

# QCC gets \$1.8M for adult community learning center

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The need for adult education programs, especially ESOL, has been high, with more than 400 people currently on the waitlist (photo via QCC website)

WORCESTER—Quinsigamond Community College's Adult Community Learning Center (ACLC) has received over \$1.8 million per year for five years in its latest funding from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, up from their 2022 funding which was approximately \$1.2 million, the school announced recently.

The rise in funding has facilitated the recruitment of additional instructors and support staff to meet the high demand for ACLC's programs. This financial boost has resulted in around 140 extra students being able to register for the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program in the fall of 2023.

The ACLC also runs a GED/HiSET program for adult learners and between the two programs, the ACLC has approximately 500 students enrolled monthly. Kim White, the director of the Adult Community Learning Center, says the need for adult education programs, especially ESOL, has been high, with more than 400 people currently on the waitlist.

"One of our major attributes is that we provide classes during the day and night as well as in person, remote and hybrid," said White in a statement.

"We provide these different time options and multiple modalities for the student that's working several jobs and taking care of a family. Our program reflects our community and the community's need."

White also noted that ACLC students have access to the same QCC supports as students in credit programs, such as the Homeplate Food Pantry and Resource Center and accessibility services.

Joselyn Suero, a Worcester resident who is originally from the Dominican Republic, has been in the United States for more than a decade. Suero suffered an unexpected illness, landing her in the doctor's office frequently, and often frustrated by her inability to communicate effectively with the medical staff.

It was the impetus she needed. In 2020, Suero enrolled in QCC's ACLC to work on her English skills. After several years in the program, Suero said she no longer needed an interpreter for her medical appointments.

"This is the best program in the world. I am so grateful," Suero added in a statement.

ESOL Instructor Jay Villagómez is in his second year of teaching at the ACLC and has experienced what it is like to learn English firsthand, continues the announcement. Villagómez was born in the Philippines and grew up in Saipan, where he began studying English at the age of 14 to attend an American university.

"It's not just learning the language but learning to live in a new country and a new culture," Villagómez said in a statement. "The privilege of being a teacher is seeing my students realize they can empower themselves. It's really fun to teach adult students and it's a way of paying it forward, the way people helped me learn English."

The case managers, Villagomez added, are another important feature of the adult education program at QCC. These managers focus on connecting students with support for personal and academic needs.

"The case managers help bridge the needs of English learners. When a student is absent, they reach out to see how they can help," Villagómez continued in a statement. "It makes a world of difference, especially for students who are separated from their home cultures and could be floundering during their initial years in the country."

White noted that the ACLC program strives to empower students to gain employment with self-sustaining wages or progress to better-paying positions through English proficiency in speaking, reading, writing and civics. Additionally, many students continue on to higher levels of training and higher education.

"I have a bachelor's degree from the Dominican Republic, but I want to keep studying in college. I discovered I love to do community service,"

according to a statement by Suero, who owns a barbershop in Worcester with her husband.

Suero also runs a group for mothers studying English. "I say to the other moms, 'Don't give up. Here in the United States, you have so many opportunities. You're going to get there if you keep going.'"