

# The Viking News

## THE NEW OLD NORMAL WCC will soon be back in-person. Is it the right move?

by: **Guadalupe Conde**

**W**CC is joining colleges across the country in happily advancing toward the past.

Despite a shaky start in which waves of Omicron variant infections caused schools to continue holding the majority of courses online, the future seems to be firmly taking shape in the form of live, face-to-face classes, with ever larger campus populations. In short, American higher education finally seems to be bidding farewell to the new normal.

After a two-week delay, WCC returned to live classes on January 31 with no foreseeable plans to slow the growth in the number of live classes. Although no promises were made for the Summer semester, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Vanessa Morest assured the faculty Senate at its meeting on Feb 9 that the school is planning

for a Fall 2022 semester that will substantially be conducted on the old model of live teaching. Some members present noted a tone of glad relief in Dr. Morest's voice as she made the announcement.

The Presiding officer of the Senate, Prof. Chad Thompson of the Biology Department, told all present that remote Senate meetings via Zoom may come to an end after the Spring break. Club meetings, department meetings, and other gatherings may follow suit. Some have already begun.

Or not. The desire to return to campus is not yet unanimous, although the majority seems to favor it. To be sure, caution continues to dominate the learning landscape. See Dr. Miles's remarks regarding campus safety elsewhere in this issue.

**What do students think? Continued on page 2**

## *Dr. Miles highlights support services*

### New services and protocols ready for next steps of COVID

by **Marygrace Orfanella**

WCC President Dr. Belinda S. Miles has reached out to The Viking News to help spread a message to the students and staff of WCC in these difficult COVID times: "You are not alone!"

Dr. Miles highlighted policies the school has put in place to keep students safe in both current and future semesters, emphasizing that while she is excited for students to be getting back to some semblance of normalcy, WCC's main priority continues to be the health and safety of students. The protocols include the mandating of the vaccine and booster, wearing masks indoors, and practicing social distancing as much as possible. In addition, a new service has been added: on-campus COVID tests. Dr. Miles recommends that students check the WCC web page for more detailed

**We are  
all going  
through this  
together, and  
we are Viking  
strong!**

protocols and frequent updates.

COVID's effect on the mental health of students and faculty was a prominent theme of Dr. Miles's message. She wants students and college employees to know about the school's Department of Mental Health and Services, which offers weekly mental health support groups for students who are feeling distressed during this time. She also reminds faculty and staff

about a mental health program just for them called Project Hope. For more information about the DMHS and how they can help go to <https://www.sunywcc.edu/student-services/mental-health-services/>

In addition to DMHS's services, Dr. Miles encourages students to reach out for help to their peers, stating that one of the best things that students can do for themselves is to build a support system of a few good friends.

Dr. Miles also discussed what some of the biggest challenges were in regards to virtual learning. Training all of the teachers in how to use Zoom and become certified in virtual teaching was perhaps the biggest one of them all. Adjusting to these changes was, in her words, "like building train track while driving the train." The pandemic was disruptive, shocking and required



Photo: WCC Dept of Creative Communications

quick adaptation on all parts of the academic process, but by making the tough call to extend the spring break in 2020, WCC was able to get it done.

All in all, despite COVID and its impact on students, staff and the college, WCC has persevered and will continue to thrive. Dr. Miles reminds the WCC community that we are all going through this together, and we are Viking strong!

# GACCIONE GETS HALL OF FAME HONORS

## State Senate honors the veteran head of student support services

by: Liam Murphy



Photo: WCC Dept of Creative Communications

Joshua "Josh" Gaccione has been selected as a 2021 New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame Inductee by State Sen. Shelley B. Mayer (D, WF, 37th Senate District). Gaccione is the Director of Student Support Services at WCC.

Sen. Mayer visited the campus in November to present Gaccione with an official plaque of membership in the honorary organization, which was established to celebrate New York veterans who have made distinguished contributions in both their military and civilian careers. The presentation was made before a small audience that included Dr. Belinda S. Miles, the college president.

After acknowledging

that the COVID pandemic has prevented the customary larger award ceremony in Albany, the senator addressed Gaccione, saying "I wanted to acknowledge in a public way, you, your extraordinary contributions to the veterans community, to all our veterans and returning veterans, and to your future, which we know is so bright."

Gaccione oversees veteran services at Westchester Community College, assisting veterans and military-affiliated students and their families with all aspects of their education. Under his leadership (and with the help of Professor Meralee Silverman and Dean Karen Taylor) WCC now offers a college success class that is dedicated exclusively to veterans. This is a three-credit elective course tailored to address the concerns of student-veterans and their dependents, emphasizing critical thinking, success strategies, goal setting, learning and memory theory, and study skills.

The union of the veterans department with the school's Student Support Services, says Gaccione, "has helped us see phenom-

enal results. Student veterans and their families are able to get help navigating some of the red tape in their reintegration process. If you have the connections sometimes it is a little bit easier, so we provide that connection for veterans and their families. We collaborate with a lot of organizations and we bring in community based resources for our student veterans so they don't have to go anywhere else to get them."

Gaccione also likes to introduce current students to alumni who have successfully transferred to four-year colleges or moved on to professional careers. "We have veterans who have gone to Columbia and other schools," he says.

Gaccione has the experience to back up his spe-

cial knowledge of veterans' needs.

As a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division out of Fort Bragg, North Carolina, he was among the first units deployed into Afghanistan in 2002 and Iraq in 2003. As the Non-Commissioned Officer-In-Charge (NCOIC) of Intelligence for the 3rd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, he gathered intelligence across numerous channels to plan and support combat operations. He helped oversee the currency exchange in Babil Province, Iraq, which helped to stabilize the Iraqi economy in 2003.

He lives in Tuckahoe, with his wife, Gina, and their two children, Thaddeus, seven, and Carmela, who was born in May 2021.

## How do students feel to be back?

by: Guadalupe Conde

The Viking News was curious to know how students at WCC felt about being "back on campus." While some of us still take online classes, there are many more students who take in person classes now than last semester. About two thirds of classes are face-to-face. A brief informal survey yielded these results:

Kiana Domenech



"Being back on campus has been an amazing feeling since we have moved in person! I think seeing students on campus and the campus coming alive is such a surreal feeling and I think we are coming back to a sense of normalcy. I am looking forward to seeing more events happen in

person on campus and also to see everyone reconnect with their peers again! It'll be fun to see everyone engage and interact with each other in these new times!"

Alison Lara

"I preferred online classes as it was easier to do your work on the go and I am a person that likes to manage my time, so in my opinion online classes work better for me."

Brenda Herrera

"It is great to see the WCC campus coming 'back to life' as the world continues to recover from the pandemic. There is nothing like seeing a more lively campus filled with the curiosities of in-person learning and the joy of students enjoying on-campus events. Although in-person experiences are so valuable, the pandemic has also demonstrated that education can be more accessible through virtual or remote options, so hopefully we can work towards having a balance of both in-person and virtual opportunities for all our students."

Paulina Jaskiewicz



"I'm very happy to see more people around the campus! I finally have a chance to meet some of my classmates in person, and get more of a full college experience. As an international student, I was required to take hybrid classes for the last 3 semesters so I see a big difference in the number of people and change in the atmosphere at the WCC campus."

Olivia Toth

"I think it's really great to be back on campus and to be in person with our professors and fellow classmates. I am excited about what the upcoming semester has to offer for all of us."

Chloe Stalker



"I'm very excited to be back on campus for my last semester at WCC. I think that the campus atmosphere is so lively now that we are officially back to having in-person classes. I'm looking forward to experiencing more in-person events on campus, as well as meeting classmates that I have only ever met virtually. Despite the convenience of online classes, I'm grateful to have the opportunity to return to campus!"

Photo contributions  
Left: Kiana Domenech  
Mid: Paulina Jaskiewicz  
Right: Chloe Stalker

## Variety marks Black History Month events

by: Dalesky Joseph

Black History Month (BHM) is a time to honor and recall all the men and women of color who have contributed significantly to the United States and the legacy of African Americans throughout history. Black History Month began on February 1st and will continue until March 1st.

Throughout Black History Month, Westchester Community College will be offering a range of events, including ways to support mental wellness with holistic health practices, film screenings, information sessions on historical origins of African cultural practices, sessions that focus on Black Mental Health, panel discussions, and cultural performances.

All BHM events are easily accessible by using WCC event calendar:

<https://www.sunycc.edu/events/>

# PepsiCo offers \$50k scholarship

## S.M.I.L.E. scholarship grants Black and Latinx students business and STEM opportunities

by: Guadalupe Conde

The day is approaching when we will put on our graduation caps and gowns, be handed our diploma to commemorate our triumphs and begin the next chapter of our lives. Many of us are in the process of applying to four-year colleges and for scholarships. Among the many scholarships offered to students by various organizations, Westchester Community College can count itself lucky to be partnered with the PepsiCo Foundation.

The PepsiCo offers the S.M.I.L.E. (Success Matters in Life & Education) Scholarship to ten WCC students annually. The lucky recipients will receive a transfer award of \$25,000 per year for the next two years of their college journey for a total of \$50,000. This scholarship was created "to address the problem of minority underrepresentation in high-demand fields. It targets Black and Hispanic students pursuing a bachelor's degree, with prefer-

ence given to students in business or STEM fields," as described on the WCC PepsiCo Foundation online page.

The S.M.I.L.E. scholarship was introduced last year, and WCC was one of only three community colleges in the nation to be granted participation in this award. C.D. Glin, Global Head of Philanthropy and Vice President of PepsiCo says, "We're proud of the achievements of our inaugural S.M.I.L.E. Scholars and excited to re-up this program for a second year and expand our support to more brilliant minds. While two-year programs can be an on-ramp to higher education, financial barriers and historic inequity have made it difficult for many students of color to take the next step in their educational journey - transitioning to four-year universities." The S.M.I.L.E. award program will be running for five years, until May 2025. Between now and then, every WCC student who qualifies for this award is being encouraged to apply for it to



Photo: Pamela Morales

take advantage of this great opportunity.

In addition to the funds that come with being a S.M.I.L.E. recipient, there are added benefits that come along with the scholarship. For example, scholarship recipients are paired with a professional mentor from PepsiCo. The student and mentor meet once a week, with a new mentor being assigned every six months. By the end of college, the S.M.I.L.E. scholar will have had a total of three mentors. Other benefits include the opportunity to participate in financial literacy courses, career development activities, and conversations with executive leaders from PepsiCo.

There are currently ten 2021 WCC S.M.I.L.E.



PEPSICO FOUNDATION

We Feed Potential

Photo: PepsiCo

recipients who are pursuing their bachelor's degrees at their respective colleges. One of the ten recipients, Pamela Morales, is currently studying at Baruch College, where she is pursuing a Digital Marketing degree. She says, "The PepsiCo Scholarship has given me the resources to continue my education and pursue a bachelor's degree! I'm grateful to be able to attend my dream school and know that I can focus entirely on excelling in my courses. This scholarship program has also paired me up with an extremely motivating mentor who works with

me to achieve my personal and professional goals. Not only did PepsiCo provide the funding for my education, but they also offer resources for my professional development." According to recipient Tiffany Patton, who also is attending Baruch College, "The S.M.I.L.E. Scholarship provided by PepsiCo and The PepsiCo Foundation was a real game-changer for me. It gave me one thing that I didn't have before - options. It also gave me financial freedom. I wish every community college student were able to pick their dream school without financial restrictions, but that's simply not the case."

Ten new S.M.I.L.E. scholarships will be awarded to 2022 graduates so that they can continue their academic endeavors without the financial stress that often comes alongside the college journey. WCC and the PepsiCo Foundation urge all eligible students to apply for these extraordinary awards. Applications are due on February 28, 2022.

## Career services announces 2022 events

Counselor/Coordinator for the Career Services Department Gelaine Williams has announced a schedule of virtual workshops and events for the Spring 2022 semester to be held on Zoom.

**Business Etiquette:**  
Wednesday, March 2nd, 11am- 12noon- Learn about Workplace Expectations and Professionalism  
Zoom Meeting ID: 832 9075 6752  
Passcode: 435865

**Employer Showcase & Mentoring Connection Session:**  
Wednesday, March 9th, 11am- 12noon- Network & gain career tips from Personal Training & Health Professionals  
Zoom Meeting ID: 837

1998 5036  
Passcode: 645309

**Résumé Writing Workshop:**  
Wednesday, March 23rd, 11am- 12noon- Learn how to prepare a winning résumé that grabs an employer's attention  
Zoom Meeting ID: 811 1849 0231  
Passcode: 835896

**How to Nail your Dream Job in Today's Reality:**  
Tuesday, March 29th, 7pm- 8:15pm- Collaboration w/ Alumni, Advice from an Expert Recruiter  
Zoom Meeting ID: 842 1876 9140  
Passcode: 218397

**Interviewing Preparation Workshop:**  
Wednesday, April 6th,

11am-12noon- Learn tips & tricks for Mastering the Art of Interviewing  
Zoom Meeting ID: 850 5001 7989  
Passcode: 996980

**Virtual Career Expo/Career Fair:**  
Wednesday April 13th, 11:30am- 1:30pm --- SAVE the DATE Plan & Prepare for the Fair  
Registration Info: (must create CCN account to participate) <https://collegencentral.com/sunycc>

**Civil Service/Government Employment Options and Process:**  
Wednesday April 27, 11am - 12noon- Learn the secrets to the application process  
Zoom Meeting ID: 839 6072 9061  
Passcode: 586363





Dr. April Baker Photo: twitter@aprilbakerbell

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Linguistic Justice*

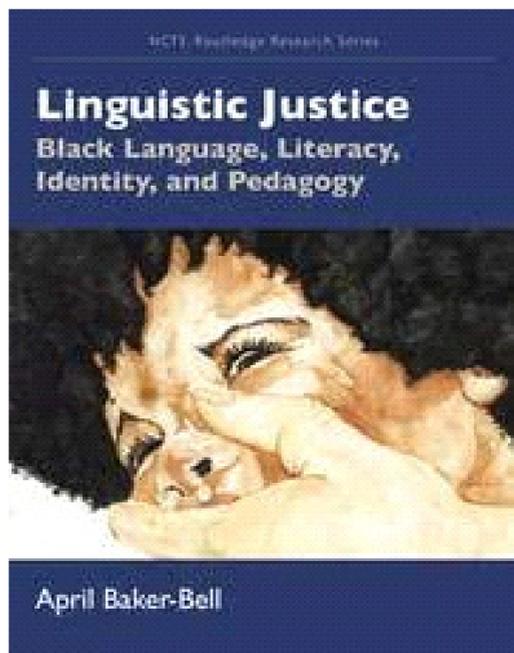


Photo: routledge.com

## *The Beauty of Black Language*

by Marygrace Orfanella

The recent virtual visit to WCC of Dr. April Baker-Bell, Associate Professor of Language, Literacy, and English Education at Michigan State University, brought to light a much needed conversation regarding the teaching of “standard English” in public schools and beyond that has pushed aside Black linguistics and the history of African languages.

In her book *Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy* (Routledge, 2020), as well as in her candid conversation with the students and staff at WCC, Dr. Baker-Bell has outlined not only the historical background of Black language but its importance in the present. One of the main points made by Dr. Baker-Bell is that by making Black children “code switch,” i.e., by making them speak what is considered proper English among the white community, society is demeaning the cultural and historical

roots of their heritage. Black language evolved from many different African dialects and was changed further when slave traders separated slaves from those who spoke the same language. The slaves made their own ways of communicating with each other, then learned how to communicate with the white community and were able to keep their language “coded” or separate from the white vernacular in order to maintain their own community and ultimately help each other to escape slave owners.

By telling students that they will be unsuccessful if they speak in Black vernacular rather than “standard” or “academic” English, society is invalidating all of the advancements of Black people everywhere. As a teacher herself, Dr. Baker-Bell has done experiments in which she exposes her students to writing in both Black language and “academic” language and asks her students to tell her what they think the

person speaking in black English is like and what the person speaking standard English is like. An overwhelming number of students including those who are black said that the person who had written in black English sounded uneducated and thuglike while the person speaking in standard English seemed successful and rich. This shows that not only does the absence of Black English in language classes help to encourage racism and racial inequality, but also does significant mental harm to the Black students by making them view the language of their community and ancestors as something to be ashamed of and as an obstacle to be overcome rather than as part of their heritage to be embraced. One of Dr. Baker-Bell’s main goals as a writer and teacher is to put an end to this mandatory “codeswitching” and to teach everyone regardless of race that Black languages are beautiful.

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## *Luke Yurich*

by: Liam Murphy

The paths that lead students to WCC are many. The one that brought non-traditional freshman Luke Yurich to Viking-land included a ten-year stint in the U.S. Air Force, marriage to an enlisted woman (presently a fellow veteran), and four recorded albums with his band, Mozey.

A native of Ohio, Luke enlisted in the U.S.A.F. while still a teenager and has served in Afghanistan, Germany, and the U.S. He and his wife, Alexis, took advantage of the educational benefits offered to military personnel upon discharge from the service to attend college. Luke chose WCC and is not sorry. “It’s awesome to get to start your college education affordably. WCC is a place where I get to further my journey towards my goals and be with a lot of great people while I’m at it.”

While not studying for his courses in electrical engineering, Luke composes and records music with a group called Mozey. “But if you’re looking for my music, be careful,” he says. “Believe it or not, there are two groups called Mozey. We’re still in discussions about it. Luckily our music is very different, so the confusion so far has been minimal.”

Luke has been playing music since he was 11. He formed his own bands in middle school and high school and began writing songs at age 22. In 2015, while stationed in Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Tex., he picked up the pace. He began recording his own stuff, and playing open mic nights and any gigs he could land at restaurants and bars with

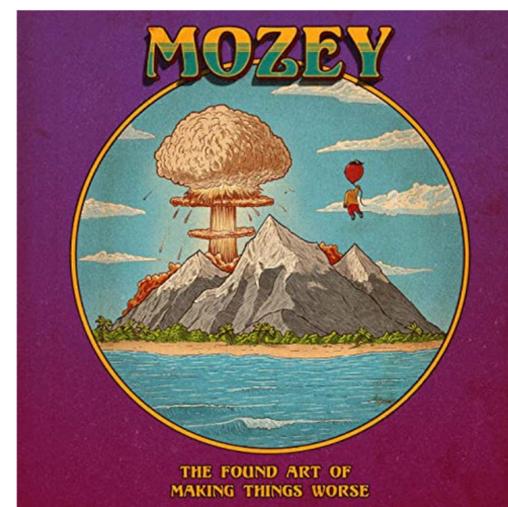


pick-up musicians. He wrote and recorded three albums solo until the last album, called *The Found Art of Making Things Worse*, which he made with friends.

One of those friends, Joe Caldarone, who played bass on the album, is now a member of a group called Arch Echo. Luke happily reports that “Arch Echo is opening for Dream Theater at the Beacon Theater in New York City on March 4.” Luke plans to attend for a reunion with his friend.

Luke favors thematic albums in which listeners can follow a story or a theme throughout all the tracks,” he says. “It takes them on a journey. In fact, *The Found Art of Making Things Worse*, which I wrote in Afghanistan, is a sort of continuation of my third album, called *Happy Searches Forever After*.” Luke’s albums are available on all major music streaming services.

Luke expects music to always be part of his life. Besides writing songs,



he may use his electrical engineering background to work in fields related to music. “There is a lot of new musical technology today. Robotics, guitar pedals, advances in recording software—there are many opportunities.”

Luke’s future plans include a transfer to a 4-year college, possibly Rutgers. Meanwhile, he is grateful to WCC “for providing such a comfortable starting point” for his post-military education.

**Top: WCC student Luke Yurich plays with his band, Mozey, with whom he has recorded four albums.**

**Bottom: Yurich’s latest album, *The Found Art of Making Things Worse*.**

## The Viking News

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Weekly meetings are open to all students and staff on Mondays 4 p.m.

Read us online at  
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## BLACK HISTORY WORDSEARCH

by Dalesky Joseph

E T T R N K T N R R S A U C V Q O F S O E  
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Jesse Owens Oprah Winfrey Toni Morrison Maya Angelou Ruby Bridges  
 Don Cornelius Beyoncé Knowles Martin Luther King Jr Madam C.J. Walker  
 Henrietta Lacks Claudette Colvin Dorothy Height Shirley Chisholm  
 Rosa Parks Ella Baker Ethel Waters

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**Maya Angelou** was an American poet, civil rights activist, and memoirist.

**Ella Baker** was an African American civil and human rights activist.

**Ruby Bridges** was the first African American child to go to all-white school.

**Shirley Chisholm** was a politician, educator, and author from the United States.

**Claudette Colvin** refused to give up her seat on a bus moments before Rosa Parks's more famous protest.

**Don Cornelius** was an American television show host and producer.

**Dorothy Height** was both a civil rights and women's rights activist.

**Martin Luther King Jr.** was best known for being the leader of the American civil rights movement. **Beyonce Knowles** is a singer, songwriter, and actress from the United States.

**Henrietta Lacks** went to The Johns Hopkins Hospital with a large cancerous tumor with rare properties. These cells have been aiding scientists for over half a

century.

**Toni Morrison** was an American novelist and Nobel Prize winner

**Jesse Owens** was American track and field athlete who won 4 gold medals at the 1936 Olympic Games.

**Rosa Parks** was an American civil rights activist best known for her role in the Montgomery bus boycott.

**Madam C.J. Walker** was an African American entrepreneur, philanthropist, and activist.

**Ethel Waters** was an American singer and actress.

**Oprah Winfrey** is an American talk show host, actress, author, television producer, and philanthropist.

## GIANT HOPES FOR HEAD COACH



Photo: USA Today



Photo: NY Post

by: Thomas Kavanagh

It has been a rocky road for the NFL's New York Giants the last few seasons. They have made changes to key positions on both sides of the ball but it seems like nothing has worked. Now there is once again some grounds for hope: Two new hires that might change the culture in East Rutherford.

The Big Blue has just acquired Joe Schoen as the new general manager and Brian Daboll as the new head coach. Both men spent the last year with the Buffalo Bills, whose star quarterback, Josh Allen, led

the team to the playoffs.

Schoen (pronounced Shane) has had 20 years of NFL experience, including front-office positions with the Dolphins. He has been with Buffalo for the past five years.

Daboll has a wealth of experience, which includes over two decades in the NFL and some notable work at the collegiate level. He helped guide Alabama to a national championship just a few years ago. A person who has had so much success under guys like Bill Belichick and Nick Saban is probably hungry to final-

ly be in the driver's seat.

Despite all his success in the past, however, it will mean nothing if he arrives and does not produce. It is challenging to come in and do well anywhere as a new head coach, but it is especially hard in New York, where so much is expected of you in such a short period of time. On January 11th, Joe Judge became the third straight Giants head coach to be let go after just two seasons or less.

WCC student Stephen Qumburji is optimistic. "Joe Judge led the Giants to a pathetic 4 wins and

13 losses this past season. Now the Giants have brought in Joe Schoen, who is an experienced executive and does not produce. It has been behind the success of Josh Allen. I hope Daboll will have the same positive effect on Daniel Jones as he did on Josh Allen. The future looks bright and blue in New York with these two new additions to the Giants organization."

Daboll will be feeling the pressure from the get-go. Only time will tell if he can score points and bring excitement back to MetLife Stadium.

## Gambling grows among students

by: Adam Adamu

Gambling among college students is relatively new but expanding across campuses in the nation. Make no mistake: WCC is among them.

I have been an avid sports fan most of my life, but I never contemplated placing a bet on any sports team; it's not my cup of tea. But recently, my perspective has changed, and not necessarily for the better. In January of this year gambling became legal in the state of New York and online betting platforms such as Fanduel, Caesars and Betmgm have made gambling more accessible. Let's be clear about what that means: Fanduel and the others have made it easier for people to take financial risks. Now add this: twice as many poor people gamble as rich people. To quote a headline from a 2017 story in The Guardian, "Gambling is an

industry that feeds off the poor and vulnerable."

How big is industry's feast? More than \$1.62 billion was spent in the opening weekend. Thanks to the new gambling law, we can add a new category of victims: college students. These platforms have incentives that a college student would find lucrative, such as an extra fifty dollars for referring a friend to Fanduel or \$300 if you refer a friend to Caesars sports book. Recent numbers have shown a 40% increase in student gambling since the law's enactment.

I was part of that increase. I began to see the amounts that could potentially be won by placing minimal bets, but the results were not pretty: More often than not I lost. When it comes to gambling many see it as something that college students should avoid.

In most cases, an undergrad has not attained the level of financial freedom to spend frivolously but nowadays more college students are taking the risk of hitting it big on online betting platforms. Sure, gambling can be fun, but at what cost? It can affect your social life, your studies, your GPA and in some cases it can get a student expelled.

What do WCC students think about online gambling?

"It can almost become consuming" says sophomore Gavin Williams "There are times when gambling can alter your sense of reality and what's important as student."

This is a feeling that I can relate to personally; as I placed bets on sports, I lost focus on academics. Studies have shown that an estimated six percent of American college students struggle

with gambling, which in most cases leads to depression.

"I didn't even want to go to class anymore" Says Yuri Smith, a sophomore at WCC. "When you lose, you feel like a failure in every aspect of the word and pretty much wanna be alone." The issues with gambling are thus two-fold: it can diminish one's finances and it can also affect one's mental health.

This is where awareness comes in. The only way we can contain this problem is by speaking out about the dangers of gambling and how it can ultimately ruin a student's education. College campuses have an array of resources to influence student behavior. To a large extent, we have won the war on smoking, poor nutrition, and sedentary lifestyles. Maybe now it's time to take on a new enemy.



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