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Anoka-Ramsey Community College Newsletter

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This Issue: New Leadership • Campus Sustainability • Student Resources • Saving with PSEO • Pottery Donation



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The President's Message

It is an exciting time at Anoka-Ramsey Community College! As spring semester winds down, many of our students are about to finish their degree programs, preparing to celebrate their graduation and dive into new futures. This time also provides our college with a similar opportunity to recognize our successes and reflect on where we're going — new investments in our students and communities and plans for the future of the institution.

We are continuing to grow our enrollment, up 13 percent over the last two years. I am also proud of our student completion rate at Anoka-Ramsey, which is at a 20-year record high of 53.2 percent (as far back as data is available).

Student success is at the core of what we do at the college and is a central theme as we embark on our strategic planning process. Many of our community and industry partners have already provided input into this strategic plan development process and I am looking forward to sharing a new five-year strategic plan with the Anoka-Ramsey community this fall.

Anoka-Ramsey has also welcomed new college leaders this year and this newsletter will introduce you to the excellent new vice presidents and deans who will continue to advance innovative approaches to student success. This newsletter also highlights some points of pride across Anoka-Ramsey Community College, from the national recognition of our Therapeutic Massage program, to sustainability efforts like a solar array at our Cambridge campus, to the college's successful inaugural clay



target season. You'll learn about new ways Anoka-Ramsey is addressing student mental health, food insecurity and student service needs. You'll also read about the recent donation of pieces from potter Warren MacKenzie to our college art collection. Lastly, you'll meet some of our amazing alumni who are making positive change in our communities.

Thank you for your continued support of our programs and our students, and here's to another great year at Anoka-Ramsey!

Kent Hanson

Kent Hanson, Ph.D.
President

About the Cover Featuring Jessica Hanson '25

Anoka-Ramsey Community College student Jessica Hanson loves spending time on Minnesota's North Shore and her gouache, paint and pencil art reflect that love.

"It's my happy place," Hanson says. "Drawing it evokes some of the happiness I feel when I'm up there."

Open spaces and nature have long been comfortable for Hanson. A self-described "outdoor kid" she grew up enjoying time in the woods on her family's 23 acres near Milaca, Minn. A sergeant in Minnesota's National Guard, Hanson chose Anoka-Ramsey's Cambridge Campus because it was an affordable option, close to home.



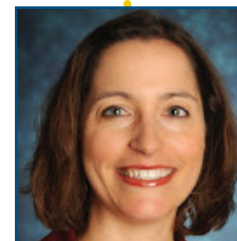
Anoka-Ramsey Welcomes New Leaders

Anoka-Ramsey Community College is pleased to welcome new administrators to its campus community.



Andy Aspaas, Interim STEM Dean

Aspaas has been on the faculty of the Anoka-Ramsey's Chemistry Department since 2004. He has served as Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF) chapter president and grievance rep, division chairs for both Physical Science/Engineering and Biology/Biomedical Engineering, co-chair of the Technology and Facilities Advisory Committees and co-chair of the Anoka-Ramsey/Anoka Technical College Strategic Planning Task Force.



Jennifer Hodges, Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs

With more than 25 years of experience in higher education, Hodges most recently served as the Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness at Doña Ana Community College (DACC) in southern New Mexico. In this role, she directed the Office of Institutional Analysis and supported assessment, strategic planning, institutional effectiveness and programs with specialized accreditation.



Norma Konschak, Interim Vice President of Finance and Administration

Konschak has most recently worked as the Associate Vice President of Finance for Normandale Community College. She brings a unique blend of skills that bridge finance and education, as her career in higher education started in academic affairs. Konschak has served as an MSCF Faculty Member, Academic Dean and Director of Academic Accountability in community and technical colleges.



Farfum Ladroma, Dean of Academic Operations

In his role, Ladroma provides strategic and tactical support to other Anoka-Ramsey academic deans, overseeing the college's academic scheduling, First-Year Experience program and Z-Degree initiatives. He most recently served as the Dean of Student Success at Pine Technical and Community College (PTCC).



Brian Wollum, Interim Dean of Student Affairs, Cambridge Campus

Wollum has worked at Anoka-Ramsey since 2015, serving as the Director of Student Success and Retention. In that role, he supervised teams in Academic Advising, Veterans Services and Adult Transitions, leading efforts to enhance the student experience and drive student success.

Therapeutic Massage Program Recognized for Quality



Anoka-Ramsey Community College's Therapeutic Massage program has received national recognition for its program quality, coursework and commitment to upholding the professional standards of therapeutic massage.

Recognition from the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB) allows students in the program to become board certified, granting them access to the highest voluntary professional credential in the industry.

"Recognized as an assigned school for NCBTMB, the Therapeutic Massage program maintains a commitment to the mastery of core knowledge and skill, the highest professional values and an education that aligns with nationally recognized standards," says program coordinator and faculty Carrie Bates Hale, M.A. "This better prepares our students for exams and gaining professional credentials. The accreditation also increases their credibility in the industry, improving job prospects and client confidence in their skills."

Demand for qualified massage therapists in Minnesota is expected to grow at least 17 percent in the next decade.

Anoka-Ramsey offers a 38-credit diploma in therapeutic massage. Through the program, students receive specialized instruction in anatomy, kinesiology, pathology and clinical massage techniques.

Visit AnokaRamsey.edu/TherapeuticMassage to learn more.

Sustainability Projects Brighten Anoka-Ramsey Landscapes

NEW PROJECTS are changing the look of Anoka-Ramsey's campuses in Cambridge and Coon Rapids. At the same time, they're **giving students, faculty and staff opportunities to get close to innovative sustainability solutions.**

Cambridge Campus Solar Array

A new 104-module solar array is returning electricity and classroom-bound data to the Cambridge Campus.

It's estimated the panels will produce approximately 70,000 kilowatt hours of energy a year. According to the United States Energy Information Administration, the average American home used 10,791 kilowatt hours of energy annually in 2022.

The array was funded, in part, through a grant from the Minnesota Solar for Schools program. Among the grant's requirements was a stipulation that data generated from the solar installation be tied into learning.



The installation provides real-time data and energy output information in a web-browser-based dashboard. According to Interim STEM Dean Andy Aspaas, that data is being used to shape classroom projects and curriculum across academic disciplines.

"It produces a lot of numbers and charts and graphs which are really nice skills for somebody in an introductory science course to develop," he says. "We're seeing a couple of areas like chemistry and environmental science are wanting to get some early access to the information. In economics, they're talking about doing cost studies over time to compare the cost of energy sources and how much we might be saving with solar energy."

Aspaas, also a 20-year member of the college's chemistry faculty based primarily in Cambridge, says he's seen a growing interest in things like sustainability and renewable energy in the courses he's taught.



"Issues related to climate change really strike a chord with a wider variety of students than I would have expected," he says. "That idea of a younger generation being able to have some say in what the rest of their life is going to be like is a powerful idea to a lot of students."

He says he's hoping this solar array can be another facet of Cambridge's identity as a place for those with an interest in conservation and environmental issues.

In the coming months, an electric vehicle charging station will be installed on campus, powered by the panels.

Coon Rapids Bee Lawn and Science Building Solar Wall

A recently dedicated area on the Coon Rapids Campus is making space for bees, birds and students to appreciate the benefits of untouched natural habitats.

Anoka-Ramsey Sustainability Committee Co-Chair Victoria Downey says the native grasses and flowers of the Bee Lawn will serve as a food source for pollinators and contribute to overall soil health and quality. "You don't have to use fertilizer in the same way or pesticides in the same way. [Native plants] don't require as much water as a traditional lawn does as well and they don't have to be mowed as frequently," Downey says. "They also have a deeper root structure and that can help maintain soil."

She adds that the reduction in fertilizer and pesticide use will also contribute to a healthier Mississippi River downstream from campus, as runoff from those additions can negatively impact water quality.

The Bee Field is situated on the south side of the Science Building.

Atop the roof of the Science Building is another sustainability-minded feature. Installed during renovations during the summer of 2024, a solar wall is contributing to reductions in energy consumption.

Using warmth from the sun, the dark panel warms air before it is pulled into the building's air handling unit. This passive warming can contribute to heat savings between 15 and 25 percent.

Resources BUILD Healthy Campus Culture

New virtual and on-campus resources are helping Anoka-Ramsey students find connection and support on their own terms.

Kate Noelke is the Director for Student Mental Health and Wellness at Minnesota State. She points out students are whole people with full, sometimes complex, lives. Through mental health, academic and basic needs support, Anoka-Ramsey and the colleges and universities of Minnesota State aim to help students remove barriers to success while still recognizing the resources they bring to bear.

"You can have experiences, lived experiences, identity, the strengths of culture, the strengths that come with the community that you grew up in, the family that you have, the friend group that you have," Noelke says. "Those are all things that higher education can leverage when we talk about building communities of care and cultures where everyone deserves to have the right to be who they are as they are where they are. And education meets them there."

From instructors to student employment supervisors to coaches and everyone in between, she says a connected community can really make a difference.

"It's everyone's job to create a healthy campus culture here because those are things that contribute to retention for students and their ability to be well and access success," Noelke says.

Read on to learn more about recent additions to the resources Anoka-Ramsey offers to support student wellbeing and success.

Mantra Health

Students enrolled in at least one credit at Anoka-Ramsey have access to free, 24/7 on-demand mental health support through Mantra Health Whole Campus Care. Students can use the virtual platform, available online and through an app, alongside mental health and wellbeing services provided by Anoka-Ramsey's Counseling Services team.

The tool provides:

- Self-care modules
- Emotional wellness coaching
- Peer-to-peer support
- 24/7 crisis support

Navigate 360

A new tool is helping Anoka-Ramsey students, faculty and academic advisors make college less complicated. Navigate 360 is a platform, available through a web portal and app, which helps students keep track of to-do lists, find the right major, connect with campus resources and more.

For faculty and staff, Navigate provides a centralized location to manage a students' academic and personal success. Through coordinated tracking and early alerts, the tool aims to help students stay on track toward their educational goals.

Cambridge Campus Fresh Food Pantry



A self-service refrigerated locker system on Anoka-Ramsey's Cambridge Campus is offering students greater access to fresh foods.

"This solution made sense for Cambridge as it is a smaller campus and finding space to have a full-time food pantry would be difficult, says Anoka-Ramsey Dean of Student Affairs Lisa Harris. "Using a locker system will allow students to request and receive food assistance in a more confidential manner than using a food pantry. This also allows for a more personalized approach to working with students and meeting their food needs."

Students can request fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, bread and dairy products in a weekly food order. When filled, orders are placed

in a self-service refrigerated locker system. Students are notified via text or email when an order is ready and will receive a unique access code to open their locker and access their order.

These items are offered in addition to grab-and-go food bags filled with non-perishable food and personal hygiene items, available once a month to students on campus. Students on Anoka-Ramsey's Coon Rapids Campus also have access to produce, meat, dairy and non-perishable food through an on-campus food pantry open daily during the academic semester.

Visit AnokaRamsey.edu/BasicNeeds to learn more about the ways Anoka-Ramsey is supporting students in the classroom and beyond.

Three Sisters, Three Different Transfer Paths, All Saving Through PSEO

Emily, Sophie and Anna Carlson all graduated from Blaine High School. While attending high school, each pursued the opportunity to enroll in the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) at Anoka-Ramsey. Through the program, they took college-level courses — both online and on-campus courses — and earned college credits while in high school.

• Benefits of PSEO

In the years following their time at Anoka-Ramsey, the sisters took separate paths toward their goals to earn bachelor's degrees. Still, all agreed the financial gain of PSEO has helped lay the groundwork for their success. In addition to financial benefits, gaining college-level academic and social experience before graduating from high school helped set them apart. Sophie adds, "It was helpful to get a head start and to have college experience before starting the four-year college I attended. I'd recommend that everyone consider enrolling in PSEO."



The sisters' mother, Jill Carlson, is also a proponent of PSEO programs. "There were mixed messages going around the high school about PSEO and whether the credits would transfer seamlessly to the four-year schools. Once we spoke with the Anoka-Ramsey academic advisors, they assured us that



the generals would transfer, and they were right," she said. "Our kids saved thousands of dollars by choosing PSEO and everything transferred to the various types of universities they each chose to attend. PSEO is a fantastic option."

• Where are they now?

Emily, the oldest of the sisters, earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Winona State University in 2019. Because of her PSEO credits, she could take fewer classes towards the end of her studies and focus on work. She now works as a pediatric nurse.

Sophie now lives in Denver where she works as a pediatric speech-language pathologist. She used her PSEO credits to complete her bachelor's degree early, allowing her to get a jump start on her master's degree. Sophie completed both degrees from the University of Minnesota-Duluth.

Anna graduated from high school in 2022 and currently attends University of St. Thomas where she is set to graduate this spring. Although she was able complete her undergraduate degree in on an accelerated timeline — within three years — she was still able to study one semester abroad in Rome. She has plans to continue her education by pursuing a master of physician assistant studies.

Club Helps Alum Find Community, Connection, Path to Career

For Steve Griffiths '89, a step through a club office door turned out to be an important first step toward his future.

Convinced by a friend from Anoka High School to give the speech team at Anoka-Ramsey a try, Steve says he was nervous the first time he visited the club's campus office. On the other side of a bright yellow door, Steve found a community that helped him stay connected to campus and engaged academically.

"I think, without that speech team, college probably would have disappeared for me," he says. "It's not that I didn't enjoy college but (the team) was an anchor there. All my friends were there. I loved my time there."

Returning to campus a few years ago, he reflected on how pushing through those nerves and pushing open that door shaped his path for years to come.

"I was so apprehensive to open the door the first time," he says, "but it probably led me to where I'm at today."

Steve took his Anoka-Ramsey credits and experiences to Mankato State University where he completed bachelor's and master's degrees. He set himself on a path of serving others and has made a decades-long career of serving others.

Today, Steve is the Executive Director of Stepping Stone Emergency Housing in Anoka, Minn. The organization runs a shelter that houses up to 66 people nightly. It works with clients to address immediate needs in the form of basics like housing, food, clothing and transportation.

"I never felt like I was somebody who was supposed to make widgets and turn a profit. I really believe my personal mission is to provide the basics, including shelter for people, so that they can become who they are meant to be," he says.

Stepping Stone matches clients and caseworkers and builds plans to address underlying causes of homelessness, including



things like untreated mental health and chemical dependency issues, lack of appropriate job training or education and more.

Steve says he can see similarities between the work Stepping Stone does for its clients and the role a community college plays in the lives of its students. They serve as partners, helping make plans and connect resources. But leave it to clients and students to control their trajectory.

"We really are about empowerment. We tell our residents we're going to help you walk through our plan, but you have to be the one to own it," he says.

Pottery Donation Molds Next Generation

Warren MacKenzie (1924-2018) was an American potter known for his simple yet elegant, functional pottery and unwavering commitment to making affordable pottery for domestic use. His work has been shown worldwide. Warren also served as an educator at the University of Minnesota, eager to share his knowledge.



Anoka-Ramsey's Art Department has received a collection of MacKenzie's work — a gift from Bill and Harty Shieber — for students and the public to enjoy. The Shieber family has a working relationship with MacKenzie and collected his work for many years. The work was previously shown in Pro-Art gallery in St. Louis, Missouri.

This is not the first time Anoka-Ramsey has honored MacKenzie and his work. In 2017, the college produced the documentary Warren MacKenzie: A Potter's Hands. MacKenzie was a presenter at the Sharing the Fire workshop in 2012. The goal of the Sharing the Fire project was to encourage and document the rich history of ceramics across Minnesota. MacKenzie was influential for establishing



Minnesota as a place where potters gather and learn from one another. Pieces are scheduled to be on display in late March on Anoka-Ramsey's Coon Rapids Campus for both students and the public to view. This work will continue to serve as an educational tool for students to learn from and study.

Clay Target Team Wraps Inaugural Season

The first season of the Clay Target program at Anoka-Ramsey Community College ended at the 2024 Minnesota College Athletic Conference Clay Target Championship event at the Alexandria Shooting Park in Alexandria, Minn.

The event saw 240 talented athletes showcasing their precision and skill in a thrilling display of marksmanship. It featured standout performances across both men's and women's divisions, with several Anoka-Ramsey athletes making their mark.

The championships not only highlighted the exceptional marksmanship of the participants but also the camaraderie and sportsmanship that define the clay target community. As the team's inaugural season at Anoka-Ramsey wrapped, coach Chris Johnson said he was excited for the future.



"This is just the beginning, and we are incredibly proud of all our athletes. We are looking forward to next fall and seeing the growth in the team and are excited for what's ahead for the Clay Target program."

Learn more about the program at [ARCCGoldenRams.com](https://arccgoldenrams.com)



Rhythm of the Rapids

SAVE THE DATE: 2ND ANNUAL Rhythm of the Rapids Concert Fundraiser

The Anoka-Ramsey Community College Foundation welcomes our community to an evening of live music from Martin Zellar and the Hardways along the Mississippi River, Sept. 18, 2025 from 5 to 8:30 pm. Bring the whole family to

enjoy music, food trucks and more while 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. Tickets go on sale in May 2025.