The Catalyst
A Newsletter for Alumni, Parents, and Friends of Greenfield Community College and the GCC Foundation

Welcoming GCC’s New President, Dr. Yves Salomon-Fernández

If you ask Yves Salomon-Fernández how she feels about becoming Greenfield Community College’s 10th President, she’ll tell you that “it is as if the stars have aligned.” She continued, “The totality of my experiences as a student and professional has perfectly prepared me for this moment. I have benefited from who we are as the United States of America, and I have a responsibility to continue to open doors for others. Others allow me to continue to reach my full potential, and I work collaboratively with people to reach theirs. I want GCC to continue to be a place where both traditional, academically well-prepared students and marginalized students can thrive. I want to

Del Mintz '84 - GCC Alum Changes Lives from Phillies Team Roster to the Youth of Philadelphia

Del Mintz put himself on the road to a career in sports at an early age. He came to GCC in 1982, right after graduating from Mount Everett Regional High School in Sheffield, MA, drawn by the comprehensive Athletic Program the College had at the time. While here, Del was a multi-sport athlete, playing baseball, basketball and soccer for the College.

“My mentors were John Palmer, the Athletic Director, basketball coaches Sam Harter and Mike Jillson, and baseball coach Bill Heirdich, as well as our men’s soccer coach, Charlene Antonio. At the time Charlene was one of the only female head coaches of a collegiate male varsity team.”

Of all the sports, baseball had the staying power. Del transferred to UMass Amherst after graduating from GCC in 1984 and played Division I baseball for UMass Amherst until graduating with his B.A. in English Literature in 1987. Del’s seemingly disconnected journey from English major to Major League Baseball scout reinforces the results of GCC’s 2016
From the President

One of the things that I love most about our college is how much of a community asset we are. Throughout the Valley, I meet people who constantly express a profound appreciation for GCC and its legacy of propelling students forward. It seems as though every resident, whether they were born in the area or moved here, has a story about how GCC changed their life or that of someone they know. The involvement of the people of the College in the life of the community also reinforces our commitment and place in advancing not just knowledge, higher education attainment, or the region’s economic vitality, but also the sense of community.

Recently, a candidate for a position described our campus as “brick and mortar.” With English not being my first language, I asked for more clarification. Having worked elsewhere in both the two-year and four-year higher education sector, at both public and private research and elite/selective institutions, one thing that Greenfield Community College isn’t is “brick and mortar.” Part of the “GCC difference” is the level of intellectual vitality that we foster here. We take our mission to educate for citizenship and leadership very seriously. Our students come to us for more than just courses, credentials, and degrees. Our educators do more than impart knowledge. We co-create knowledge with our students and work alongside them and each other to understand, respond to, and prepare for current and new complex problems that we face as a society.

At GCC, our intellectual vitality is an integral part of our identity. When I speak to students in our classes and throughout the main campus and our other sites, I ask them why they picked GCC. Invariably, their reasons include at least one characteristic that they looked for elsewhere and did not find. Some drive from long distances to get to us. Similarly, as I get to know our full-time and part-time faculty and our staff—our educators—our sense of mission is one of the reasons many choose to work here and others would prefer to work at GCC compared to other options that they may have. The intellectual vitality of our campus is reflected in our existing inter-disciplinary programs and in the many co- and extra-curricular programs that we offer.

Recently, a colleague and I were talking about the conflicting events that we have had take place at the same time on campus. Sure, we could coordinate the programming better. But overall, I think we would all rather work at a place that is intellectually “lit,” as the colloquial expression goes, than one that is dead or simply “brick and mortar.”

As someone who is new to the community and has worked elsewhere, I readily see the unique characteristics of GCC. As we each go through our day, what we may have internalized as normal or routine for us may be an exemplar for our peer institutions. GCC has a long history of being a pioneer, of paving the way for others, and of distinguishing itself among peers.

All the best,
Yves Salomon-Fernández, Ph.D.
In October, GCC kicked off STEM Week—a statewide initiative to boost student interest in science, technology, engineering and math—with a presentation by NASA astronaut, polymer chemist and Air Force Colonel Cady Coleman. Cady, who has close ties to GCC as a Trustee of the College and Franklin County resident, presented stories of teamwork from her career in space, which has included science missions on the space shuttle Columbia and on the International Space Station.

Cady’s presentation was a community event, open to all who wanted to come. One alum who graduated 30 years ago said, “I haven’t been to the GCC campus in many, many years. Cady is what brought me back in.” The event also drew attendees from as far away as southern Hampden County, including staff from the Springfield Science Museum and Planetarium.

Alysha Putnam, STEM Special Programs Coordinator and STEM Week organizer, was excited by Cady’s recommendation to students to “be brave and be open about the talents that you bring.” “Getting into STEM can be overwhelming,” Alysha explained.

Bob Manners ’86 Named 2018 Distinguished Alum

This year GCC was pleased to present the 2018 Distinguished Alumni Award to Robert (Bob) Manners ’86. Bob has been a selfless advocate for health, safety and the welfare of all citizens in our community for over 30 years. Though challenged by dyslexia early on, he read and wrote his way to passing exams to qualify him for the work he most wanted to do—firefighting, paramedic work, police work, CPR instruction, and EMS services. After completing his Associate’s Degree at GCC in 1986, he went on to earn college degrees from UMass Amherst ’89 and Springfield College Paramedic Program ’93.

Bob, whose life was changed by GCC, is a life saver. He has responded in the middle of the night to assist those in need, and he has educated many others on how to save lives as well. As Supervisor of Medcare Emergency Health ambulance service, he mentors students, new employees and employees upgrading to a paramedic role. Through his role at Franklin County EMT Association, he promotes the good deeds and dedication of others.

In thanking the college for his award, Bob reflected, “My thinking and philosophy has always been that each of us creates a ripple effect in the world. If we do something positive, it creates positive ripples through our community. I think about my career, and the people I’ve touched, and how I might have affected them in ways I’m not even aware of—a life I saved, a person I taught to save a life, a child whose car seat I installed and who was protected in a crash. GCC has that ripple effect too. The college makes a profound impact that, through its alums, ripples out and touches the world in positive ways.”

Bob also serves as Chair of the Town of Shelburne Select Board, and his many other hats range from raising llamas to running tractors for neighbors, from installing car seats for kids to organizing Shelburne Grange events.

Among his many professional accomplishments Bob includes: EMT of the Year, Kid Safe Practitioner Award, Nationally Certified Child Car Seat Technician, over 30 years dedicated to serving countless CPR courses, and as a firefighter, paramedic, police officer, and certified history teacher.
keep GCC as a place where people can turn around their lives, start anew, no matter who they are, and what their journey has been. GCC is the place to do that.”

Chair of GCC’s Board of Trustees Robbie Cohn said, “Dr Salomon-Fernández is talented, smart, ambitious, very savvy, and well-educated. She speaks four languages and has a wealth of experience. She was the unanimous pick of 11 trustees out of a group of five excellent candidates. We were not looking to replace Bob Pura, we were looking for his successor. I believe we’ve found her. She is perfect for this moment.”

As a mom, as a spouse, as a woman, as an immigrant, I wanted to find a place where my whole family can thrive. This is that place.

Salomon-Fernández also believes that the Pioneer Valley is the right place for her and her family. She said, “As a mom, as a spouse, as a woman, as an immigrant, I wanted to find a place where my whole family can thrive. This is that place. My husband is passionate about his disciplines, renewable energy and sustainable agriculture. He can thrive here. My kids have a deep appreciation for art and the natural beauty of the Valley. When we lived in eastern Massachusetts, we used to visit the Berkshires regularly, driving across Route 2 and through this area. Of anywhere we could live in the world, this is where we picked.”

She continued, “I was attracted by the social justice commitment, the feeling that this area is up and coming, that there is a good mix of established people and professionals complemented by younger folks moving things forward. This is a phenomenal fit for me and my family. With GCC, we share common values and a commitment to community. I have no doubt that this will be a ‘great marriage.’”

From her first time on campus, Salomon-Fernández recognized the unique world that is Greenfield Community College. She said, “During each of my visits to GCC, I felt a strong sense of family and a deep sense of caring—authentic, genuine caring. It was deeply meaningful to me to see the little bits of the mosaic of community here. People take care of each other on campus. During my interview, I was cold (I’m from the Caribbean, I’m often cold) and others in the room immediately loaned me gloves and a shawl. That is caring.”

In her first semester as GCC President, Salomon-Fernández has been getting to know her colleagues and the students at the College. Examples include the establishment of drop-in office hours for employees to check in with her on any topic, “Pizza with the Prez” listening sessions with students, and departmental luncheons hosted by Salomon-Fernández as a way to get to know her workforce.

She has also spent time in the community connecting with GCC’s partners and supporters and getting acquainted with Franklin and Hampshire County institutions. She has attended several area Chambers of Commerce networking events and engaged with partner non-profit organizations at both the administrative and program levels, with activities such as volunteering with her family to serve the Thanksgiving meal at Stone Soup Café.

“I’m eager to be a co-leader among other leaders, within and outside of higher education, advancing the Pioneer Valley,” she said. “I approach my work and any new experience with a certain level of humility and I look forward to what the community and the pioneers of ‘Happy Valley’, as I have heard residents dub this little corner of the state, will teach me. We’ll have a lot of fun. We’ll build on our foundation. The future is bright.”

Davey Steps Down, Rae Elected GCC Foundation Board President

At the GCC 2018 Annual Meeting in November, Board President Michael Davey was thanked for his leadership for the past two years, and Vice-President Leigh Rae was voted to begin her tenure in that role. Davey will continue on the board’s executive committee for the remaining year of his 6-year term. The College community is deeply grateful for their service, and for all of the board members who work to raise funds in support of the mission of Greenfield Community College and student success.
On Campus

GCC student, Hayley Hudson, finds a quiet corner in which to study amid the bustle of the College's main campus. The core mezzanine level offers students a spot above the fray, but only a quick glance away from checking in on the momentum of a busy school day in the lobby below.

Gratitude

Steve Kulik
Celebrated for 25 Years of Service

At a November celebration honoring retiring State Representative Steve Kulik, center, held at GCC, a legislative citation acknowledging his 25 years of service in the Massachusetts House of Representatives was presented by his colleagues, State Representatives Susannah Whipps, left, and Paul Mark, right. State Senator Adam Hinds, back left, was joined by several other members of the Western Mass legislative delegation to reflect on Representative Kulik's many contributions to our community and state government.
Survey of Area Employers, which affirmed the benefit of a liberal arts foundation in higher education. Employers, large and small, regardless of which industry, reported placing a high value on workers having the ability to effectively communicate, work with others in teams and have critical thinking and reasoning skills, all clearly required and demonstrated throughout Del's career.

“I wasn’t that good of a player,” he says, “so I knew that coaching was the next logical step if I wanted to remain in baseball.” Del went on to coach baseball at the Division III, summer collegiate and American Legion levels, and was a player and coach with Berkshire Baseball through 1991.

How did this Massachusetts sports fan find his way to Philadelphia? While looking for his next step, he talked with Greg Schilz, who had been Del's teammate at UMass and who is now Assistant Director of Scouting for the Philadelphia Phillies. It was Schilz who suggested that Del consider scouting as a profession. The two ended up working together in the Phillies' front office.

“I was a rabid Red Sox fan, and was always in mental pain,” Del laughs. “But surprisingly, when I was hired by the Phillies, I transitioned to being a Phillies fan almost immediately.” Del scouted for the Philadelphia Phillies from 1995 to 2018 covering the Northeast region. “Scouting means lots of road trips. The most memorable and enjoyable scouting trips for me were always the ones I took with my three children.” Another best moment? “No question, winning the 2008 World Series.”

Last year Del transitioned from scouting to serving as an instructor with the Phillies' Urban Youth Academy and their RBI (Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities) program. These free programs provide baseball and softball instruction and college placement tutoring to inner-city children. They also offer baseball vocational training to kids who want to work in non-player positions in the game.

“I like helping to cultivate a new generation of baseball/softball student athletes. The Phillies are in a great partnership with the community, and I play a role in supporting and evaluating young players, so they can have positive experiences and learn about what opportunities might be out there for them.”

This isn’t the first time Del has committed himself to youth development. In 1995, Del founded Pretzel City Baseball School, dedicated to helping young people enjoy playing baseball and softball and to building positive learning experiences.

Looking back, Del credits GCC staff and faculty for being there for him when he was a young learner, saying, “I would not have graduated without the guidance and support of Dean of Students Ethel “Risky” Case and Dr. Arthur Shaw. I will be forever indebted to them both. GCC is the perfect place to begin your college experience. From the faculty to the administration, if you show up, they will have your back.”

The impact this type of support from teachers and mentors can have on learners resonated for Del. He has worked to model the same unconditional commitment to the members of the teams he’s worked with since his time at GCC, from major league players to the youth of Philadelphia.

Community College Night at Fenway Park

An enthusiastic group of GCC alumni, faculty and staff prepare to leave for Community College Night at Fenway!

On September 26th, members of the extended GCC community traveled to Fenway Park in Boston with President Yves Salomon-Fernández and Student Senate President Mike Heitke-Felbeck. They joined the other 14 Massachusetts community colleges in celebration of the community college mission. The Red Sox went on to become the 2018 World Series Champions!
Please contact us at 413-775-1600 or foundation@gcc.mass.edu for information about Foundation events in the community, the annual campaign, planned giving opportunities, the alumni association, or join our email list.

Office of the GCC Foundation and Alumni Affairs

Behind the scenes…

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Please give to the GCC Foundation Annual Fund today. www.gcc.mass.edu/give

New Faces at GCC Foundation

The GCC Foundation Resource Development Team has added a new member. In November we welcomed Jenni Haley as our new, part-time Annual Fund Officer. She is working collaboratively with our staff to grow our donor base and endowment, and she’ll be actively supporting our campaign volunteers throughout the Annual Campaign.

Jenni is a development professional with over 15 years of experience in nonprofit communications and fundraising. She most recently served as Development Manager for Tapestry, and she was Capital Campaign Coordinator for the Amherst Survival Center.

Aimee Furaha Salmon has been appointed as the Student Representative to the GCC Foundation Board of Directors. Salmon, originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), is the former Administrator of CAMME DRC, a non-profit organization that helps youth in the DRC live a future free of exploitation. She immigrated to the United States five years ago and became a naturalized citizen in 2017.

Currently, Aimee is enrolled in the Health Science program, where she is working on an Associate Degree. Her goal is to earn a degree in medicine and work directly with non-profit organizations focused on access to health care for impoverished people around the world.

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Join now @ www.gcc.mass.edu/alumni
Community

Senior Symposia New Location

Senior Symposia is a collaboration between Greenfield Community College and area seniors to provide a way to learn in retirement in a format that best suits their unique needs. The Town of Greenfield is joining this partnership by providing the new Senior Center, which opened last March in the John Zon Community Center, as the symposia’s new home. The bright, welcoming space provides a modern and convenient learning environment for seniors, with an updated sound system, plenty of parking, and easy accessibity.

“This is a true partnership between the Town and the College,” says Mark Rabinsky, GCC’s Director of Workforce Development and Community Education. “Council on Aging Director and GCC alum Hope Macary ’97 has been great to work with, and we couldn’t be happier to be there. The seniors have always brought an amazing level of enthusiasm for learning. It’s really every educator’s dream to have such passionate and engaged learners in the classroom.”

The next symposia season kicks off on in February and will cover a range of topics from history, science, politics, architecture, and current events.

For more information, visit www.gcc.mass.edu/non-credit/senior-symposia

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