

## **For immediate release**

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Mount Wachusett Community College Early College Programs Awards Diplomas to 59 Students and Associate Degrees to 26 Students  
GARDNER, MA – May 30, 2024 – On Thursday, May 23, 2024, Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) held the graduation ceremony for the Gateway to College and Pathways Early College Experience programs at the Theatre at the Mount. The 59 graduates represent over twenty cities and towns across central Massachusetts.

“Tonight is one of the highlights of my year. To be able to celebrate the achievements and the accomplishments of our students who are graduating here tonight. We are incredibly proud of our Early College programs and the opportunities they provide for students,” stated MWCC President James Vander Hooven. “We have had the privilege of watching you collectively redefine the high school experience and what it can and should look like for students today.”

“We are here tonight to celebrate our graduates’ accomplishments and the partnerships that represent the pillars of support for our students. Without the steadfast support of our partner schools, Superintendents, dedicated administration, and guidance staff, we would not be here tonight,” Dean of K-12 Partnerships and Civic Learning Fagan Forhan shared. “We are so grateful to the Gardner Public School District for their continued support and collaboration as we reimagine the high school experience together for today’s learners. It is through these partnerships that together, we have built a true community here at MWCC; a place where new paths are forged, and lives transform. We have created an environment where students feel supported, encouraged, and free to express themselves; where we, as faculty and staff, learn as much from our students each day as we hope they learn from us.”

“The partnership between MWCC and Gardner Schools is the driving force in creating creative dual enrollment programs, and I am proud to be a part of a program that helps all students. This evening is a wonderful opportunity for me to say thank you to you for participating in these programs,” said Gardner Superintendent Mark Pelligrino.

The student speakers were Junia Alce of Fitchburg and Iyari Watson for Pathways Early College Experience, and Kylie Hedges of Athol for Gateway to College. Alce, who

served as student emcee for the event, is currently a junior and hopes to transfer to the University of Central Florida to ultimately pursue a Master of Science in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. Watson will attend the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences to study sports medicine with the goal of becoming a sports medicine physician. Hedges is a member of the Commonwealth Honors Program and will be returning to MWCC in the fall to complete her interdisciplinary studies associate degree.

Valedictorian for Gateway to College was Lanahlee Boucher of Fitchburg, who is graduating with a 3.93 GPA and will be attending Fitchburg State University in the fall as an English major.

Pathways Early College Experience Valedictorian was Ware resident Kacie Gallagher who earned a 3.95 GPA and an Associate Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. She plans to transfer to Bridgewater State College to pursue psychology, and ultimately become a child psychologist.

The Early College and Dual Enrollment Programs at MWCC are led by Fagan Forhan, Dean of K-12 Partnerships and Civic Engagement; Sara Vettese, Director of Early College and Dual Enrollment; Stefanae Bowen, Coordinator of Dual Enrollment and Early College; Cara Breda, Early College Transfer Counselor; Gateway to College Resource Specialists Sharmese Gunn and David Thibault-Munoz; Early College Academy Academic Counselors Shaunti Phillips, Erika Puccio, and Sandy Tavares; Business Manager, Jessica Connors; Tami Morin, Administrative Assistant; Natalie Nelson, Staff Assistant; and Jennifer Welch, Senior Special Programs Data Coordinator.

The Pathways Early College Experience graduates are:

Norah Jane Theresa Blair\*, Phillipston  
Emmett Brian Frank\*, Lunenburg  
Kacie Morgan Gallagher\*, Ware  
Michael Paul Gemelli, Jr.\*, Orange  
Veronica B. Grubb\*, Fitchburg  
Royal Kane\*, Petersham  
Daniel Patrick Kershaw\*, Sterling  
Jackson Langlois\*, Oakham  
Gabriela Lyman\*, Orange  
Timothy David Schiller\*, Methuen  
Drew Myles St. Peter\*, Winchendon  
Sophia Elizabeth Tovar\*, Clinton  
Iyari LaDawn Watson\*, Fitchburg

The Gateway to College graduates are:

Sadie Marie Asch\*, Lunenburg  
Isaiah James Baker, Athol  
Lilly R. Baker, Ashby  
Brianna Lorin Barrett, Hubbardston  
Paola Marie Bones-Silva\*, Fitchburg  
Lanahlee Boucher, Fitchburg  
Liana Nicole Brouillet\*, South Barre  
Emma Rose Caban, Barre  
Betty-Jo Caisse, Baldwinville  
Yenny Esthefany Florentino Castillo, Fitchburg  
Maeve Clarke, Holden  
Issabelle Clemente, Gardner  
Braden Matthew Cook, Westminster  
Adam Cormier, Baldwinville  
Lorelly Ann Leika Dessalines\*, Leominster  
Tessa Ann DiSalle, Phillipston  
Emersyn Forde, Hubbardston  
Henrique Gomes, Jefferson  
Jayden Grummell\*, Athol  
Kylie Faye Hedges, Athol  
Kayla Marie Horrigan\*, Athol  
Gianna Rose Howlett\*, Gardner  
Kerrian Daneilya Jones, Gardner  
Sahir Noor Khan, Fitchburg  
Cecelia Angelique Lane\*, Westminster  
Reis Lewis, Leominster  
Catherine Martin, Templeton  
Janea Michelle Martinez, Fitchburg  
Hannah Lynn Millan, Fitchburg  
Makenna Mongeon\*, Holden  
Leilani Kamdyn Moore, Fitchburg  
Autumn Oakes, Shirley  
Annemiah Hadassah Onore, Fitchburg  
Taylor Pearson, Ashby  
Autumn Plourde, Lunenburg  
Christopher Prunesti-Leveille, Oakham  
Kaleigh M. Raskett\*, Spencer  
Annika Faith Rodriquenz\*, Westminster  
Autumn Lee Saseen, Leominster  
Lillian Stan, Gardner

Alyson Makenzie Teto, Orange  
Francesca Theriault\*, Athol  
Angelita Sarah Torres, Fitchburg  
Angel Noel Ulloa, Gardner  
Skye Valentin\*, Ashby  
Rayana Vasconcellos, Shirley

\*Also earned an associate degree.

#### About MWCC's Gateway to College

MWCC's Gateway to College program, established in 2006 as the first Gateway site in New England, provides a second chance for students ages 16 to 21 who have dropped out of high school, are at risk of dropping out, or experienced a setback, as well as an opportunity for home schooled students to complete high school and college studies.

#### About MWCC's Pathways Early College Experience

MWCC's Pathways Early College Experience offers motivated students interested in getting a head start on college the opportunity to earn their high school diploma and an associate degree while completing their junior and senior years in high school taking courses at MWCC.

Both programs are designated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as approved Early College programs and are offered in partnership with Gardner Public Schools.

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