll at Framingham State this fall with 100 percent of their tuition, fees, and room and board covered by the scholarship.

Tanis will major in Psychology at FSU and is considering a minor in entrepreneurship. Her ultimate goal is to become a mental health counselor for young adults after obtaining a master’s degree.

“Mental health is something I’m very passionate about,” she says. “It’s not discussed enough, particularly in the Black community. I want to be able to advocate for people going through mental health issues.”

The two students will have the opportunity to take all four years at Framingham State at no cost, but must meet certain scholarship requirements in order to have it renewed each year.

English Professor Halcyon Mancuso created the scholarships through a $2.5 million financial commitment to Framingham State that was announced in 2018.

Pierre will major in English at FSU and is considering a minor in secondary education. He has strong interpersonal skills and is looking forward to developing his communication abilities into a future career.

“When the admissions counselor called me to deliver the news, I was stunned,” Pierre says. “It’s an enormous opportunity, and it’s like a financial weight has been lifted. I’m really appreciative.”

Students met with representatives of each company throughout the semester as they worked on their plans and marketing pitches. The stakes are big for Sir Inkwell’s, a trendy new cold tea drink that Anheuser-Busch has agreed to distribute through its channels in Southern California if they can create enough buzz.

“It’s really important to keep students actively engaged with the course materials,” says Rahman, who has been teaching at FSU for 20 years and is the recipient of the 2022 Distinguished Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching. “Often that means rolling up our sleeves and collaborating with real companies as consultants. It’s a wonderful opportunity for the students to network and apply their skills.”

As the students work with the companies, Rahman arranges for specialists to come in and speak to the class about specific issues they are dealing with. In the case of Sir Inkwell’s, she invited alumna Kim Pita ’10 to discuss marketing startup companies. For the Clinton Savings Bank project, Rahman invited a representative with Avidia Bank to discuss how they approach marketing.

“They are often really pleasantly surprised with our students,” she says. “They are smart, articulate and very interested in the project.”

Rahman specializes in international marketing and seeks to expose her students to global opportunities whenever possible. She has led 14 international trips with students during her time at FSU, including to China, Montreal, Italy, France, Greece, England and more.

“I studied abroad in Greece when I was in college and really got the travel bug,” says Rahman. “A lot of our students feel like traveling abroad is out of reach for them, but where there’s a will, there’s a way. Jane Decatur (Director of International Education) works magic in her office.”

Rahman and her husband recently donated to FSU to establish a scholarship in support of Marketing students.

“I’m a firm believer that education changes lives and Framingham State changes lives,” says Rahman. “If I can do a little bit extra to make things easier on a student, then I’d like to do that to the best of my ability.”
FSU Class of 2022

Thousands of family members and friends gathered at the DCU Center on Sunday, May 22, to celebrate Framingham State University’s Class of 2022. It was FSU’s first in-person ceremony since 2019. Senior Class President Samantha Collette spoke about the troll that the pandemic took on the class, and how something that initially forced them apart actually wound up bringing them closer together in the end.

“All of the people I had missed out on...it has truly been an honor serving you all. We will miss you, but we will not forget you,” she said.

A total of 710 undergraduate and 472 graduate degrees were conferred during the ceremony. It was the final commencement for Framingham State University President F. Javier Cevallos, who is set to retire.

“It has truly been an honor serving this institution, its wonderful faculty and staff, and our amazing students,” Cevallos said. “I feel very fortunate to have gotten the chance to get to know many of you, and I want to thank you for helping make my final academic year at Framingham State so special.”

Jonathan Lemare, the Chief White House Correspondent for Politico and a host on MSNBC, spoke about polarization in the country and encouraged graduates to “step away from their internet and social media silos and engage with people face to face. You will realize that other person is another human,” he said, “someone with whom you can disagree but still respect...Find that common ground that gives our democracy its most valuable asset: a connected, informed, tolerant citizenry.”

Framingham State University’s Class of 2022.

2022 Distinguished Faculty Awards

Distinguished Faculty

EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

Sandra Rahman, PhD, Professor of Marketing

Dr. Sandra Rahman works hard to incorporate outside professionals into her courses, providing students with an opportunity to network and gain real-world experience prior to graduation. Last year, students in her Strategic Marketing course took part in a competition with Anheuser-Busch (AB) and Sir Inkwell to develop a startup marketing campaign.

EXCELLENCE IN SCHOLARSHIP

Kimberly Arditte Hall, PhD, Professor of Psychology

Dr. Kimberly Arditte Hall’s research focuses on identifying cognitive and emotional variables that cause or worsen the symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress and sleep difficulties in adults.

EXCELLENCE IN ADVISING

Shelli Waetzig, PhD, Professor of Chemistry and Food Science

Dr. Shelli Waetzig has gone above and beyond to support our students as they apply to various health professional schools, including medical, dental, physician assistant, nursing, pharmacy, physical therapy and occupational therapy.

EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE

Julia Zoino-Jeannetti, PhD, Professor of Psychology

Dr. Julia Zoino-Jeannetti recently led Framingham State University through the program approval process with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

Distinguished Visiting Faculty

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Fei Yu, PhD World Languages

Dr. Fei Yu has been a visiting lecturer at Framingham State since 2018. Her instructional style focuses on learner-centeredness and learning motivation.

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

Kenneth Grunes, MBA, Management and Business & IT

Professor Kenneth Grunes is a visiting faculty member in the Management and Business & IT Department who teaches courses in Business Policy and Strategy, Marketing Principles, Marketing Research, Organizational Behavior and Strategic Marketing.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL/BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Holly Pearson, PhD, Sociology and Criminology

Dr. Holly Pearson has been a visiting faculty member at Framingham State University since 2017. She established a course on disabilities during her second semester at FSU.

COLLEGE OF STEM

Andrea Kozol, PhD, Biology

Dr. Andrea Kozol has filled many roles in the Biology Department during her time as a visiting faculty member, including lab coordinator, lab instructor (bench and field labs) and course instructor for major, non-major and honors program classes.
Joshua Onujiogu has dreamed of playing in the NFL since he was 7 years old. When the Wareham, Massachusetts native did not get recruited by any Division I football programs after high school, it appeared to everyone except Onujiogu that the dream was over. But he never lost faith.

"Since I have been at Framingham State, I have been working toward my dream and I knew this was going to be the end result," Onujiogu said shortly after signing a contract with the Seattle Seahawks following the NFL draft in the spring. "I don’t regret the path I had to take. Everything happens for a reason."

According to D3football.com, Onujiogu is one of just two NCAA Division III student-athletes to get a contract with an NFL team following the 2022 draft. The star defensive end began generating buzz ahead of the draft following a strong Pro Day at Holy Cross in the spring. He is a two-time MASCAC Defensive Player of the Year who registered 13.5 sacks, 68 tackles and an interception last season while leading the Rams to another appearance in the NCAA Division III tournament.

Onujiogu credits Director of Athletics and Head Football Coach Thomas Kelley ’76 with helping him to reach his potential.

"Coach Kelley has always believed in me, and I really cherish our relationship," he says. "I know Seattle really liked him. I think it’s a good fit."

The coach credits Onujiogu with not letting the Covid-19 shutdown and canceled 2020 season upend his development as a player.

"He really powered through it," says Kelley. "Instead of taking a step backward, he took a couple steps forward, which is pretty impressive. As a Division III athlete, he is not getting the kind of coaching and training attention that these Division I athletes get. But he didn’t drop a beat."

Onujiogu still has more to overcome to get into an NFL game, but no one’s doubting him now.

MAJOR: Health & Wellness
HOMETOWN: Wareham, Massachusetts
NICKNAME: Uno

FSU receives National Science Foundation Grant to support recruitment, retention and career advancement of STEM faculty of color

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded a nearly $3 million grant to three Massachusetts sister universities to support the development of a model for advancing early career faculty of color to full-time positions in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

Framingham State University, Bridgewater State University and Worcester State University will partner on creating a national model for a state university system to recruit, retain and promote cohorts of STEM faculty of color. The STEM fields in the three institutions include the social, natural, environmental and food sciences; anthropology; biotechnology; photonics; engineering; mathematics; and economics. Framingham State is the lead institution on the effort, which will officially launch on July 1, 2022, and take place over five years.

Black/African Americans, Hispanics and Latinx students make up roughly 33% of the U.S. student population in institutions of higher education and 13% of the proportion of earned STEM doctorates. Nonetheless, they represent only 9% of the STEM workforce and only 6% of the tenure-track STEM faculty in U.S. institutions of higher education.

“Our faculty demographics do not mirror that of our students who reflect our society but not the STEM workforce,” says Dr. Reema Zeineldin, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs at Framingham State and the lead principal investigator (PI) on the NSF grant application. “Research clearly demonstrates that students of color perform better when they are guided by professors from similar backgrounds and lived experiences. This alliance of three institutions aspires to provide a replicable supportive model on best practices in inclusion and equity for increasing representation and persistence of faculty of color in STEM. We are grateful to the NSF for its support of the effort.”
FSU Cheerleading Wins National Championship

Framingham State University’s Division III Co-Ed Cheerleading Team won the National Championship during the competition down in Daytona Beach, Florida this past spring. The team’s final score was more than three points higher than runner-up Montclair State University, and included zero deductions.

According to Head Coach Dave Lombardi, the journey to the National Championship began two summers ago at a cheerleading camp the team attended in Taunton, Massachusetts, which secured them a spot at the Nationals. The camp helped the team master advanced skills, such as learning complex pyramid routines, and taught them to work under pressure.

It was the team’s first National Championship win since they began attending the Nationals in 1997. The cheerleaders on the squad are: Danielle Achin, Sophia Cameron, Alex Connor, Jon Dailey, Amanda DeAngelis, Sophia DeMore, Kristina Giordano, Hayley Shulman, Julia Taliaferro, Juliana Therrien and Reymi Vargas.

Softball and Women’s Lacrosse Win MASCAC Titles in Spring 2022

Framingham State University’s women’s lacrosse team captured its first-ever conference tournament title this past May, while the softball team added its latest title in a recent stretch of dominance in the Massachusetts State Collegiate Athletic Conference.

Led by Tournament MVP Rachel Erickson, the second-seeded lacrosse team defeated fourth-seeded Bridgewater State University 18-10 in the championship game, earning an automatic invite to the NCAA tournament. The team had finished as regular season champions twice in recent years, but this is the first time they broke through with a tournament championship.

The softball team was the fourth seed entering their conference tournament, but upset top-seeded Bridgewater State University in consecutive games to take the title. The team has now finished as regular season or tournament champions every since 2017 (the 2020 season was canceled due to Covid). The team was led by pitcher Ally Moran and first-year utility player Brooke Grassia, who were both selected to the All-Conference first team. Senior Captain Camille Desrochers also completed a stellar career that saw her earn All-Conference honors every year.

University Community Club Enjoys Successful First Summer

Hundreds of Framingham State alumni, faculty and staff gathered with residents of Ashland at the Warren Conference Center’s beautiful property in early June to celebrate the launch of the University Community Club (UCC).

Those in attendance enjoyed live music, pickleball lessons and the ropes course during the special event, which kicked off a summer of outdoor activity for members of the new club. Located in Ashland, Massachusetts, the Warren Conference Center & Inn sits on over 100 wooded lakefront acres, with access to hiking trails, tennis courts, athletic fields and more. FSU launched the community club as a way to engage with the surrounding community and further utilize a piece of University-owned property.

Membership to the UCC is a fraction of the cost someone would pay at similar clubs around Massachusetts. Membership to the UCC includes:

- Free parking and maintained public hiking trails
- Watercraft rentals
- Tennis and pickleball courts
- Nine-hole disc golf course
- Fitness and wellness classes
- Social events, such as wine tastings, dining clubs, poker nights and more.

Certain activities and benefits will be covered under the membership fee, while others will have costs associated with them.
MetroWest College Planning Collaborative Provides Underserved Students with On Ramp to College Education

The MetroWest College Planning Collaborative (CPC) launched in 2014 as a resource to help underserved families navigate the college application and financial aid process, but Director Colleen Coffey quickly realized it needed to be so much more than that.

“I went out into the community and saw that many of the families we were targeting didn’t even know where Framingham State was,” says Coffey. “That changed the entire vision of our work. We knew if we simply served as an outreach center, we’d probably be sitting in the building alone. We needed to start a grassroots movement.”

Coffey began hitting the road and prior to Covid her team was engaging with about 3,500 community members a year, providing them with information about services and programs at the CPC, which is a joint venture of FSU and MassBay Community College. With the support of outside grant money and funding, Coffey was able to expand her team and establish four major college access programs that today are actively engaged with more than 1,000 students starting as early as sixth grade. One of those programs is the MetroWest Scholars Early Start program, which engages students and families from Framingham, Milford and Waltham public schools starting in eighth grade and enrolls them in college-level coursework. Today there are 455 scholars (a number that is expected to double over the next 18 months) in grades 8 through 12 who have collectively earned 1,209 college credits and have already begun thinking about their career pathways and professional goals. More than 80 percent are students of color, and two-thirds are economically disadvantaged.

“The structure of this program, where we work with the students and their families for several years, allows us to have a deeper relationship and greater impact,” says Roxana Marrero, who oversees the CPC’s Early College programs.

The impact on students, such as Framingham High School sophomore Jennifer Panza, has been profound.

“I get to explore different career pathways before I make the decision to choose one,” says Panza. “It’s nice to have people behind you, supporting you. It’s a crazy experience but I’m doing it, and I’m proud of myself.”

In addition to its Early College programs, the CPC also has a robust high school advising and mentoring program as well as a college retention program, supporting students the center has worked with to get into college to make sure they stay on track to graduate.

“The College Retention piece has been critical during Covid, where we have had to talk students out of walking away,” says Coffey. “It’s our job to help them work through any issues they are having and understand what long-term happiness will look like with economic stability and choices in their future careers.”

Supporting the Mission

The MetroWest College Planning Collaborative could not offer its wide range of impactful programs without the financial and programmatic support of several groups and nonprofit organizations. Director Colleen Coffey oversees a team of 12 full- and part-time staff members, but only her salary is split between FSU and MassBay. Every other position is funded through outside support, including:

- The Smith Family Foundation
- The Jacobs Foundation
- A federal grant obtained by Congresswoman Katherine Clark
- The Massachusetts Legislature’s Early College Joint Committee (ECJC)
- The Early College Alliance
- The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

1,027
Students Actively Served across 4 Major College Access Programs

1,209
College Credits Earned by MetroWest Early Start Scholars
Zoe Ryan-Williams ’24 arrived at Framingham State University at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, when just about all classes and activities were occurring virtually. But rather than get upset over a difficult situation, she jumped at the opportunity to fill a student leadership void on campus.

“I took the situation as an opportunity for me to do as much as I could and turn it into a positive,” says Ryan-Williams, who majors in Sociology.

By her sophomore year, she had become president of the Students of Caribbean Ancestry (SOCA) student club, an orientation leader and a resident assistant on the Social Justice Floor of Larned Hall. As president of SOCA, she plays a key role in building membership, running meetings and organizing events, such as the “Taste of SOCA” event that featured food native to the Caribbean.

Social justice is a big focus for her, and FSU’s increasing diversity and commitment to antiracism are two reasons she decided to attend the University.

“I really value that faculty and staff are working on these issues and care about the student perspective,” she says. “That’s something I want to continue into my career.”

Now a junior at FSU, Ryan Williams is seeking to take advantage of opportunities to land internships through the Office of Career Services in order to build her résumé. She plans to pursue a master’s degree after she graduates and would like to work as an advocate and get involved with issues of race and social justice.

“The Sociology professors at Framingham State are such a great group,” she says. “They are so encouraging and so proud of me.”

Major: Sociology with a Political Science minor
Hometown: Worcester, MA
Interests: Social Justice, Leadership
Writing the Next Chapter

The tasks ahead of Framingham State’s new president, Dr. Nancy Niemi, are big. So are her energy and enthusiasm.
If you’re looking for Framingham State’s new president, Dr. Nancy Niemi, don’t look in her office. Since starting as the University’s eighth president on July 1, she has been out meeting with people—students, faculty, staff and the state congressional delegation, among others.

Dr. Niemi is on a quest to understand the University’s unique mission, the particular needs of its diverse student community and what it will take to ensure the University’s long-term sustainability and success.

“More than anything else, I’m listening,” Niemi explains. “My goal first and foremost is to get to know Framingham State and all of its constituents. I am certain that leadership begins and ends with relationships. And that means talking to everybody I possibly can, internally and externally, to develop the beginnings of deep, productive working relationships.”

Focus on Framingham

Niemi sees those relationships as key to accomplishing the immediate work facing Framingham State University, which includes a strategic branding and enrollment management initiative, a new five-year strategic plan and the ten-year NECHE (New England Commission on Higher Education) accreditation process. She is more than up to the task: Niemi comes to Framingham State from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore where she served as provost and vice president for academic affairs, overseeing 19 departments, five schools, a dozen centers and 400 faculty members.

“I certainly have many ideas about higher education as well as decades of research and experience, but the way forward here has to come within the context of Framingham State,” she continues. “I am not interested in the status quo. I am interested in being at this place that is great and amplifying what we do to make sure everyone knows we’re here by the education we offer, the experiences we produce and the ideas that we engender.”

Three months into the job, Niemi is confident that she has landed in the right place. “It’s wonderful to be truly immersed with all of these people who care so deeply about higher education and working together to make Framingham State the absolute best it can be.” She explains that she was drawn to Framingham State, in part, by its storied history as the birthplace of public education for teachers. “I am first, foremost and last a teacher at heart—I have been a public school teacher, and I’ve taught public school teachers. And I firmly believe that public education, whether it’s K–12 or higher education, is at the heart of what makes our country wonderful. A public school is a community body. Everybody is part of it. Everybody gets to learn. I love that.”

Growth Mindset

Niemi’s expansive enthusiasm for Framingham State is palpable—and infectious. According to Kevin Foley ’84, chair of the presidential search committee as well as the board of trustees, that quality distinguished her from the other applicants.

“Dr. Niemi came across as the most energetic of the candidates,” he explains, “one who was genuinely eager to come to Framingham State and participate in its growth. We got very positive feedback from the different groups she met with as part of the interview process. People remarked on her spot-on research on Framingham State and her insight into both its strengths and opportunities.”

Dana Barros ’23, who was the student representative on the search committee, was impressed by Niemi’s commitment to students. “What stood out for me was Dr. Niemi’s passion for the mission of Framingham State; her commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion; and her
“To me, public education is the most important tool we have for social equity, social change and making the world a better place.”

— DR. NANCY NIEMI

I want to make sure everyone knows we’re here by the education we offer; the experiences we produce and the ideas that we engender.

— DR. NANCY NIEMI

scholarship going.” He sees that energy as instrumental in helping the University tackle the current enrollment challenge with curricular innovations. “Higher education across the country is facing a shrinking population of traditionally aged students, 18- to 22-year-olds. We need to look at alternative populations, whether that’s older students, continuing education online or graduate students.”

Mission Drivers

Foley is encouraged by the breadth and depth of President Niemi’s listening tour and the speed at which she is diving in. “There’s a great deal to be done to expand the stature and the footprint of Framingham State,” Foley says. “We offer such a compelling value with both the quality of our programming and the education we provide. We have so many success stories. There’s great opportunity to increase the reputation and reach of Framingham State.”

Niemi agrees wholeheartedly with Foley’s assessment and is ready to dig into the challenges ahead. “She believes that the key to addressing those challenges begins with tending to the health of the campus community. “With the pandemic, it’s been a tough couple of years,” she observes. “I want to be certain that we’re paying attention to how we are doing and making sure that we, as a campus community, are taking care of ourselves.”

“This care and concern, she asserts, is fundamental. “It will impact finances. It will impact enrollment. And it will impact our identity.”

Though she acknowledges the obstacles to come, Niemi remains bullish about the future of Framingham State University. “A lot of people have said to me, ‘Who would want to be a president now?’” she concludes. “I think it’s a great time to be president, especially at Framingham State, because you get to work with an institution and a community to determine what public higher education should be right now. To me, public education is the most important tool we have for social equity, social change and making the world a better place.”
"It's been a wonderful career. It feels good to make a difference in people's lives."  
BARBARA BRITT-HYSELL '76

Barbara Britt-Hysell
'76 Opens Her Home to International Students

The transition to America can be very difficult for international students studying in the United States, who often arrive with unrealistic expectations and pressure from their families back home to achieve success. "Many of the kids came believing what they hear on the news or see in the movies about pursuing the American Dream," says Barbara Britt Hysell, who directed the teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) program at Hamilton College in New York for many years. "They feel like they aren't quite getting what they were promised." Britt Hysell not only taught Academic Writing to many of Hamilton College's international students, but also helped make them part of the community by hosting holiday dinners and game nights, and even inviting them into her home when they needed a place to stay. In fact, despite retiring in 2021, Britt Hysell was hosting a recent Hamilton graduate from Kenya this past May.

"He’s living with us for two weeks before he moves to Boston," she says. "He had no place else to go. When all else fails, they know to call me, because my husband and I don’t say no." Britt Hysell became an indispensable resource for the international community at Hamilton during her 17 years there. Her path to specializing in teaching Academic Writing to foreign students was not a traditional one. After graduating from FSU with a degree in English, she and her husband moved to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where she worked in a restaurant and began tutoring kitchen staff, focusing on basic language related to oralcommunication in the work place.

As she, her husband, and eventually their children, moved around the country due to his job, she would keep finding volunteer opportunities to help local immigrants improve their language skills. This would eventually lead to more formal teaching positions in elementary and secondary schools and ultimately, her job coordinating the TESOL program at Hamilton.

"It’s been a wonderful career," says Britt Hysell. "It feels good to make a difference in people’s lives."
2000s

Haidi (Garcia) Mulfaney '01 became Chief Advancement Officer at Archbishop Williams High School this past January.

Philip Balkus '72, who teaches history at Wulpole High School, was Massachusetts’ sole recipient of the James Madison Graduate Fellowship. He is one of 54 people nationwide to receive the $24,000 prize.

Danielle Morrissey '05 was named the new principal for the Vincent M. Igo Elementary School in Foxboro, Massachusetts.

Michael Azzalone '09 was recently promoted to Senior Director of Sales at Wistia, providing businesses with video solutions for the web.

Jenna Bergeron '09 recently joined Bergeron | Burgess, PLLC as a partner.

Steve DuSilva '09 earned a Regional Emmy Award in Videoigraphy for his work on the New England Sports Network’s (NESN) special, Travis Roy: A Life & A Legacy.

Brad Nathan '09 has been named Men’s Head Rugby Coach for Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts.

2010s

Rylee Jackson '11 joined Bentley University in 2017 and was promoted to Assistant Director of University Events last winter.

Daniel Vitale '11 joined Salary.com last January as a Global Business Development Manager.

Brendan Harer '12, G '16 has started a new position with NESN as their New England Sports Network's (NESN) special, Travis Roy: A Life & A Legacy.

Brad Nathan '09 has been named Men’s Head Rugby Coach for Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts.

2020s

Julia Conneen '20 joined Mass General Hospital in a full-time position as a Phlebotomist last winter.

Alyssa Dufly '20 shared that she was promoted and is now working as a Nutritionist at VNC.

Edith Dwyer '20 graduated from Brown University this past spring, with a Master of Public Affairs and a Master of Public Health.

Rebecca Macki '20 recently began as a Senior Nutritionist at MOC WIC in working in community nutrition.

Ulisses Ramirez '20 joined Alpha Analytical full-time as their Marketing and Events Coordinator.

Richard Svopa '20 joined Mike Goulian Aviation in Plymouth, Massachusetts as a Customer Service Representative. He was previously a Flight Coordinator at Jets.com.

Angie Martin '21 started a new position with The Portland Group working in Accounting and Human Resources.

Nina Romano '21 accepted a full-time position with Fusion Worldwide as an Accounts Payable Specialist.
Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award

Duc Levi’86, MD

Dr. Duc Le is a native of Vietnam, who immigrated to the United States as a teenager following the fall of Saigon. He enrolled at Framingham State because it offered an affordable education that he could manage financially. He has devoted his career to emergency medicine, working on the frontlines to help patients in critical need of care. During his distinguished medical career, Dr. Le has been published, issued five patents for medical devices.

Young Alumni Achievement Award

Lynea Spencer ’15, G’17

Lynea Spencer received her undergraduate degree from FSU in 2015, and completed her MEd in Nutrition Education in 2017. She gives generously to Framingham State University, a staff member, an adjunct faculty member and a volunteer. Spencer continues to be involved in the FSU Chapter of Phi Upsilon Omicron (honor society for consumer sciences) and was the co-chair for the National Regional Conclave held in Massachusetts in 2018. She has participated annually in the FSU Giving Tree and in Diversity and Inclusion exercises. Spencer is a Delegate Elect to the School Nutrition Association of Massachusetts Board of Directors and is Secretary of the Massachusetts Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. She is a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and currently works in nutrition education for the John C. Stalker Institute of Food and Nutrition at Framingham State University.

Alumni Leadership and Service Achievement Award

Donna Criswell ’74

Donna Criswell began her career as an instructor with the Natick Public Schools after graduating from FSU. She was an early pioneer in educational technology, and in 1983 assisted with the implementation of the school district’s first computer system. In 1997, she moved to the Sudbury Public Schools where she served as an instructional technology curriculum specialist for nearly 18 years.

An unexpected tragedy changed the course of Criswell’s life in 2013, when her daughter, Sharon Marie Gath, passed away at the age of 35 due to an epileptic seizure. Prior to her passing, Criswell and her daughter had started a handcrafted jewelry business called Mabu Designs. She decided to keep the business going, using all proceeds to support charity. Framingham State was the first beneficiary of this generosity, when she created the Sharon Marie Gath Memorial Scholarship, an endowed fund that supports students in financial need, with a preference for students in Fashion Merchandising (Sharon’s major).

Alumni Educator Achievement Award

Margaret Hagemeister ’74

Margaret Hagemeister taught at Natick High School until 2014. Among her career accomplishments, she chaired the 14-member English Department, which included evaluating and supervising teachers, facilitating professional learning community meetings, setting and managing budgets, scheduling English classes, purchasing supplies and textbooks, and communicating with various constituents of the school community (administration, teachers, students, parents, town residents). Hagemeister directed the Natick High School Drama program, was responsible for coordinating all aspects of two full-scale productions per year, as well as managing budget, fundraising and production staff. She taught 20 different academic levels and elective courses per year in the English Department, including Theatre Arts, Humanities and Journalism.

2022 Alumni Achievement Awards

Recognizing alumni for their outstanding accomplishments

FSU Leads to Love and Fulfilling Careers for Leo and Jane Govoni

Leo ’80 and Jane (Gerrior) ’80 Govoni got just about as much as anyone can hope for out of their college experience at Framingham State University, including each other. The couple met as resident assistants during their sophomore year.

“Lev has been together ever since,” says Jane, who wanted to become a teacher like her father and attended Framingham State for its Spanish major and Study Abroad program in Seville, Spain. Leo played football at Framingham State and studied Economics. The pair began their careers in Massachusetts but soon moved down to Florida where Leo started the first of several businesses he owns, Boston Asset Management.

“I fell in love with being an entrepreneur,” says Leo, who today is president and founder of Boston Holding Company LLC, a private equity firm which includes holdings across a broad spectrum of industries.

Jane began teaching Spanish at a local high school and then continued her studies to earn a PhD in Second Language Acquisition to be able to train teachers. She then began teaching at Saint Leo University and today is the ESL/Foreign Language program coordinator in the College of Education at the University of South Florida (USF). During her career, she has been recognized by the state of Florida with the Irving Wershaw Award in Foreign Language Education and the Mary L. Collins Award for Excellence in Teacher Education. She was awarded the Margaret Burlington Tittle Excellence in Teaching Faculty Award at USF.

“I was very well prepared coming out of Framingham State,” says Jane, who earned a master’s degree in Spanish from Boston College and her PhD from the University of South Florida (USF). During her career, she has been recognized by the state of Florida with the Irving Wershaw Award in Foreign Language Education and the Mary L. Collins Award for Excellence in Teacher Education. She was awarded the Margaret Burlington Tittle Excellence in Teaching Faculty Award at USF.

Leo, who today is president and founder of Boston Asset Management, expressed an interest in getting into craft beer, they invested in Big Storm Brewery and after a couple of years bought out the previous owner. Today, L.J. serves as president of the rapidly expanding business, which includes five taprooms and distributes beer and spirits along the East Coast as far north as New Jersey. Their daughter, Caitlin, worked in the family business as well, but with three small children, she now stays at home and raises her family.
Alumni events

**APRIL 9, 2022**
Richard C. Logan ’70 Gymnasium Dedication
Friends, family and former teammates gathered at FSU on April 9 for the dedication of the gymnasium in honor of longtime trustee and FSU supporter Richard C. Logan ’70, who was on the first men’s basketball team.


**JUNE 3, 2022**
Cyrus Peirce High Tea
As part of Reunion Weekend, members of the Classes of 1956, 1957, 1962 and 1967 gathered at the Warren Conference Center to celebrate community and friendship.

**JUNE 6, 2022**
Rams Booster Golf Tournament
Alumni and supporters of Framingham State athletics gathered at the beautiful Highfields Golf & Country Club in Grafton, MA to raise money to support the University’s student athletes.

**A PIONEERING HEALTH PROFESSIONAL**
Dr. Priscilla Douglas ’56
The family of Dr. Priscilla Douglas is sad to announce her peaceful passing at her home in Connecticut this past May.

After graduating from what was then called Framingham Teachers College in 1956, she went on to earn a master’s degree in Nutrition from UMass Amherst and a PhD from The University of Connecticut where she taught as a professor in their Allied Health program and was later awarded the title of Professor Emerita. In 1983, Douglas applied for and received a nearly $250,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to develop an innovative new curriculum for health promotion and disease prevention.

Douglas never forgot the school where she began her higher education. Throughout her life she was a generous donor and consistent supporter of FSU, establishing the Priscilla D. Douglas ’56, PhD, RD, Food & Nutrition Endowed Scholarship Fund. In 2020, she received the Alumni Educator Achievement Award.

**FALL 2022**
**Great Programming for All Ages at Danforth Art School**
Framingham State University’s Danforth Art School is preparing for another year of innovative and exceptional programming in their studios at the Jonathan Maynard building. The Summer Arts program welcomed close to 500 students over the course of nine weeks to learn about art, in the studios and at the museum. Several new faculty members with specific areas of expertise have been hired to strengthen class offerings for children, teens and adults.

Collaborations among various departments on campus are planned, including the Fashion Design and Retailing Department providing tours of the campus facility for potential undergraduate recruits.

The coming year will also bring a new focus on educational initiatives linking museum and studio learning in an effort to highlight the exceptional offerings the Danforth brings to the cultural community in the region. The popular Drinks at the Danforth program will return, as well as a new lecture-based experience, Brunch at the Danforth, to be launched in the fall. Kids’ Night Out, Family Art Time, Art & Movement and other public events will round out the focus on education for all ages.

Upcoming workshops and classes for all ages and levels can be found on the website: [DANFORTH.FRAMINGHAM.EDU](http://DANFORTH.FRAMINGHAM.EDU)

**Refer a Ram**
Help Find the Next Generation of the fRAMily!
Do you know someone who would make a great Ram? As an alum, you know firsthand the transformative power of a Framingham State experience. The Refer a Ram Program provides the opportunity to waive the $50 application fee for prospective undergraduate and graduate students with a simple referral. Refer someone today—there are no limits on the number of students you can refer. Share this gift with anyone considering FSU, including family, friends and colleagues. Referred students will be contacted immediately by the Admissions Office and will receive priority consideration when they submit their application.

Learn more at: [FRAMINGHAM.EDU/REFER-A-RAM](http://FRAMINGHAM.EDU/REFER-A-RAM)
A Giant in the Field of Drug Abuse Prevention Science

Leaders from around the country in the field of drug abuse prevention gathered at the Society for Prevention Research Symposium in Seattle this past June to celebrate the life and legacy of Framingham State University alumna Dr. Elizabeth (Breslin) Robertson ’69 who passed away in December 2021.

Robertson’s impact—which had a particular focus on preventing drug abuse among children—was felt through her scholarship, leadership, advocacy, outreach and mentoring activities. From 1995 to 2014, she worked at the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), rising to become the senior advisor on prevention research.

“I met Liz when I was starting at NIH, and she had a profound impact on my career,” says Dr. Eve Reider, the Associate Director of Prevention Research at the National Institute of Mental Health. “She was wonderful in terms of mentoring me and giving me opportunities along the way.”

Reider says Robertson changed how people think about prevention research by creating a model that uses a multilevel perspective. “She approached prevention at the community level, at the family level, at the school level and at the individual level,” says Reider. “Her influence continues to be felt in the field today.”

In 2014, Robertson was awarded the Society for Prevention Research (SPR) Presidential Award for her lifetime contributions and received the SPR Fellowship for her substantial body of work, which had a broad and significant impact on prevention science. After leaving NIDA, she was coaxed out of retirement by the University of Alabama to serve as Senior Associate Dean for Research in the College of Human Environmental Science, a post she held until 2020.

Classmate and longtime friend Linda Hyder ’69 spent the last few months of Robertson’s life with her and was by her side when she passed last December from pulmonary fibrosis. “She died beautifully and peacefully at her home, exactly how she wanted,” says Hyder, who is a professional artist.

Hyder says Robertson was quick to establish strong bonds with people in her life, had a great sense of humor and was an outstanding artist in her own right. “She was also a caretaker,” Hyder says. “She and (her husband) Bill adopted a daughter Nancy, and she had four granddaughters she loved dearly.”

Prior to her passing, Robertson endowed two scholarships at Framingham State University. Hyder says Robertson worked her way through both undergraduate and graduate school and had a strong desire to help current and future generations of students.

“The scholarships were very important to her,” Hyder says. The Dr. Constance B. Jordan Memorial Scholarship is for students with a demonstrated financial need who are majoring in Food and Nutrition or Food Science, and the Ruth Bangs Memorial Scholarship is for students with a demonstrated financial need majoring in Child and Family Studies. The scholarships are named in honor of former FSU faculty members who were influential to Robertson.

For more information about the scholarships or to donate, contact the Office of Development and Alumni Relations at ALUMNI@FRAMINGHAM.EDU or 508-626-4012.
The Bridge of Sighs

This arched pedestrian bridge was frequently referred to as “the Bridge of Sighs” after the original one in Venice, Italy. The above-ground structure connected Wells Hall to the north side of May Hall; an underground tunnel also ran between the two buildings.

Photo circa 1950.