



A Southeastern Massachusetts
Public Higher Education
Partnership

Legislative Gathering & Awards Dinner

April 13, 2022

BRISTOL
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Our Program

5:30 COCKTAIL RECEPTION

6:00 WELCOME

Laura L. Douglas, PhD, President, Bristol
Community College & CONNECT Board Chair

6:15 BUFFET DINNER

Prepared by Bristol Community College Faculty
and Culinary Arts Students

6:45 DISTINGUISHED LEGISLATIVE
AWARDS PRESENTATION

Honoring Representative Patricia Haddad and
Representative Elizabeth Poirier

Presented by Fred W. Clark, Esq., President,
Bridgewater State University, and Mark Fuller,
PhD, Chancellor, University of Massachusetts,
Dartmouth

7:00 CELEBRATING **CONNECT** STUDENT
SUCSESSES: STUDENT PANEL DISCUSSION

Facilitated by Rear Admiral Francis X. McDonald,
USMS, President, Massachusetts Maritime
Academy

- **Nelissa Louis-Charles**, Bridgewater State
University & Coaching4Change
- **David Castles**, Bristol Community College &
Westport Land Trust
- **Sara Morse**, Cape Cod Community College &
Young People in Recovery

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- **Abigail Hammond**, Massachusetts Maritime Academy & Crowley Maritime
 - **Jordan Palmer**, Massasoit Community College & Massasoit Community College
 - **Saheedat Bello**, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth & Dell Technologies

7:45 QUESTION & ANSWERS

Facilitated by John Cox, EdD, President, Cape Cod Community College

Distinguished Legislator Award Honorees

The Chief Executive Officers and Executive Director of CONNECT are delighted to honor Representative Patricia Haddad and Representative Elizabeth Poirier for their dedication, passion and commitment to regional collaboration and for their support of education, public health and mental health programs for the Commonwealth's citizens. Throughout their careers, they have staunchly advocated for a multitude of education programs, including those that enhanced early education programs, as well as those that provide equal access to higher education opportunities for students with disabilities.

REPRESENTATIVE PATRICIA HADDAD



Patricia Haddad is a Massachusetts State Representative, representing the Fifth Bristol District which is located on Massachusetts' South Coast. She has served in the Massachusetts House of Representatives since 2001. She is the former Speaker Pro Tempore of the Massachusetts House of Representatives and has served on a variety of committees including Human Services and Elder Affairs, Health Care, Medicaid, Natural Resources and Agriculture, Rules and Ethics, and Ways and Means. In addition, she served two terms as Chairwoman of the Joint Committee on Education and was also the Assistant Majority Whip.

State Representative Haddad has been a staunch advocate and pioneer for bringing clean energy alternatives to Massachusetts.

Prior to her career in government, Haddad was a health and physical education teacher in her native town of Somerset, where she also served on the Recreation Commission and School Committee.

REPRESENTATIVE ELIZABETH POIRIER



Elizabeth A. Poirier is the former Massachusetts State Representative, representing the 14th Bristol district in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1999 to 2021. During that time, she also served as Massachusetts' Third Assistant House Minority Leader.

Prior to becoming a State Representative, Poirier worked for many years in the banking industry before co-owning a retail business in downtown North Attleboro. While in office, State Representative Poirier's accomplishments included membership on the Special Joint Committee on Redistricting, the Foster Care Committee Caucus, the Special House Committee on Ethics, the Executive Committee of the House Women's Caucus and a special appointment to the House Commission on Child Abuse and Neglect. During this time, she also served as the Assistant House Minority Leader. She considers it the honor of a lifetime to have served the good people of the 14th Bristol District.

Meet the Panelists

NELISSA LOUIS-CHARLES

Bridgewater State University



Nelissa Louis-Charles is a transfer student at Bridgewater State University. Originally, she began her studies at Bristol Community College, where she established critical skills. Then, she decided to take the leap and enroll at a 4-year institution.

Currently, she is a sophomore and is working toward her English-Education degree with a minor in Sociology.

For the past three years, Nelissa has been a part of the amazing program called “Coaching for Change,” which has benefited both her career goals and moral compass greatly. As a future educator, she believes it is vital to share her experiences, which will help those that plan to navigate through the educational system.

More recently, she began working with the guidance department at Taunton Public Schools for an internship. This field work has exposed her to the beauty and essence of academic excellence, and how interpersonal relationships are the core of a college education.

DAVID CASTLES

Bristol Community College



David Castles is a former Baking and Pastry graduate from Le Cordon Bleu Boston, turned Bristol Community College graduate. He decided he wanted to do more with his life by thinking “big picture” – the environment. He started his associate degree in Engineering Technology, with a concentration in environmental, in 2018, wanting to help the community he loves and cares about.

With the knowledge gained from Bristol Community College, he’s been making a difference at the land trust he’s currently working at. This summer, he is completing a second degree in Sustainable Agriculture, combining his knowledge of culinary arts with agriculture to help bridge a gap in those worlds as well.

His dream job is to work as a civilian in the Army Corps of Engineers, helping with civilian projects or even as a national park ranger.

SARAH MORSE

Cape Cod Community College



Sara Morse enrolled at Cape Cod Community College, via the TRAIN grant, which is allocated from their Center for Corporate and Professional Education (CCAPE).

As someone now celebrating 6 years of sobriety, Sara entered the Recovery Coach Program offered through TRAIN at nearly no cost, which allowed her to balance her personal life, including being a mom of three children, along with her education.

She completed an internship with a local health center and now works extensively in the Cape Cod community and beyond in wellness, recovery and homelessness, including a job for a local non-profit that distributes diapers and supplies for parents.

ABIGAIL HAMMOND

Massachusetts Maritime Academy



Abigail Hammond is a senior at Massachusetts Maritime Academy studying Marine Transportation.

Originally from Fitchburg, Abigail grew up spending time on the water in Boston and Florida with her grandparents. She knew from an early age that she would pursue a career that led her to the ocean.

Last June, Abigail participated in a commercial shipping program in which she sailed on the M/V Oregon, a Crowley Maritime tanker in the Gulf of Mexico.

At the Academy, Abigail is passionate about the promotion of women and other historically underrepresented groups in the maritime industry. She currently holds the title of Regimental Diversity and Inclusion Officer in the Regiment of Cadets. She is also involved in various efforts at the Academy to promote diversity, equity and inclusion, including Students United Against Discrimination (SUAD), where she serves as President, and the Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA).

When she is not busy with homework and regimental duties, Abigail enjoys spending time with friends and family, playing guitar, and exercising. She is excited to be graduating this June with her U.S. Coast Guard License as a Third Mate. After graduation, Abigail plans to either work on a tugboat or ship out on commercial vessels. Wherever her various job prospects take her, she knows it will be at sea, where it all started.

JORDAN PALMER

Massasoit Community College



Throughout her academic career, discipline was not a commonly practiced skill nor was it ever prioritized to be, however, a shift occurred following the transition from high school to the college level for UMASS Boston graduate Jordan Palmer.

This shift began after enrolling at Massasoit Community College the fall of 2017 with little idea of what to pursue next. While the narrative remains the same for many recent

graduates – get a diploma, go to college, pick a trade or find a full-time job, these options seemed fairly limiting.

Instead, Jordan took a chance and enrolled in a few STEM courses, rather than the less challenging electives she traditionally favored. This leap opened up an abundance of opportunities, leading Jordan to further her education in the sciences, accepting a research internship position and allowing her to finish school with minimal debt due to the financial support of scholarships and grants.

Venturing beyond doubt allowed Jordan to gain valuable experiences and skill sets applicable to a range of disciplines. However, the unique opportunity to conduct real research early in her studies prepared her the most for greater challenges following graduation from a community college.

Jordan's internship experience promoted intellectual development and professional preparation. While students at her 4-year university struggled to interpret scientific journal articles, Jordan fell back on the scientific literacy and public speaking training she received through various presentations and events. Once a straight-C student, she utilized the learning styles picked up as an intern to independently and effectively study to obtain a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science.

Now as a research mentor and coordinator for Massasoit, Jordan works to help provide the same chances to students like her as she prepares to continue her studies as a graduate student.

SAHEEDAT BELLO

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth



Saheedat Bello is a Senior at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. She will be graduating in May with a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science and a concentration in Software Engineering.

At UMass Dartmouth, Saheedat is a student leader. She is the vice president of the school's National Society of Black Engineers chapter, a residential assistant, and an IT service center assistant.

In her junior year, Saheedat interned at DELL Technologies as a project/program management intern, where she was able to get exposure to what it was like to work in the technology field and discover the importance of professional networking.

Saheedat is passionate about technology, learning, and creativity. Outside of being a student, Saheedat enjoys reading and spending time with her friends and family. In the future, Saheedat hopes to be a "force to be reckoned with" in the tech field. She also hopes to inspire as many women and women of color to enter into computer science and STEM fields.

Sincere Appreciation!

On behalf of CONNECT's Chief Executive Officers, I would like to express my most sincere appreciation and gratitude to our honorees, State Representative Haddad and Retired State Representative Poirier for their commitment, passion and dedication to making higher education accessible to everyone throughout our region. We are humbled and inspired by your commitment to serve the region and Commonwealth.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the faculty, staff and students at Bristol Community College for hosting tonight's Legislative Gathering and Awards Dinner. Without your passion and dedication, tonight's event would not have been so exquisitely executed.

I would like to express appreciation to my colleagues at each of the CONNECT institutions for their professionalism, dedication, enthusiasm and support throughout the planning and execution of this event. The transfer coordinators, internship coordinators, public relations, media, & marketing directors, and executive assistants, have worked tirelessly, to help identify panelists, coordinate logistics, and ensure every detail for this evening was perfect.

Thank you to each of our six inspiring student panelists for sharing their thoughtful reflections on the benefits of internships. You have illustrated the importance of these experiences and the extent to which they have complemented your learning journey and guided your career path. Best wishes for continued success!

I wish to express appreciation and gratitude to our legislators and distinguished guests for joining us this evening. We sincerely appreciate you allocating the time to join us in honoring Representatives Haddad and Poirier and for your continued support of our regional higher education consortium and our initiatives.

In conclusion, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to all CONNECT's Chief Executive Officers, but most especially, Dr. Laura Douglas, CONNECT Board Chair, for your time and support.

As a Board of Directors, your collective dedication to the higher education community and your commitment to collaboration is inspirational, unparalleled and appreciated beyond measure.

Sincerely,



Stacey Kaminski, Ed.D.
CONNECT, Executive Director