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# Anoka-Ramsey Community College Newsletter



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## The President's Message



Greetings from Anoka-Ramsey Community College! 2024 brings a fresh start to classes, athletics and activities — our campuses are buzzing with the start of a new semester. I'm happy to report an increase in enrollment at Anoka-Ramsey this year, which is both exciting and a testament to our student-centered culture at the college. As educational needs continue to evolve, I'm proud of the work our faculty and staff do to stay ahead of the curve and provide new and innovative opportunities to our students.

**“INNOVATION is a FOUNDATIONAL piece of what we do at Anoka-Ramsey, and in how we serve our communities.”**

Across disciplines, the college offers new and personalized opportunities for our students to explore and learn. From ensuring greater access to college education, to co-curricular experiences that challenge our students to think beyond the classroom walls, to engaging students in activities that create inclusive communities, we're creating new avenues for students to succeed. Our students are published researchers, talented artists and performers, emerging leaders and effective advocates. Every semester I am amazed by the diverse array of their accomplishments.

In this edition of the Anoka-Ramsey newsletter, we highlight some of our more recent innovations at the college, including support to make college more affordable and meet student basic needs, advances in scientific research by our faculty and students, and updates to our athletics offerings. You'll also hear from alumni whose experiences at the college led them to successful and purposeful careers and learn how you can support current and future Anoka-Ramsey students at our upcoming Rhythm of the Rapids event later this year.

We are also looking ahead to the future of Anoka-Ramsey, as the college embarks on a strategic planning process later this spring. This process will bring a variety of stakeholders together for feedback on advancing the mission of the college through a new strategic plan. I am looking forward to hearing from students, faculty, staff, and community partners and to unveil the new plan next year.

Thank you for your ongoing support for Anoka-Ramsey, and for your partnership in the success of our students.

Kent Hanson, Ph.D.  
President



# ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

@ Anoka-Ramsey

Anoka-Ramsey Community College is committed to providing our students accessible, affordable and flexible learning options. We're proud to support the student journey with resources for success in the classroom and beyond.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT



Free tuition for qualifying Minnesota students with an annual family income under \$80,000 through the North Star Promise



Tuition rates are frozen through 2025



Support to pay for college through scholarships, loans, grants and work-study opportunities

## ACADEMIC SUPPORT



- Tutoring support in areas including math and writing
- Transfer pathways for completion of an associate degree and seamless transitions to bachelor's degree programs at Minnesota State universities

## SUPPORT THROUGH PERSONAL CHALLENGES



Professional counseling staff to support social and emotional needs



Connections to basic needs like food, housing and childcare support



Anoka-Ramsey is here to help our students navigate food insecurity because it's hard to learn on an empty stomach.

## FOOD PANTRY

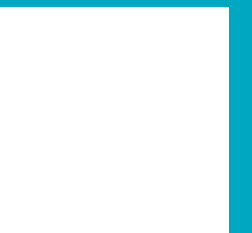


In March 2023, Anoka-Ramsey opened an on-campus food pantry in Coon Rapids and celebrated its designation as a LeadMN Hunger Free Campus in April 2023.

During the fall 2023 semester our Coon Rapids food pantry and grab-and-go food bags distributed on our Cambridge Campus provided:

- 9,936 pounds of food
- Food for 869 visits
- 105 grab-and-go bags on the Cambridge Campus

Scan the QR code to learn more about the ways Anoka-Ramsey and Minnesota State are making college accessible and affordable.







## Embedding Undergraduate Research in Courses CURE to Close STEM Equity Gaps?

Student achievements like these add to an inventory of research and literature that suggests CUREs are an effective way to expand access to undergraduate research opportunities.

In the spring of 2023, a group of researchers from academic institutions across the country, including Anoka-Ramsey Biology Instructor Kristen Genet, was awarded a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to investigate the connections between expanding access to undergraduate research opportunities, achieving student learning outcomes and developing a broader community of scientists for the next generation.

*“We know that undergraduate research experiences are critical for students in science,” Genet says.*

*To learn how to do science, you actually have to DO science.”*

She continues, “But there’s all kinds of barriers for both students and faculty when it comes to traditional research experiences.

“For faculty at community colleges, minority-serving institutions, or small primarily undergraduate institutions, many obstacles make it difficult to provide students with research experiences: there’s not enough time considering demanding teaching schedules, financial and administrative support, or infrastructure (including space, equipment and supplies). For students, those obstacles could include available time, financial or physical limitations. There could also be limited availability of research opportunities or [a lack of] knowledge or capability to actively seek out these research experiences due to social or cultural constraints.



“So, using CUREs removes many of these barriers to undergraduate research opportunities because it integrates research directly into the curriculum. Just by being part of the class, students are actively involved in research. And by embedding research into the curriculum, this also becomes part of faculty teaching load and course budgets, removing those institutional barriers as well.”

### Strong Foundations for Futures in STEM

Student researcher Trinity May says she’s eyeing a future as a nurse practitioner in gynecology and midwifery. She says the course, research and labs helped her preview her future education and training.

“It was a lot of work,” she says. “Having it be such an in-depth class. We had two labs and we did asynchronous lectures too. The experience of doing that work is something that will carry on.”

For his part, Hoang Phat Nguyen completed his coursework on Anoka-Ramsey’s Biology Transfer Pathway program in May 2023. He’s enrolled at the University of Minnesota and hopes to enroll in medical school in the future.

He says his experience researching and publishing findings at Anoka-Ramsey is a strong building block toward that future goal.

“A lot of medical schools like to see pre-med students publish as much as possible,” Nguyen says. “So the research I did with Dr. Croonquist is very helpful for me.”

Nine Anoka-Ramsey students mapped a mutation to a new gene, contributed to the naming of that gene and published their findings.

*Students collaborated with undergraduate researchers through a nation-wide research network to identify a novel gene in fruit flies. Networks like this are helping Anoka-Ramsey students connect to new discoveries and opportunities to build futures in STEM.*

Emily Hattling, Carissa Manthie, Trinity May, Hoang Phat Nguyen, Sylvia Gitamo, Luke Johnson, Claylan Mounthachak and Nadia Pobuda worked on the project as part of a genetics course taught by biology faculty member Dr. Paula Croonquist during spring semester 2023. Their research was in partnership with undergraduate researchers at three other institutions and supported through a National Science Foundation network called FlyCURE.

Through their efforts, they identified a novel genetic mutation in fruit flies. The mutation, which presents in the eye of the flies as an enlargement and reddening, inspired student investigators to suggest the name “clifford”, a nod to the big red dog made famous in children’s literature.

### Throwing out the ‘Cookbook’

The research that produced these findings was incorporated directly into the students’ course curriculum through a teaching tool known as Course Undergraduate Research Experience (CURE).

This hands-on approach is a deviation from teaching science labs following a formula Croonquist calls, “cookbooks,” meaning manuals that provide instructors with a plan for science labs that lays out the entire process, including conclusions/outcomes.

A CURE provides students the opportunity to practice the scientific method by creating and testing a hypothesis.

“When you’re doing art, you’re painting. You know what a painter will do later,” Croonquist says. “When you’re doing music, you’re playing your instrument. You know what it’s like if you want to make a living playing the violin.

“When we teach science courses, especially if the labs are ‘cookbooks’, that’s not what science is about. You’re not starting with a curiosity or a question. The biggest thing we’re modeling [with CUREs] is what happens in the field.”



## Anoka-Ramsey Seeks Legislative Support for Science Building Improvements on Coon Rapids Campus



Anoka-Ramsey is seeking \$14.5 million in funding to complete renovations to eight labs and four classrooms, among other spaces. The project calls for updates and replacements of key infrastructure elements, aimed at meeting key goals, among them:

- Improved safety, workflow and space efficiency at lab prep areas
- Increased lab size to better comply with current student space requirements
- Increased equipment quantity for better student-to-equipment ratio
- Increased bench work area for safer student work zones
- Enhanced teaching positions and technology in classrooms and labs equates to a more productive learning environment

“The design of the new science building is grounded in evidence-based, best-practice teaching in STEM, specifically inquiry-based experimentation and other student-centered lab pedagogy that is necessary for closing the equity gap for historically underserved students while improving the success of all students,” Anoka-Ramsey STEM Dean of Academic Affairs Rebecca Krystyniak says.

Anoka-Ramsey request is just a piece of a much larger puzzle in the Minnesota State system during the 2024 legislative session. The system is seeking \$541.4 million in funding, with investments of \$427.6 million in state funding and \$113.8 million in college and university support.

To learn more about the Minnesota State 2024 Capital Request at [MinnState.edu/legislative](https://MinnState.edu/legislative).



# NEW LEADERSHIP LINEUP at ATHLETICS Helm



With recent retirements and departures across Anoka-Ramsey athletics, new leadership is blazing a trail forward for the Golden Ram student-athletes across the eight collegiate athletics. At the front of the herd is Jessica Pelzel, who accepted the promotion to Director of Athletics and Health and Wellness Center in fall 2022. Pelzel is well-known across the Golden Ram community since she previously served as assistant and head coach of Women's Basketball and Interim Athletic Coordinator as well as an instructor in the Health, Physical Education and Exercise Science Department. "It's an exciting time for our athletic programs," Pelzel says.



**"As a department we strive to create an environment that encourages the pursuit of excellence in the classroom and on the field/court, empowering our student-athletes to become well-rounded individuals."**

"I am working with our coaching staff to help them to provide comprehensive support, mentoring and guidance to our student-athletes."

Fundraising events and sponsorships that support athletics are part of the new approach Pelzel has initiated. She often places student-athletes at the forefront of organizing these activities which provide leadership opportunities for student-athletes outside of their role in sports. The newly-formed Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) is the student led group in charge of these initiatives.

"We prioritize our student-athletes' physical well-being, skill development and mental resilience by fostering an atmosphere conducive to growth and achievement," Pelzel says. "Ultimately, our aim is to prepare our student-athletes for success beyond their time at our institution, equipping them with the skills, values and experiences that will serve them well in their future endeavors."

"Our goal is to produce not only successful athletes but also responsible citizens who positively contribute to their communities. I think that philosophy will help both our staff and student-athletes understand our goals and know we are committed to making this the best experience possible."

## New Collegiate Sport – Clay Target

The first Clay Target team will begin competing in fall 2024. "This sport will offer our Cambridge-area students an opportunity to have a collegiate sport on the Cambridge campus," Pelzel says. "Clay target is a co-ed sport and will attract many athletes from the surrounding communities. We are excited to offer a sport solely on the Cambridge campus and hoping it supports enrollment growth."

## Athletic Coaches

Several new coaches are part of Anoka-Ramsey's successful collegiate athletic teams. They bring extensive amateur and professional experience, familiarity with college's athletics programs and, in at least one case, legendary status in Minnesota athletics.

- Basketball (Women's): Samantha Doucette
- Basketball (Men's): Khalid El-Amin
- Baseball: Jason Saulsbury
- Clay Target: Chris Johnson
- Soccer (Women's): Ben Harrison
- Soccer (Men's): TBA
- Softball: Jen Zidar
- Volleyball: Ryan Doolittle

**For rosters, schedules and updated news about Anoka-Ramsey Athletics, visit [arccgoldenrams.com](http://arccgoldenrams.com) or @ARCC\_athletics.**

# 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, share your own stories and learn more about how you can support the college and our students at [AnokaRamsey.edu/donate](http://AnokaRamsey.edu/donate).

## Eric Ziegler '19



Eric Ziegler and his daughter, Jennifer, age 5

Eric Ziegler didn't have to look far to find Anoka-Ramsey. "It was like a mile from my house at the time," he says. "That was convenient for me." A staff sergeant in the U.S. Army Reserve, Eric completed an associate of arts degree in computer networking at Anoka-Ramsey in 2019.

Now working as an electronic technician with the National Weather Service, Eric is using his limited free time to work toward a bachelor's degree through an online program. Still serving in the Army Reserve, he's also a father to three children under the age of five.

When it comes to tips for balancing a career, online learning, service and a family, Eric's advice seems simple. "Have a good spouse," he says. "I've been fortunate to have my wife in my life."

## Judi Wanyama '12 DNP, PMHNP, APRN, FNP-C



Judi Wanyama '12, DNP, PMHNP, APRN, FNP

Judi Wanyama's career in health care was turned upside down in 2020 with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2012 graduate of Anoka-Ramsey's nursing program was accustomed to working in long-term care and clinical settings. As the pandemic set in, patients stopped coming to the downtown Minneapolis clinic where she was working.

So, she decided to go to her patients.

Judi opened Hope Medical Clinic. The clinic serves patients across the Twin Cities metro with hubs in Brooklyn Center and Minneapolis and intensive outreach through churches and community gathering spots. That intensive outreach aims to reduce health disparities, especially in immigrant communities and communities of color.

She says the sense of community and inclusivity she aims to create with her clinic has similarities to Anoka-Ramsey.

"There was a community aspect," she says. "I just had a feeling like I belonged."

"The foundation laid during my time at the college has undoubtedly contributed to my journey in the field of nursing. I am proud to be an alumna of a college that continues to make strides in providing excellent education and fostering a community of success."

## Athletics Hall of Fame



The Athletics Hall of Fame celebrates outstanding achievements and contributions. The 2024 Hall of Fame celebration took place in February and honorees include:

- Lisa Boxwell: Athletic Department
- Linda "Klug" Coleman: Women's Basketball
- Trey Scott: Men's Basketball
- 1985 Baseball Team

## GOLF EVENT

**Raising funds for our athletic department.**  
Funds will be used for a variety of student-athlete centered needs.  
SAVE THE DATE FOR THE  
**2024 Anoka-Ramsey Athletics Fundraiser**  
Aug. 19, 2024 at Greenhaven GC Anoka, MN



## Rhythm of the Rapids

### Save the Date: Rhythm of the Rapids Concert Fundraiser

The Anoka-Ramsey Community College Foundation welcomes our entire community to an evening of live music from G.B. Leighton along the Mississippi River, Sept. 12, 2024 from 5 to 8:30 pm. Bring the whole family to enjoy music, food trucks and more as we raise funds to inspire

student success at Anoka-Ramsey. All members of the community are welcomed and encouraged to attend. We look forward to seeing you there!

To purchase tickets or sign up to volunteer, visit [rhythmoftherapids.com](http://rhythmoftherapids.com). Tickets will be available in May 2024.