Rainy River Community College welcomes back Students for Fall Semester 2020

By: RRCC Director of Operations, Brad Krasaway

WE ARE EXCITED TO SEE STUDENTS ON CAMPUS!!!

Looking back, prior to March 2020, we took having students on campus for granted. Rainy River Community College has always been and always will be about connectiveness, unlocking
student potential, and serving everyone who walks through the door with respect and sincerity. However, when COVID-19 turned the world on its head, RRCC needed to innovate faster than ever before. The past 6 months have made us better. The quality of instruction, advising, registration, admission and academic support services have all improved due to being pushed outside of our comfort zones. The students are the benefactors of these innovations.

A brief rundown of these improvements are:

- Any prospective student can choose to FaceTime, Zoom, Android Videochat, text, call, email, or meet face to face with an advisor or a recruiter in an attempt to eliminate any barrier that may hinder a student’s ability to attend college.
- More than 65% of all courses have a mixed modality in which students can choose to learn on campus face to face or online through Zoom or other internet-based means, thus expanding student choice and preference.
- Our Academic Success Center has evolved to being a combination “Zoom Room,” student Tutoring Center, and Zoom Tutoring hub.
- Many classrooms have not only been modified to ensure social distancing but also so that it enhances classroom participation and encourages discussion.
- Technology improvements are everywhere; including a new laptop check out program for students, Zoom friendly cameras/microphones/speakers in many classrooms, and an increased number of dedicated student space on campus.

Students are thriving through difficult circumstances and their determination amazes me. Once again, students are stepping up to the challenge of their times and persevering through a complex environment. Education is the path to a better future from an economic standpoint, personal standpoint, and from a civic standpoint. It is the single best investment you can make in yourself and we are here to help you make the most of it.

We. Together. We Are Voyageurs.

Director of Operations,

Brad Krasaway

#GoVoyageurs
Greetings everyone,

Welcome to fall semester- it is wonderful to see students again! Even with masks, online and hybrid delivery, and social distancing, the vibrancy of human interaction on campus cannot be missed. We are in the people business, and it is good to be back, no matter what format we are in.

I am saying hello in this newsletter as a way of introduction. I have been serving as Hibbing Community College’s interim academic dean for the last year, and I am pleased to now serve Rainy River Community College in a dual role across the Northeast Higher Education District. As our district moves to become one accredited college with multiple campuses, it has been a pleasure to learn about all of the good work that is happening to serve students across our region.

What stands out most at Rainy River Community College is everyone’s commitment to our
students as holistic human beings, global citizens, and as the talent that will grow our communities. I am honored to support the efforts of faculty and staff at RRCC, and I look forward to seeing where the coming years take us!

Have a great fall semester,

Jessalyn

RRCC Faculty Perspective of adjusting to delivering Fall Courses during COVID-19

By: RRCC History | Anthropology | Political Science Instructor, Joe Chlebececk

Overall, COVID-19 has encouraged all of us to grow as educators. Status quo simply will not cut it in this environment. RRCC has come together – faculty and staff – to meet the challenges of educating amidst COVID-19.

The courses faculty are teaching now are different than pre COVID-19 times through the use of technology. Technologies of various kinds are common place in today’s higher education, but COVID-19 has resulted in additional technology tools in each instructor’s wheelhouse.

The courses faculty are teaching can be delivered in various formats to help meet the health and safety guidelines for COVID-19.
Blended/Hybrid
- Some instruction will be online and some instruction will be in class/face-to-face as listed on your fall schedule and/or arranged with the instructor.

HyFlex
- Instruction is offered in-class/face-to-face with remote synchronous or remote asynchronous option.

Synchronous
- 100% of instruction is online but some meetings and activities will be live via Zoom.

Asynchronous
- 100% of instruction is online with no in-person meetings and no in-person proctored exams.

Overall, flexibility in instruction is a must! Hands-on as a liberal arts instructor oftentimes means online discussions on present-day real life situations. The importance of values and the lessons of war are two examples that exemplify hands-on application of content from my courses.

Students really like clarity when it comes to instructor expectations, so students have been asking many questions. And those questions are being asked through email, online chats, and in-person exchanges.

I have adopted a “Whatever works best” model. In addition to offering instruction through a variety of blended formats, clear and open communication remains the key to ensuring a class environment that is inviting, organized, and predictable.

Rainy River Community College earns distinction as Hunger Free Campus
Rainy River Community College (RRCC) has earned the distinction of becoming a Hunger Free Campus by LeadMN. This is an initiative to address food insecurity on community and technical colleges.

The 2020 “Hope Center’s #RealCollege Survey” National report shows that 45% of college students in the United States are food insecure. This statistic is consistent with recent Minnesota data that shows 37% of college students have experienced food insecurity, meaning they do not have a steady source of food or cannot afford to feed themselves or their families. RRCC staff and faculty believe that no student should have to go hungry while pursuing their education.

In 2019 the Minnesota State Legislature passed and Governor Walz signed the Hunger Free Campus act. Today, over 16 colleges have earned the designation by serving over 6,596 students through the campus pantries, distributing over 61,600 pounds of food to students, providing emergency assistance funding to 260 students, and more.

A Hunger Free Campus designation signifies a college that is actively taking strides to reduce food insecurity amongst students. In order to be awarded the Hunger Free Campus designation, RRCC needed to meet the following criteria:

- Has a food pantry, partnership with a food bank, or some type of food distribution system on campus available to students.
- Has a designated staff person on campus to educate students on SNAP and other public services aimed to reduce food insecurity.
- Provides emergency funds to assist students who may be experiencing basic needs insecurity.
- Has a taskforce dedicated to addressing food insecurity concerns.
- Hosts or participates in at least one hunger awareness event each year.

The central component of RRCC’s Hunger Free Campus campaign is the Voyageur Food Pantry located on campus. It was started in February 2019 as a community collaboration with Backus Community Center, Falls Hunger Coalition, Second Harvest Food Bank, Ruby’s Pantry, a local family, and RRCC.

Approximately 20 students visit the pantry each day. The pantry has a variety of items including fruit, granola bars, cereal pasta, household and school supplies and more. RRCC Retention Specialist, Amy Amundsen, said, “The students at RRCC are fortunate to have community members and organizations that recognize the need for The Voyageur Food Pantry and work diligently to keep it stocked. A local International Falls family has been an integral part of The Pantry since its start and continue to ensure that our students have access to the food that they need.”

Cash contributions have also come in from RRCC faculty, staff and students, as well as local community members. If you would like to donate, contact Amy Amundsen at RRCC 218-285-2226, amy.amundsen@rainyriver.edu.

Click here for more information about the Voyageur Food Pantry
Save the Date - October, 26-27, 2020!

Higher Learning Commission Comprehensive Evaluation Visit

By: RRCC Director of Academic Services, Tammy Cook

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) will be conducting a Year-4 Comprehensive Evaluation of Rainy River Community College October 26-27, 2020. Comprehensive Evaluations are scheduled at years four and ten of the 10-year accreditation cycle. Rainy River’s last reaffirmation of accreditation was in 2016.

The Higher Learning Commission, an independent corporation founded in 1895, accredits degree-granting post-secondary educational institutions in the North Central region of 19 states, including Minnesota. HLC’s mission is to serve the common good by assuring and advancing the quality of higher education.

The HLC Evaluation Team includes professionally trained peer reviewers from Trinidad State Junior College, Red Rocks Community College, Gogebic Community College, Maricopa Community College-South Mountain, Northern Wyoming Community College District, and Bethel University. The Team will use a set of standards of quality, called the Criteria for Accreditation, to determine whether an institution merits accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation. The Criteria are based around: Mission, Integrity, Teaching and Learning, Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning.

Additional information and notice of open meetings will be posted in the Announcements section of our website (rainyriver.edu) as it becomes available.

Rainy River Community College’s mission is to serve its communities by guiding learners to achieve their educational, career, personal, and civic goals.

Rainy River Community College Foundation welcomes back Students
By: RRCC Foundation Executive Director, Anne Homkes

While this school year is starting off on a different foot than normal, the RRCC Foundation is excited to welcome students back to campus! The Board of Directors has continued to be amazed at the hard work and creativity the RRCC faculty and staff have put in to prepare for this academic year. The Board offers their deep appreciation to everyone who helped make this school year possible.

This summer brought unique challenges as the Foundation decided to cancel the Annual Golf & Social, which typically takes place in June, due to COVID concerns. The health and wellness of our students, staff, faculty, and community is a top priority for the Board members. However, we are hopeful to be back out on “the green” next year.

The Board has been busy working behind the scenes these past months on a couple different initiatives:

- The Foundation reviewed applications throughout the summer and awarded over $145,000 in scholarships to new and returning Rainy River students for the 2020-2021 academic year!
- The Foundation continued to offer the opportunity for faculty and staff to apply for Small Campus Grants for the academic year. Historically these grants have helped support technology upgrades, orientation fees, classroom improvements, etc. This year, one of the grants approved by the Board allocated funds for the college to purchase two Rainy River face masks and a bottle of hand sanitizer for each student, given to them upon their arrival to campus.

We wish the best of luck to the entire Rainy River community and look forward to continuing
Fall 2020 has brought a number of changes and challenges to RRCC. Despite this, the nursing classes through our partnership programs has continued to grow and fill all available spots. Essential workers in healthcare are at the heart of our nation and at our college. Eleven practical nursing and twelve registered nursing students have begun their education to enable them to join the ranks of those who care for our community.

Adjustments to some clinical components was required as a few facilities are still on lock down however with careful screening and PPE precautions some local sites are happy for the chance to have students caring for their patients once again. Virtual clinical experiences have provided excellent learning opportunities but the chance to interact with patients is irreplaceable.

The energy and enthusiasm of the nursing students this year is very high! They are excited to have the opportunity to become nurses while remaining in their home communities with their families now more than ever.
NJCAA announces All-Academic Team

Below is a listing of the nine 2019-2020 National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) All-Academic Student-Athletes at Rainy River Community College who have been named to first, second and third teams:

- **NJCAA All-Academic First Team (4.00 GPA):** Jesus Carmona, Kenneth Markel, Chance Duda and Kora Martin.
- **NJCAA All-Academic Second Team (3.80-3.99 GPA):** Will Laabs and Aaron Folsom.
- **NJCAA All-Academic Third Team (3.60-3.79 GPA):** Eugene Barnes III, Casey Meyers and Esteban Ruelas.

Congratulations, Student-Athletes!

Credit: National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA)

Stay Smart. Stay Healthy. Mask up!
Rainy River Community College will require all students, faculty, staff and visitors to wear facemasks/coverings at all times on campus in public settings. Face coverings are also required in outdoor settings on campus if social distancing cannot be observed.
Have you taken your Self-Assessment today?

Complete the Rainy River COVID-19 Self-Assessment before arriving on campus. Visit rainyriver.edu to access the Self-Assessment.