

A Bit of Me

This series of profiles on SUNY Broome community members is a part of the Student Village diversity calendar initiative. We will be highlighting members in our community who identify with or can speak on the diversity theme or topic for each month.

The theme for May is Stereotypes, and the issues that come with it.

To be featured in this series please reach out to Kalis Nunes .

Dr. Kevin E. Drumm, PHD

President of SUNY Broome Community College



WHAT IS YOUR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND?

I have an Associate Degree in Education from Berkshire Community College, a Bachelor's Degree in Education from Boston University, a Master's Degree in Education Administration & Leadership also from Boston University, a Graduate Certificate in Alternative Dispute Resolution from NOVA Southeastern U, and lastly a PhD in Higher Education Administration & Leadership from NYU.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS PROFESSION?

It kind of chose me but it was a way to give back to an institution that had done so much for me, "institution" being in the broadest sense of community colleges as a sector.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART ABOUT YOUR JOB?

I love working with students!

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE SPOT ON CAMPUS? IF SO, WHERE?

The stone, sunken patio directly in front of our Business Building and behind my office in Wales.

WHAT IS ONE PIECE OF ADVICE YOU WOULD LIKE TO GIVE TO STUDENTS AT SUNY BROOME?

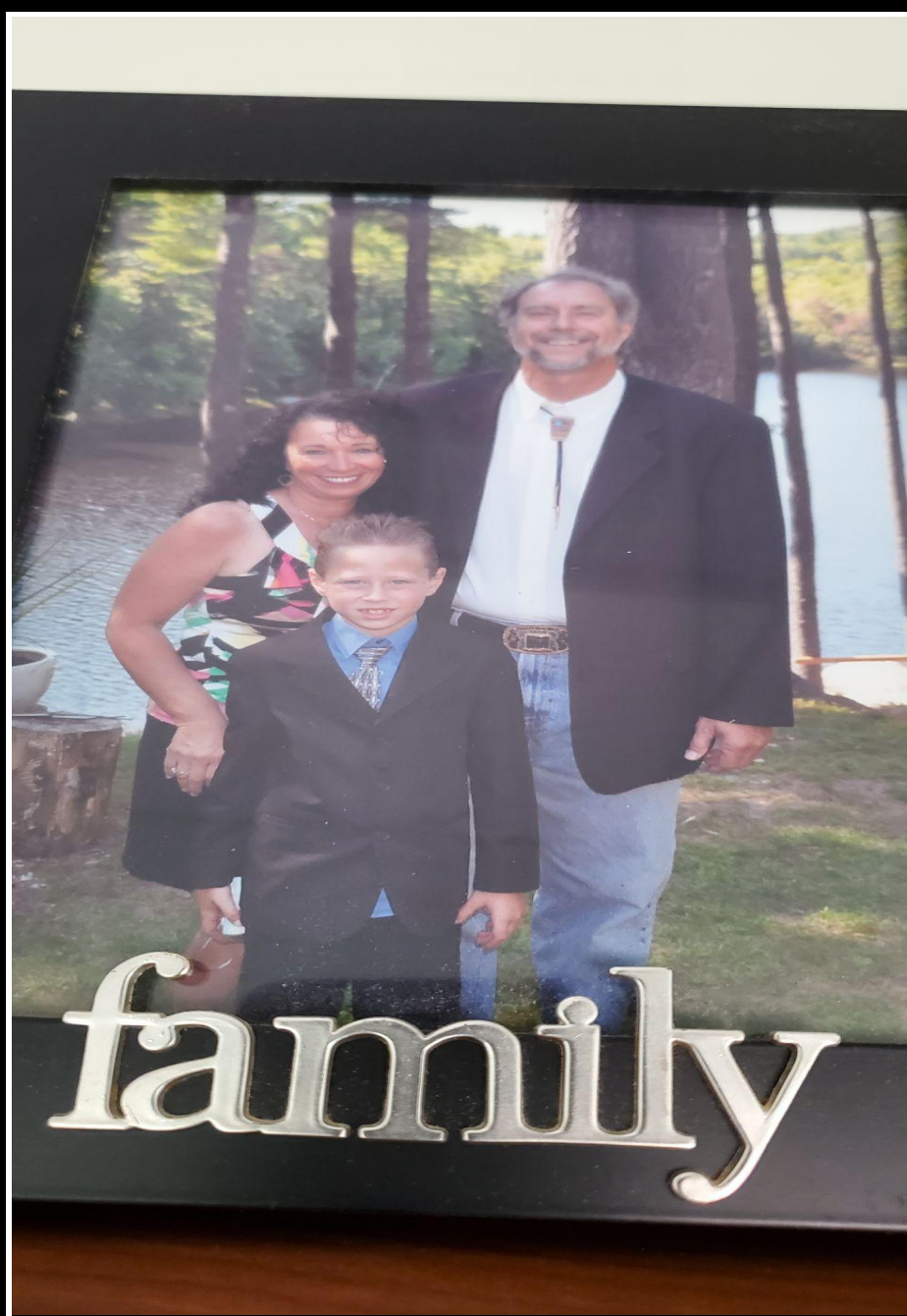
Go to class first and foremost, and take good notes.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE THAT YOU HAVE FACED AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME IT?

It probably won't come as a surprise, but guiding SUNY Broome through the COVID pandemic has been my biggest challenge and we aren't through it yet. I am getting through it with the help of a host of people from SUNY central in Albany to my leadership team here at SUNY Broome and all our faculty, staff and students. Rarely do we face great challenges alone and it's important to seek input from those around you whom you trust. A team can do so much more than an individual. Prior to facing COVID and running the college, my greatest challenge was having been laid off as a young professional during a recession. Two hundred of us were laid off across the university system where I was working and it was last-in-first-out and I had only 2 years in the job. It took me 6 months to get back on track but I eventually did.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE YOUR BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT?

Having a family and staying married for 30 years.



WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO CREATE THE PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (PTODI)?

A small group of faculty, including one faculty member of color, inspired me to create the Task Force. It was clear that the greater community was diversifying much faster than the college community and that we needed to work to be better prepared to meet the needs of our community. It's a core principle of community colleges to work to meet the needs of your community. Also, "Access" to a higher education is the core mission of all community colleges. If someone doesn't feel comfortable coming here or being here, then we're not really providing access in spite of being open admissions. So, it was important to take a look at ourselves and ask how we could become more accessible for all, not just the majority of our students.

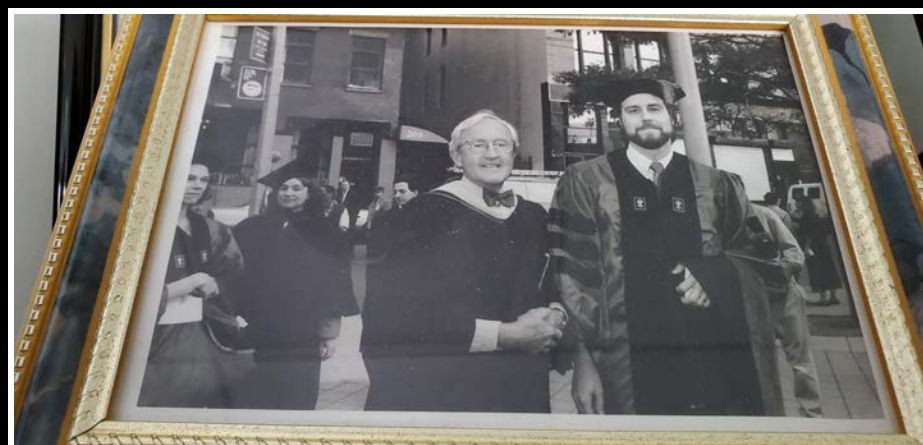
WHAT DO YOU HOPE FOR THE TASK FORCE TO ACCOMPLISH?

Miracles! This past year has taught us that we have so far to go in making our country welcoming for all, let

alone community college students. It will take many miracles for this to happen, while formerly I thought it might happen slowly during my lifetime. But as I've said with many initiatives I've been a part of during my career: "Just because we think it's impossible doesn't mean we shouldn't try!" A lot of great things never would have happened if someone didn't believe we could accomplish the impossible. Whether going to the moon and back or curing a lot of cancer, at first only the great visionaries thought we might be able to do it while most thought it impossible. Climbing Everest would also be in that category before there was any technology at all to help Sir Edmund Hillary, but the Sherpas knew it could be done and so did he while everyone else thought it impossible. Flight is another example.

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS IN WHICH YOU THINK SUNY BROOME COULD HELP FIGHT AGAINST STEREOTYPING?

Education at its core fights against stereotyping with the sharing of facts at the core of what we do. Education hopefully leads you to look below the surface and beneath the tip of any iceberg to see what's really there. If you do that, it's almost impossible to stereotype. Therefore we need to keep educating people.



HAVE YOU EVER BEEN INVOLVED IN A SITUATION WHERE SOMEONE WAS STEREOTYPED? HOW DID YOU REACT TO IT?

Growing up in an Italian family, half Italian anyway on my mother's side where my grandparents had immigrated, stereotypes abounded in our community. We also had a lot of Irish and Polish people in our little town loaded with paper mills, so people came from all over to work there and many lived in town as well but there wasn't enough population to fill the mills with workers. At that time, Italian, Irish and Polish jokes were rampant, as common as political jokes today. I really didn't think anything of it growing up because I knew nothing else but my little town, but then I went to college.

OVER TIME SOCIETY HAS CREATED A STEREOTYPE AGAINST STUDENTS WHO ATTEND COMMUNITY COLLEGES. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THAT STEREOTYPE? DO YOU THINK THE STEREOTYPE WILL EVENTUALLY GO AWAY?

Sadly, I don't think stereotypes will ever go away. It's human nature. Indeed, many people do look down on community colleges but it's getting better. The attention more recent U.S. Presidents have paid to community colleges has helped a lot. Bill Clinton was the first to deliver a major speech at a community college. George W. Bush set aside a lot of federal money to help community colleges build technical facilities and he spoke well of community colleges publicly. Barack Obama regularly spoke to the importance of community colleges and now Joe Biden wants to make them free for all. So, it's getting better—for good reason—and I do think eventually, as more community college graduates rise to positions of power and influence, perceptions will finally reach a good place. After all, we've been around for just over a century, a mere 120 years, while universities have been around for a millennia with the University of Bologna in Italy being established in 1088. Our own Harvard was founded in 1636, about 150 years before we even had a country of our own. We have ways to go to catch them. We are really still in our infancy, or maybe toddlerhood in the bigger picture and it's not unusual to stereotype energetic, "precocious" kids whom we all know will grow up and replace us someday.

