

FITCHBURG STATE COLLEGE
Graduate and Continuing Education

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ALPHA SIGMA LAMBDA
INTERNATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY
PI GAMMA CHAPTER



2009 Inductee Biographies

GENEVIEVE BARD
B.S. IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

BIOGRAPHY:

I have worked for the Lawrence Public School system for over twenty years. I have always wanted to become a full fledged teacher, but while my two sons were growing up I devoted all of my free time to them and their activities. Next year I will be turning fifty years old and I will also be graduating from Fitchburg State. I am a grandmother of five beautiful grand children. Getting to this point has been a struggle. I would have much rather spent time playing with my grandchildren then doing homework and studying. I never thought I would get to this point, but I am able to see a light at the end of the tunnel now. I am so overjoyed.

Important educational experience: I think the greatest and most important thing that Fitchburg State has given me is to allow me the opportunity to take my classes at Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill. It is because of this wonderful convenience that I will be graduating next spring.

I would like to thank: I would want my husband to know how much I appreciate his continued encouragement and support. At times I have been completely overwhelmed and wanted to just throw in the towel, but he would not hear of it. My husband would always ask, "What can I do to help or make it easier?" I would seclude myself by the computer to do my studies and he would do whatever else needed doing. This is as much his accomplishment as it is mine. I have loved him for over thirty years now and it just keeps getting better.

RENEE CALDWELL
B.S. IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

BIOGRAPHY:

I decided to make a career change after the birth of my two children. I first earned an associate's degree in Early Childhood Education from Mount Wachusett Community College and then transferred to Fitchburg State. Three years later, as a non-traditional student, I am graduating from Fitchburg State College with a bachelor's degree and an initial teaching license. During this time I have been working full-time in a local school system. Some of my responsibilities have included being a kindergarten paraprofessional, special education paraprofessional, and a Nature's Classroom Coordinator. With the busy schedule of work, school, and family I have had little time for hobbies. I am looking forward to spending more time enjoying my family and taking a vacation.

Important educational experience: The most important educational experience that I have had at Fitchburg State occurred during my student teaching. After six years of making sacrifices in order to return to school, the experience of having my own class reassured me that I had made the right decision in pursuing my dream.

I would like to thank: I would like to thank my husband, Jeff; son Curtis; and daughter, Sabrina. They have made both financial and emotional sacrifices in order to support me while working on my degree. I would also like to thank my closest friends for babysitting, getting my children to activities, and pushing me to finish. I truly could not have finished without their support.

HENRY DAIGLE
B.S. IN OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

BIOGRAPHY:

My name is Henry E. Daigle and my goal is to receive a Bachelor's Degree in Occupational Vocational Education. I am 47 years old and I live in New Bedford, Massachusetts. I am the youngest of five, two sisters and two brothers. I am not married and have no children. I am in my 3rd year of teaching at Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School in Fall River, Massachusetts. I hold a Massachusetts Journeyman and Master Plumbers License and I am about to complete my 10th course on my road to full certification and a Bachelor's Degree in Occupational Vocational Education. I was the Plumbing and Gas Inspector for the City of New Bedford before I took the position as a teacher at Diman Regional. I still hold a position of a Gas Inspector /Assistant Plumbing Inspector for the Town of Fairhaven. I am very active in the state and local inspectors associations, which presently I am honored to hold the position of president of The New England Plumbing, Gas, and Mechanical Inspectors Association. I like the guitar very much and consider that one of my favorite hobbies. I really love to travel to Northern New England when I get the chance, and I like to travel to Canada.

Important educational experience: The biggest challenge in my life right now is the battle I am facing with cancer. For the past year the road has been a bit confusing and filled with a lot of "What if's". I am now presently going through my second series of chemotherapy treatments within the past year. My faith, my job, my schooling, my goals and the attitudes from people I have met, keep me striving for more. I plan to continue to my road to a Bachelor's Degree in Occupational Education and to achieve a highest grade possible doing so.

I would like to thank: I have found Fitchburg State College a great place to continue an education. Since the day I enrolled, every person I have talked too, or e-mailed and every teacher I have had, has been wonderful. I would also like to thank my fiancée Karen.

SUZANNE M. DEMERS
B.S. IN OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

BIOGRAPHY:

My name is Sue Demers and I am the Scheduling / Reporting Coordinator at Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School in New Bedford, Massachusetts. I have been employed at the school for fifteen years. The greatest part of my job is working with some incredible people on a daily basis. Having graduated from GNB High School in 1992, I have a special appreciation for classroom teachers and the importance of education. I have been a part of vocational education since being a student. I am proud to be a part of an institution that offers students a career while learning the academics necessary to pursue higher education. Since 1999 I have been pursuing my bachelors' degree part-time from Fitchburg State College and look forward to not only achieving this degree, but continuing on at the next level.

Important educational experience: I think the most important educational experience I have had while enrolled at Fitchburg State College comes from what I have learned from both professors and classmates throughout the many courses in the degree program. Also, I have seen my administrative capabilities come to light with each new year and project responsibility. The experiences I've taken from each class I have attended will help shape my future direction in education.

I would like to thank: I would be remiss if I did not thank my family for their unwavering support. But if I had to single out just one person it would be my friend and former boss, Luis Lopes. Luis was the person who encouraged me to go back to school in the first place. When I first began taking classes, he was always agreeable to adjusting my schedule or work load to accommodate the sometimes rigorous class schedule, not to mention how helpful he was if ever I needed additional guidance. Luis has achieved many degrees and success in his own career; he has always been like a mentor to me.

JEFFREY A. DICKENS
B.S. IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

BIOGRAPHY:

I graduated from a vocational high school in 1980, and worked for the next 18 years at Digital Equipment Corporation, where I learned a great deal about computer system administration. I took some college classes via Digital in the early 1980's. I restarted work on my degree in 2005. I've worked for the past three years at Seaman Paper Company in Gardner as their IT Manager. I have three children ages 12 to 19. My hobbies include Barbershop Harmony; I sing in the Worcester Men of Song Chorus and in the quartet Toy Town Tunes. I also enjoy geocaching.

Important educational experience: An important educational experience I've had is distance learning via Blackboard. With my busy schedule, the flexible study hours offered by these programs have been a great help. I also enjoyed the programming contest last spring. With only one year of Java study, and coming in a half-hour late, I still managed to take fifth place.

I would like to thank: One person who has been very supportive is my mom, Marianne Keefe. She has consistently provided moral and financial support, and is still the smartest person I know.

JOANN GARRITY
B. S. IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

BIOGRAPHY:

This is a milestone year for me as I turn 50, will be married in November for 30 years and in June will have completed the requirements for graduation. I have three adult children, ages 25, 27 and 32, who are proud and thrilled for me. They have supported me taking evening classes for the last 20 years; one at a time. Two of my children live in California and one lives in Georgia with my two year old granddaughter, Gracie.

I am currently employed with MOC Childcare and Head Start Services. I have been with the agency for 15 years. I have been a classroom teacher for 12 years and a Family Development Coordinator for three years.

Important educational experience: Being a student in the Building Careers Grant Program at Fitchburg State College has been a key to graduation for me and many other students in the program. The support and flexibility of advisors, classes and professors has made it possible to work full-time and earn my degree.

I would like to thank: Although there are many people to thank, including my family and all advisors here at Fitchburg State., I have to say my greatest support comes from the other Building Career Grant students. I would like to thank Carol Murray, Pamela Christian-Ridings, Darlene Comeau and Melissa Mikander for the hours of support, laughter and understanding that continue to get us to our goal of graduation.

KAREN J. GUENETTE
B.S. IN OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

BIOGRAPHY:

As I read the induction notification into Alpha Sigma Lambda, I immediately had the feeling that my hard work and determination was being rewarded. I have always had a love for children and especially teaching. However, due to getting married at a young age and raising children, I had not pursued by education beyond my 1982 associate's degree in secretarial science. After a volunteering at my children's elementary school, I was asked by my principal to become a classroom aide. It was a big adjustment to my family life. Eventually, I became a school secretary and later the executive secretary to the school superintendant, as well as the school committee. I realized that I missed working with school children. I went back to school, at the age of 40, and obtained my Vocational Technical Teacher Certification. After three long exams, I passed and became a licensed teacher in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This was a very proud and exciting time in my life. What seemed like an unreachable dream had come true. I am honored and grateful to be inducted into Fitchburg State's Pi Gamma chapter of Alpha Sigma Lambda.

Important educational experience: In addition to my education, the networking and contacts I have made around the state through taking Fitchburg State courses has been a great experience. Whether the course was online or in the classroom, the instructors and classmates have been wonderful people; all with strong and focused goals to achieve.

I would like to thank: I would like to thank Robert Packard of J.P. Keefe High School and the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrator's for being instrumental in helping me to obtain my B.S. degree. Bob has been an accessible mentor and guidance counselor for me. He makes himself available and truly assists in picking courses, answering questions and giving long term advice about my educational goals.

REBECCA L. KING
B.S. IN OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

BIOGRAPHY:

I was born in Portsmouth, VA on July 12, 1973. My father is a retired Master Chief from the United States Navy. We moved around a lot as a child and I had the opportunity to live in many different places. I moved to Massachusetts shortly after graduation to attend Quinsigamond Community College. I attended for one year and I decided that college was not for me. I moved out on my own at the age of nineteen. In 1995, at the age of twenty-two, I joined the United States Coast Guard. I spent four years serving on active duty and four years in the reserves. I received the Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Medal and the United States Coast Guard Accommodation Medal. In 2004, I returned to Quinsigamond to finish my degree and I graduated in May of 2006 with my associate's degree. I became an instructor for the National Restaurant Association in 2005. I was offered my current position at Quinsigamond in 2007 where I work as the lab instructor for the Food Service Management Program. I began my bachelor's degree at Fitchburg State in 2007. I hope to obtain a classroom based faculty position at Quinsigamond upon completion of my degree.

Important educational experience: Many of my courses and instructors have contributed to my success and it would be difficult to single out one experience. I did have a unique experience in my General Psychology class. The students in the class needed to put together a presentation on a clinical psychological illness. I did my presentation on bi-polar disorder. I was approached by one of my classmates who wanted to thank me for my presentation. He stated my presentation made him think that maybe he suffered from this disorder. He met with his doctor and was officially diagnosed. I did not know what to think of this at first, but in the end I felt good that my presentation helped someone to recognize his or her own illness.

I would like to thank: There is really only one individual who supported me through my degree and that was my co-worker. She was always supportive and continues that support today. If it wasn't for her I would not in be in the Occupational/Vocational Education program.

BARBRA L. KURZANSKI
B. S. IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

BIOGRAPHY:

I have been working in the field of education for the better part of twenty-five years. I earned an associate's degree in Early Childhood Education from Becker Junior College in 1984. Twenty years later I decided to return to school to become a teacher in Massachusetts. With the exception of second grade, I have worked as a teacher or an assistant at every level from infants through fourth grade. My family is the center of my life. I have been blessed with three children; my fraternal twins, Ryan and Camille, are 19 years old and both are freshman at Fitchburg State College. My second son, Robert, is a 16 year old sophomore at Leominster High School. I am fortunate to live very close to my parents and my sister and her family.

Important educational experience: Technology did not play a significant role in education when I earned my associate's degree. My experience, skills, and knowledge of computers were limited when I began at Fitchburg State College. Although I did not take any courses in the field of technology, the many on-line courses I took at Fitchburg State strengthened my computer skills. In addition, I increased my technological abilities through researching, organizing, writing, presenting, and submitting material for classes, seminars, and practicum. These experiences provided me with "on the spot" training in technology.

I would like to thank: I want to thank my parents for providing transportation, meals, and entertainment for my three children when I was at class or studying. Without their support I could not have succeeded in this endeavor. I also thank my children for tolerating the disruption to their lives and for their understanding when my role as student superseded my role as mom. Knowing I had the support of these two generations, allowed me to focus on school.

KIMBERLY R. LEWIS
B. S. IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

BIOGRAPHY:

I am 32 years old and live with my wonderful seven-year-old son in Hampstead, NH. I work at Merrimack Education Center in Billerica, MA, and provide coaching and vocational training to teenagers and young adults who have learning challenges and special needs. It's a great program, and I love what I do. I also enjoy spending time with my son, hiking at state parks, working with plants and gardening and being with family and friends. I enjoy volunteer service work, and worked in a soup kitchen once a month for several months last year. This was a tremendous experience for me. My goals are to teach 4th or 5th grade elementary education, and I am so looking forward to the time when I can do this. I plan to complete my education at this time next year.

Important educational experience: It has been wonderful for me to be part of the NECC cohort program provided by Fitchburg State College. Because of this, I am able to finish my degree near my home, and in the evenings part-time while working and raising my son. I have had the privilege of learning from some excellent professors and working with the same group of amazing women from start to finish. They have been a great support to me.

I would like to thank: Mostly I would like to thank my son, Samuel, who is such an awesome young person. I want to thank him for all the times he understood when I was too busy or doing my homework. I remind him and myself too, that college is an immense blessing and always pays off in the end, in so many ways. I also would like to thank my parents, whose love and support are just a phone call away over and over again. I love them and feel so grateful that they are my parents.

STEVEN MIRANDA
B.S. IN OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

BIOGRAPHY:

I have been a culinary arts teacher at Old Colony Regional Vocational Technical High School for the past eleven years. I married in 2007 to my wife Wendy. I am a Skills USA Chapter Advisor and Management Team Member and also a member of the Massachusetts Vocational Association. I am currently the Southeastern Chapter President and Convention Program Chairperson. I also am a National Restaurant Association Serv-Safe Instructor. I am proud to be a competitive Olympic Weightlifter, Power lifter and Strongman Competitor.

Important educational experience: Fitchburg State College has allowed me the opportunity to pursue further credentialing and professional development in an environment, not limited by an already busy schedule. The well rounded and open curriculum has allowed me to take classes that not only make me a better teacher, but also a better balanced person.

I would like to thank: I would like to thank my wife for her endless support and encouragement to excel. She pushes me to always work hard and be the best I can be.

CAROL ROBISON
B. S. IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

BIOGRAPHY:

I was a retail sales district manager traveling and on the road a lot when I became a single parent and changed jobs to become a secretary at Leominster High School. This was supposed to be a temporary transition until I adjusted; instead, my life adjusted to my new lifestyle and family responsibilities, and I realized quickly that this would be where I would remain. Working in the guidance office at LHS, I became motivated by the students who were preparing and excited to go off to college. I loved seeing their excitement at their future opportunities. I had my associate's degree but I never received my bachelor's degree. One of my co-workers kept encouraging me to go back to school. One day, another co-worker, who had an intern voucher for a free class, transferred it to me so that I could take my first class. It was an Introduction to Psychology class. It was a difficult class, but I enjoyed the experience of being out with other adults, learning and working toward a goal. I am now working toward my bachelor's degree with the goal of becoming a guidance counselor. The whole experience has made me better at my job as secretary in the guidance office because I can really relate to kids' fears about the college experience. I have three children. My son just graduated from UMass Amherst with a degree in mechanical engineering. My daughter is an education student at Fitchburg State and my youngest daughter is a junior at LHS. She is also looking forward to a degree in education.

Important educational experience: As an adult learner, who had not been in school for many years, I had to learn how to learn again. It was challenging to balance learning, studying and coordinating material. Working with teachers and other students has really helped me to accomplish this.

I would like to thank: Of course, I need to thank my family, who has been wonderfully supportive, but also my co-workers who really pushed me to do this and who listen to my stories about my classes.