

Anoka-Ramsey Community College Newsletter

Winter 2022 | Issue 9



This Issue: Write Like Us Program • Sustainability • Music on Campus • Foundation Impact • Alumni Connection



ANOKA-RAMSEY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A member of Minnesota State

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The President's Message

The start of a new semester at Anoka-Ramsey Community College provides an opportunity to pause and reflect on the progress the college has made, the current position of our programs in the communities we serve and the ways we can advance our work in the coming year.

These last two years have presented Anoka-Ramsey and our stakeholders with unprecedented challenges and uncertainty. The pandemic continues to impact the world around us, including the higher education environment. Despite these ongoing challenges, I am proud of the ways our college continues to prioritize student success, sustaining our community and meeting student and workforce needs while preserving health and safety on our campuses. It is this commitment to sustainability—of health and wellness, of diverse perspective, of environment, of academic rigor and innovation—that drives Anoka-Ramsey's growth and the achievements of our students, graduates, faculty and staff.

In this newsletter, you'll get a glimpse into a variety of ways Anoka-Ramsey engages with and sustains our communities, including: the college's participation in the Write Like Us program to amplify equity-based creative writing, environmental sustainability efforts and a new sustainability certificate program, equity and inclusion initiatives in on-campus arts and athletics and the diverse and impressive ways that Anoka-Ramsey alumni and scholarship supporters contribute to student success and a skilled workforce. Additionally, I was honored to award several retired Anoka-Ramsey faculty with emeritus designation this year, and we are proud to feature them in this newsletter, celebrating their career achievements in teaching, research and community and college engagement.

Anoka-Ramsey is focused on sustaining growth and change in our academic programs and services. The renovation of the Business and Nursing building continues and is on track



to be completed in time for the fall 2022 term. This project, funded through the state bonding bill, will allow the college to modernize our classroom spaces and simulation labs, and to prepare and grow a new generation of nurses and other professionals. I am excited to see the project culminate in a new cohort of students learning in the renovated building!

This spring, the college is offering a mix of courses, programs, and services delivered in-person and remotely to meet varying student needs and to ensure that students are connected with resources to complete their education, such as laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots, food support and financial support by way of scholarships and crisis grants. Anoka-Ramsey will also develop a framework for the next chapter of the college's diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, to meet the needs of our students and employees, today and in the future.

The coming year at Anoka-Ramsey is sure to bring additional challenges, but it also brings with it the hope and promise of our students, and the incredible efforts and contributions of our faculty and staff—and alumni and

supporters like you—who sustain and advance our mission, vision and values.

Thank you for your continued support and advocacy for our college and best wishes for a happy new year.

Kent Hanson, Ph.D.
President

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- Kent Hanson, President

Write Like Us Program Fosters Connection to Self and Community



In collaboration with four Minnesota State community colleges in the Twin Cities, Anoka-Ramsey Community College is participating in the inaugural year of an equity-based creative writing program: Write Like Us.

The program brings local and national authors from the BIPOC community together as mentors for students interested in but underrepresented in the creative writing field.

Eight Anoka-Ramsey students were selected for the program by local author mentees and started meeting fall 2021. By providing BIPOC mentees with models of success that look like them, the Write Like Us program hopes to recruit, retain, and represent BIPOC students in the college's Associate of Fine Arts (AFA) and creative writing certificate programs—programs with high rates of persistence, graduation and transfer.

For the students selected, the opportunity has been about creating connection.

Sabrina Lor is a first-year student at Anoka-Ramsey. She came to the college with a passion for reading and writing but didn't do it a lot. Writing was a form of expression, a way to process feelings. Lor is South Asian and grew up without a worthy representation of what success could look like for her. Lor was selected for the Write Like Us program by local Lao writer Saymoukda Duangphouxay Vongsay.

“Being selected for this program gives me the confidence to think anyone is worthy of anything.”

Anyone can do anything.

- Sabrina Lor

Through the program, Lor hopes to find her voice as a South Asian author, connections to other creative writers on campus and ultimately publish her own short story.

“It's really awesome to be working with a South Asian author and to connect on experiences

when it comes to writing and finding ways to find resources so I can actually establish a foundation in my writing instead of feeling as if I'm not worthy of it because I may not be the target author that many people would like to read from,” shared Lor.

“Being selected for this program gives me the confidence to think anyone is worthy of anything. Anyone can do anything.”

Learn more about each of the students selected for this year's Write Like Us program at AnokaRamsey.edu/writelikeus

The inaugural year of Write Like Us is funded by a \$150,000 Minnesota State Multi-Campus Collaboration grant in support of Minnesota State's Equity 2030 goals. Minnesota State is a consortium of thirty state colleges and seven universities in Minnesota. Equity 2030 aims to close the educational equity gaps across race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location by the end of the decade at every Minnesota State college and university.

National Author Event

Members of the community are invited to join us for the national author event this spring when Anoka-Ramsey welcomes author Brit Bennett for a reading, on-stage interview and book signing.

Thursday, April 21, 2022 | 2 pm

Anoka-Ramsey Community College

Coon Rapids Campus, Performing Arts Center

Event information at AnokaRamsey.edu/writelikeus



Inspiring **IMPACT AND ACTION** in

SUSTAINABLE

Five years ago, a group of faculty, staff and students put Anoka-Ramsey Community College on a path to investing in sustainability that will make a lasting impact.

In a recent reflection, Victoria Downey, Anoka-Ramsey geography instructor and a founding member of the Sustainability Committee at the college, shared, “Five years ago we started our sustainability journey by getting our first recycling bins in classrooms at Anoka-Ramsey.”

Since then, the group has helped add campus organics recycling, built a Sustainability Policy, launched an Introduction to Sustainability course and Sustainability Certificate, and partnered with a Minnesota GreenCorps member to complete a full greenhouse gas assessment to help inform recommendations for Anoka-Ramsey’s sustainable future through a Carbon Action Plan.

The efforts have been woven into aspects of the college experience at every level and are part of a statewide commitment to the principles of environmental sustainability. The committee and college also work to educate surrounding communities through sustainability-focused education, modeling of best practices, and educational campaigns focused on environmental action.

Sustainability in the Classroom

Anoka-Ramsey has been offering an Introduction to Sustainability course since the 2020 academic year. Through that course and goals of the committee, Downey and Lisa Becker, an anthropology instructor and Sustainability Committee member, recognized the need for more education opportunities at Anoka-Ramsey.

For both instructors, climate change and sustainability have become a common topic in their classes. Responding to the clear concern and passion shown by students at the college and commitment to sustainability-focused education, Anoka-Ramsey added a Sustainability Certificate program in fall 2021.



2021 Highlights in Sustainability



16-credit Sustainability Certificate launched fall 2021



91% of all debris from the recent demolition of the college's Business and Nursing building has been recycled



600 individuals responded to a commuter survey to help inform a greenhouse gas assessment



Minnesota GreenCorps member completed first greenhouse gas assessment to create the college's first Carbon Action Plan



Through strategic efficiency efforts, including energy efficiency improvements to facilities and improvements in space utilization, the colleges and universities of Minnesota State were able to achieve an average reduction of Energy Use Intensity of more than 19% per square foot between 2009 to 2020

“Isn't it the goal of any professor to inspire action outside of the classroom?” asked Kenzie Fodness, a student at Anoka-Ramsey.

Fodness took both the Intro to Sustainability and an Energy Use course at the college and sees the commitment to sustainability in action.

“The idea that students can be taking these courses and learning about sustainability, but also doing things that will prepare them for their future goals regardless of if they choose to work in the field is an amazing opportunity,” she said. “It's not something that would be easy for people to find without additional schooling which not everyone can afford.”

Fodness' experience in the courses made the complex issues and science around climate change that were being learned in class tangible.

“Isn't it the goal of any professor to inspire action outside of the classroom?”

- Kenzie Fodness

“Instructors found a way to teach factual information that is extremely important but would also show us how it affects the real world and real people and what actions we can take to influence change.”

According to Fodness, it's the collective, small actions of individuals across all pillars of sustainability—environmental, economic, social/cultural and wellness—that will make a lasting change.

Anoka-Ramsey is dedicated to environmental sustainability and providing a space for students and the community to be educated and inspired to act with us.



Music Keeps Community, Connection Alive on Campus



At a time when connection is difficult, music is helping keep community alive at Anoka-Ramsey Community College—on campus and online.

During the last year, campus has felt different at Anoka-Ramsey. With a continued priority of student success, health and safety, there are fewer people in the halls, labs and classrooms. But if you venture to the Music building of the Coon Rapids Campus you may hear a classic rock tune blaring from speakers in a Rock and Roll History class, choir ensemble voices filling rooms and muffled tunes from private spaces where students have a quiet place for practicing.

Music at Anoka-Ramsey is providing students with the opportunities for the connection that they're craving in a time when it's easy to feel isolated with in-person courses, ensembles and performances, as well as virtual productions.

Alexis Johnson was in her junior year of high school when the COVID pandemic changed the way she finished her high school career.

When she started at Anoka-Ramsey in fall 2021, Alexis had no idea what to expect from college, but knew she wanted to be in-person as much as possible and safe.

"I'm such a face-to-face person that learning

online is really difficult for me it was difficult to keep information retained and the spike in my mental health since returning for music classes has been huge," shared Alexis.

For students like Alexis, the in-person music options have been important, for others, the virtual experiences have been just as valuable.

Two years ago, when the pandemic hit and we were doing things virtually for the choir, I thought a performance would be completely impossible," said Music Instructor and Cambridge Campus Choir Director, Randal Buikema.

Not only was it possible, but the students learned skills in technology and received more private instruction than ever before. As Buikema continues to teach virtually, he has seen other skills develop in students and the pandemic has required both students and faculty to be more open and flexible. That

connection is something he hopes to carry with him in the future.

"I miss seeing my students in person, but I think the education that they're getting is still very valuable," said Buikema. "Students have had to share more about what's going on with them personally because of COVID. As an educator I'm going to be more open to their troubles, their obstacles.

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- Randal Buikema,
Music instructor and
Cambridge Campus choir director

Distinguished Faculty Recognized

Anoka-Ramsey Community College is proud to recognize three faculty members with Distinguished Faculty Awards (Emeritus) in 2021.

Nominated by their peers, each retired faculty member demonstrated excellence in their roles at the college and leadership within the community.

Join Anoka-Ramsey in thanking these individuals for their contributions to the college, community and higher education.

- Thomas Allen Hanson, Sociology
- Max Malmquist, Physics
- Melissa Mills, Biology

Read more about this important designation and each recipient at AnokaRamsey.edu/distinguishedfaculty2021



Anoka-Ramsey Community College Foundation Makes a Difference for Students Like Beteab

“For as long as I can remember, I wanted to go to college and attain my goal of graduating with a degree in computer engineering. However, college expenses can be a significant hurdle that leads to many students giving up their dreams.

Since I did not want to give up on my goal and I couldn't sign up for financial aid due to my immigrant status, I sacrificed a year after high school to



work as many jobs as possible to earn money for college. Because I have to juggle full-time school with two jobs, this scholarship is a savior.”

- Beteab D. Tefera,
Computer Engineering student and
Foundation Scholarship Recipient

To learn more about how you can support the Anoka-Ramsey Community College Campus Foundations and our students visit AnokaRamsey.edu/foundations

Alumni CONNECTION

From our first graduates in the class of 1965 to today, Anoka-Ramsey Community College is proud of our alumni and their contributions to our community. Catch up with some of our alumni and share your own story at AnokaRamsey.edu/stories



◦ Dave Blanchard '07

When Dave Blanchard '07 started at Anoka-Ramsey, it was simply to avoid taking a placement test but, during his time at the college, Dave built a network, a community and even met his wife. Dave completed an associate's degree in 2007 and transferred to St. Cloud State University (SCSU). He graduated from SCSU in 2010 with his bachelor's degree and began teaching elementary education in the Cambridge-Isanti School District.

Recently Dave took a shift and accepted a position at SCSU in teacher development. He is also in a doctoral program for curriculum development and instruction at Winona State University.



◦ Kat Hinkley '21

Kat Hinkley wasn't even considering college when she was in high school. She was passionate about art and wasn't sure a degree in the field was worthwhile.

After a year navigating college life during a pandemic, Kat completed both her AA and AFA degrees over the summer 2021 while living on campus at St. Cloud State University (SCSU) where she transferred to continue her education.

Kat is working toward degrees in both Graphic Design and Art Education at SCSU.

Women's Basketball Team Appoints New Head Coach

To start the 2021-22 season, former Golden Rams assistant coach and Health, Physical Education instructor Jessica Pelzel was named head coach of the Anoka-Ramsey Women's Basketball team.

Pelzel's appointment to the head coaching role follows the retirement of Dave DeWitt after 16 years at Anoka-Ramsey.

Prior to joining Anoka-Ramsey six years ago, Pelzel spent 10 seasons as head coach at Madison College. Pelzel also serves as a NJCAA Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Region Ambassador.

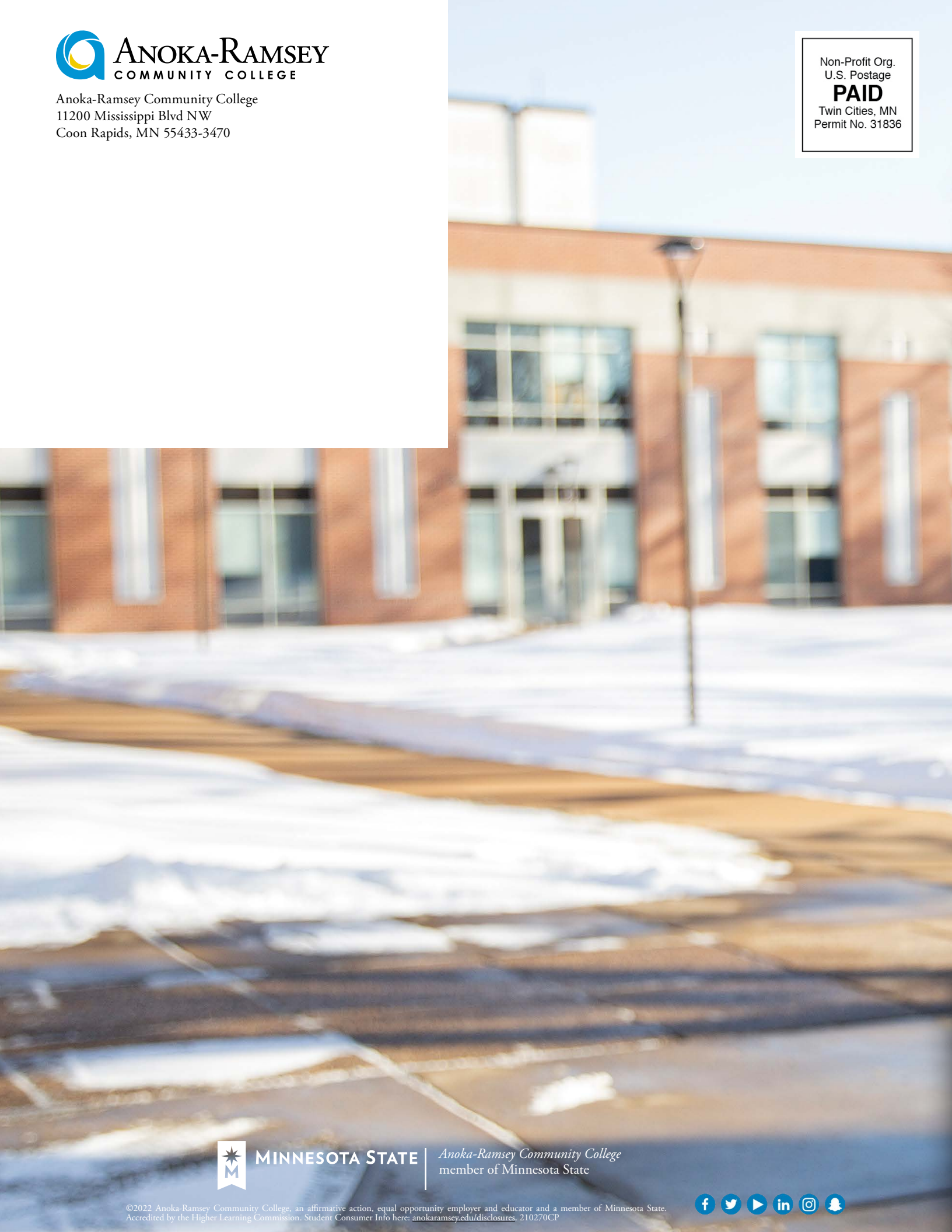
As Pelzel transitions into this new role after a season that was cancelled due to COVID, it's a fresh start for her and a team of mostly new players. It's a chance to build relationships to support each other through a trying academic year.





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