

# TRANSFORMATIONS



## COMMUNITY OF BELONGING

Employees find purpose, support  
and success at MATC

DELIVERING HOLISTIC  
STUDENT SUPPORT

.....

MATC BUILDS  
FOR THE FUTURE

.....

TEACHING  
SMARTER  
WITH AI



## MISSION

Education that  
transforms lives, industry  
and community

## VISION

The best choice  
in education, where  
everyone can succeed

## VALUES

Empowerment,  
Inclusion, Innovation,  
Integrity, Respect

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## MATC PRESIDENT

**Anthony Cruz, Ed.D.**, was selected as the 11th president of Milwaukee Area Technical College in May 2024 by the MATC District Board of Directors and began his tenure in July 2024.

Dr. Cruz, who previously served as president of the Kendall Campus of Miami Dade College in Florida and has almost three decades of higher education experience, is using his expertise to increase educational opportunities, enrich the student experience and bolster student success at MATC.

Since becoming MATC's president, he has emphasized his philosophy of ensuring that our work is centered on serving students. He has outlined systems of support and channels for change to strengthen the organization.

His experiences have given him a profound understanding of the complexity of the higher education landscape and the opportunity to celebrate the diversity of the unique backgrounds and perspectives of the students, faculty and staff that he serves. Among the action steps he is taking are hosting Coffee with Cruz/Cafecito con Cruz sessions to allow for student/staff engagement; inviting hundreds of district residents, business executives and community leaders to participate in a series of Presidential Roundtables to share input about MATC's next five-year strategic plan; and, most recently, launching a new Voice of the College LIVE series that focuses on specific topics that help us better serve students and/or support one another.

Dr. Cruz is committed to creating innovative approaches to reduce the skills gap, increase the number of college graduates and build a stronger employee culture centered on excellence and endless opportunities. Dr. Cruz believes that prioritizing communication, civility and trust is critical for our future.

THE 2024 MATC ANNUAL REPORT IS A PRINT EDITION OF

## TRANSFORMATIONS

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**MILWAUKEE AREA Technical College**  
Transforming Lives, Industry & Community



## MATC MOMENT



*Viola "Vi" Hawkins, a longtime champion of MATC who graduated in the 1980s with straight A's and returned to the college as a member of the MATC Foundation Board of Directors, shares her thoughts on the college's strategic plan during a Presidential Roundtable at the Downtown Milwaukee Campus.*



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## MESSAGE FROM THE President and District Board Chairperson

**AT MILWAUKEE AREA TECHNICAL COLLEGE**, students are our “why.” Helping them achieve their dreams drives the work of our faculty, staff and administrators. And we continue to do everything we can to help students on this life-changing journey.

In the last year, we continued to expand support inside and beyond the classroom. Building upon resources that include emergency financial assistance, food pantries and mental health support, we added one of the nation’s first drop-in child care centers as well as a new on-campus grocery delivery option. We invite you to read about the holistic support we provide (page 16) in this edition of Transformations, which is also our 2024 Annual Report. You can also hear from some of our caring, committed employees about why they choose to be a part of a team that drives student success (page 10).



As we complete the last year of our Transformation 2025 strategic plan and begin the work of creating our next plan, we are focused on the future. For us, this includes integrating artificial intelligence into classrooms (page 14), building welcoming and student-centered spaces (page 20), and continuing to grow opportunities for high school students to earn college credit (page 24). In recent years, the number of “dual credit” students taking classes at MATC has grown 8% to 10% annually.

These are a few of the ways that MATC continues to live up to our mission and deliver on the investment we receive from local and state taxpayers, business partners, and donors to the MATC Foundation, our philanthropic partner. To all of you: Thank you for standing with us as we transform the lives of our students, build a skilled workforce for local industry, and, ultimately, transform the greater Milwaukee community we call home. You make it possible.

**Anthony Cruz, Ed.D.**  
MATC President

**Mark F. Foley**  
MATC District Board Chairperson

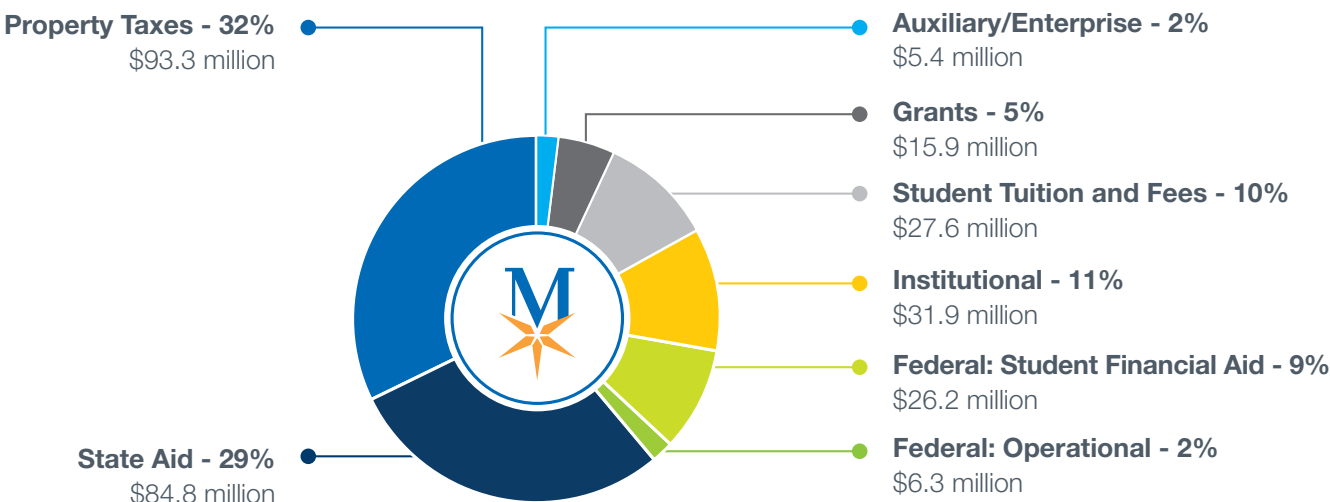


*Top: Little Stormers Village, a free drop-in child care center for MATC students, is one of many resources the college offers. Left: MATC District Board Chairperson Mark F. Foley and MATC President Dr. Anthony Cruz.*

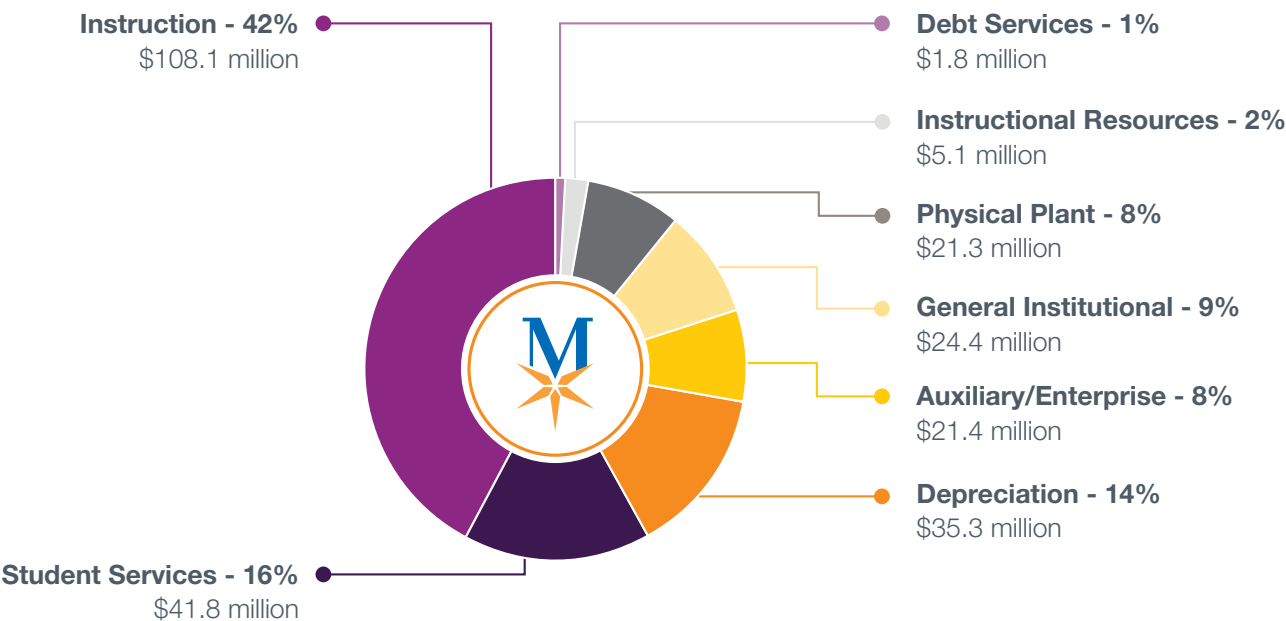


# MATC 2024 Financials

## Total Revenue \$291.4 Million



## Total Expense \$259.2 Million



**Milwaukee Area Technical College is fiscally responsible, balancing the needs of students and taxpayers.** The college retained a strong Aa1 bond rating from Moody's Investors Service in the 2023-24 fiscal year. The tax levy decreased from .8998 (2023) to .8367 (2024) for every \$1,000 of equalized value. The owner of a \$100,000 home in the MATC service district paid \$83.67 in 2024, compared to \$89.98 in 2023, a decrease of \$6.31.

# Highlights

## Hispanic-Serving Institution Designation Is Close

**WITH 23.4% OF FULL-TIME** college-level students identifying as Hispanic/Latino/a, MATC is close to reaching its goal of becoming a Hispanic-Serving Institution, or HSI. To achieve the federal designation, colleges and universities must have a minimum of 25%.

Earning the HSI designation means schools can apply for additional federal funding to support all students through improved services, innovative instruction and support partnerships with four-year colleges.

“We are here to provide the opportunity for everyone to succeed,” MATC President Dr. Cruz said when the news was announced in September. “HSI designation will help all students.”



## Enrollment Growth Continues

**THE COLLEGE SERVED** more students for the third straight year in 2024-25, marking a period of growth following a decline during the COVID-19 pandemic. While numbers are not yet final, total enrollment was up 6% for 2024-25 as of February compared with the same point the prior year. MATC primarily measures enrollment by — and receives its state funding based upon — the number of full-time equivalent or FTE students; in other words, two students taking a “half load” of credits equal one full-time equivalent student. Enrollment by total number of students is also up; Summer grew by 4%, Fall by 9% and Spring is on track for 10% growth. Counting all students, MATC serves more than 30,000 students each year.



## 9/11 Tribute

**ON THE 23RD ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11**, MATC students, faculty and staff gathered with representatives of area police and fire departments to honor the 2,977 people, including 432 first responders, killed on that tragic day.

A fire engine used by the college for training flew the American flag from its extended ladder, and red, white and blue placards bore the names of the first responders who died in the attacks. Milwaukee vocal artist William Toney sang the national anthem and a lone bagpiper from the Milwaukee Pipes and Drums played “Amazing Grace.” A video saluted the selfless spirit of those who gave their lives that day.

“The call for help is risky business. We don’t know what awaits. But for these people, it is a risk worth taking, knowing that a life could be saved. On 9/11, those first responders took the risk to save lives,” Navy Chaplain Dr. Andrew Cahoun said at the event.



## New Academic Programs in 2024-25

**THE COLLEGE ADDED** new programs and updated a few to adapt to the changing needs of employers in the Milwaukee region:

- Integrative Health associate degree emphasizes holistic mind-body-spirit wellness coaching strategies to help clients make lifestyle changes.
- Associate of Arts – Spanish is tailored for students planning to transfer to a four-year university and major in Spanish.
- Digital Content Creation associate degree (formerly eProduction) trains students to create on-demand visual media content for multiple platforms.
- IT Network Specialist (AI, Cloud and Virtualization) associate degree prepares students to work with emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence. The program also offers an online accelerated cohort.



## Amped Up About Heavy Metal Careers

**STUDENTS FROM** Franklin, Greendale, Greenfield, Oak Creek, St. Francis, South Milwaukee and Whitnall high schools gathered at the Oak Creek Campus in October for the Heavy Metal Tour to explore careers in manufacturing.

The daylong event was sponsored in part by All Within My Hands (AWMH), a nonprofit foundation established by the members and management of the rock band Metallica to support and advance careers in “heavy metal” manufacturing fields.

The students spent the morning touring workspaces and labs dedicated to the maintenance and repair of heating and cooling equipment, woodworking, welding, and CNC machining. The goal of the event was to expose the students to the opportunities in manufacturing and perhaps change their perception of those careers, said Patricia Nájera, Ph.D., executive director of MATC’s Oak Creek Campus.

“We want you to know that you have options after high school,” Dr. Nájera told the students. “You should consider coming to MATC.”



## All Heart: Students Win Prestigious National Scholarship

**ECHOCARDIOGRAPHY STUDENTS** Ann Achtien and Ame Eng, who received their associate degrees at the college’s Spring Commencement on May 19, were awarded the Alan D. Waggoner Student Scholarship.

The Waggoner scholarship is given to students who exhibit a passion for the practice of echocardiography and demonstrate leadership abilities. The award included \$1,000 for tuition and pays for registration and travel expenses to attend the 35th annual ASE Scientific Sessions in Portland, Oregon. Winners are selected based on academic record, essay answers, personal accomplishments and letters of support.

“Having this on their resume sets them apart from other graduating students,” said Wendy Kong, director and lead faculty of the echocardiography program.



## Wisconsin BioTech Health Hub

**MATC COULD SOON ENHANCE** and expand programs in the biological sciences that help improve healthcare thanks to federal funding secured in July.

The Wisconsin Biohealth Tech Hub, a Milwaukee-Madison collaboration to position Wisconsin as a global leader in personalized medicine, was awarded \$49 million to drive that collaboration forward.

Wisconsin’s tech hub was one of 12 across the country to win a share of \$504 million in funding designed to supercharge innovation. The consortium includes MATC, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, BioForward Wisconsin, Exact Sciences Corporation, Accuray, Plexus, GE HealthCare, Rockwell Automation, W RTP Big Step, Employ Milwaukee, Madison College, the University of Wisconsin System Administration, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Madison Regional Economic Partnership and Milwaukee7.



## 2024 General Election

**THE NONPARTISAN ORGANIZATION** When We All Vote brought good times and civic engagement to MATC on October 31. That’s when the group hosted a Party at the Polls celebration to encourage students to vote in the 2024 general election. Other sponsors of the event were the Milwaukee Bucks, the National Basketball Players Association and the Social Change Fund United.

MATC also served as an early voting site where City of Milwaukee residents could cast their ballots.







*Maiyer Thao (left), Dr. Sadique Isahaku (center) and Karen Feliciano thrive in MATC's welcoming and caring culture.*



# A Community of Belonging

## Employees share how they feel right at home at MATC

Sadique Isahaku, Ph.D., arrived at MATC more than 10 years ago and has never thought about leaving for one second.

The work is challenging, the pay rewarding, and the culture welcoming and belonging, according to Dr. Isahaku.

“MATC has accomplished many great things, and this is an excellent place to work,” said Dr. Isahaku, the vice provost of learning. “Many people believe there are greener spaces elsewhere, but I like to remind them that there is fertile ground right here.”

“Seeing themselves represented in the diversity of faculty and staff is important to our students,” said Laquitha “Elle” Bonds-Jones, vice president of human resources.

MATC has a diverse team of employees — 39% identify as people of color — serving the students who make the college one of the most diverse two-year institutions of higher education in the Midwest.

“MATC prides itself on being a premier place to work in the region, with a culture of commitment, caring, character and continuous improvement,” Bonds-Jones said.

“Our ultimate goal is that all employees feel a sense of belonging, our team members treat each other with respect and kindness, interact openly and with empathy, and value different perspectives,” she added.

The college also offers competitive salaries and good benefits like paid time off, flexible work opportunities, tuition remission and reimbursement, and plentiful professional development opportunities, Bonds-Jones said.

To find candidates, the talent acquisition team attends job fairs, uses recruitment platforms that specifically reach candidates who reflect the student population, and networks

with professional groups, Bonds-Jones said.

“A healthy culture is vital to the success of any organization, especially one as diverse as ours, where inclusion and social mobility are at the forefront of our work,” said MATC President Anthony Cruz, Ed.D. “Embracing inclusivity and shared goals promotes unity, stronger relationships and a more effective approach to problem-solving and community

building. My commitment is a caring culture centered on excellence and endless opportunities.”

**Here are stories from three members of MATC'S workforce:**

### **MAIYER THAO** *Student Services Specialist*

Maiyer Thao sees herself in many of the students she serves.

Thao has worked at MATC for one year, first as a student employment assistant at the college's CareerHub and currently as a student services specialist, a position that is supported with funding from Employ Milwaukee's U.S. Department

of Labor Building Pathways to Infrastructure Jobs Grant Program.

The youngest of seven children of Hmong parents who emigrated from Asia in 1976, Thao was taught to work hard and to value education, but often she had to seek out the right resources to succeed.

“Many of the students I work with are non-traditional, first-generation college students, often from marginalized groups,” Thao said. “As a young girl, I loved education, and

“A healthy culture is vital to the success of any organization, especially one as diverse as ours, where inclusion and social mobility are at the forefront of our work ... My commitment is a caring culture centered on excellence and endless opportunities.”

**MATC PRESIDENT DR. ANTHONY CRUZ**

I've always dreamed of making an impact on my community by ensuring students succeed in their academic journey. At MATC, I get to do that every day."

In 2017, Thao graduated from Hamilton High School in Sussex. She earned a bachelor's degree in December 2020 and a master's degree in May 2022 from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She is the first in her family to get a master's degree.

Thao is active in Milwaukee's Hmong community. She is involved with the college's Asian Student Association, is part of the national Southeast Asian Youth Education Committee and participates in Our Scholarship Inc., a nonprofit group

based in Milwaukee that raises scholarship funds for Southeast Asian high school and college students.

"I believe it is valuable to celebrate everyone and to take the time to learn about other cultures," she said.

Thao was attracted to MATC by its commitment to helping every student succeed, and she has flourished in the college's supportive environment.

"We are persistent and focused on our mission," she said. "My supervisors have been very supportive of my advancing, prospering and seeking out opportunities that utilize my skills to the fullest. There is a lot of space to grow here."

"I have recommended MATC to others as a place to work and will continue to recommend it," Thao added. "This is a great place to be. The college appreciates you, values you and celebrates you."

*As a student support specialist, Maiyer Thao (above) gives students the same spirit of support she receives from her supervisors at MATC. Dr. Sadique Isahaku (right) leads by example as the vice provost of learning. Karen Feliciano (far right) moved to Milwaukee when she was 15, speaking very little English. Because of her own experiences as a bilingual student, she started a bilingual welding program.*

## **SADIQUE ISAHAKU, Ph.D.**

### *Vice Provost, Learning*

Dr. Sadique Isahaku candidly concedes he came to MATC for personal, professional and pecuniary reasons.

"We transform lives here and that aligns with what I wanted to do," he said. "When I looked at the job description, I knew I could do everything in this job, and I could make more than where I was."

Dr. Isahaku, who received his early education in Ghana and Nigeria, came to MATC in 2014 and has loved every minute of it.

"I'm grateful and happy to work here every day. I feel valued and I feel respected," he said. "No place is perfect, but I feel we have a responsibility to be the best we can be in our professions."

Before coming to MATC, Dr. Isahaku worked for the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, coordinating the education programs and overseeing the career and technical education programs in all of the state's adult correctional facilities. Previously, he was an assistant professor of education at Beloit College in Beloit, Wisconsin, for eight years.

He came to the United States from Norway, where he earned a degree in welfare and development economics, and taught for several years.

At MATC, Dr. Isahaku leads through trust, transparency and innovation.

"I'm not infallible, and I want those who work with me to know I am approachable," he said. "I'm not afraid to try new things. I can be a risk-taker, but I receive support from colleagues and leaders to explore new ways of doing things."



## KAREN FELICIANO

### *Welding Instructor and Program Chair*

Karen Feliciano knows that every obstacle can be overcome.

Feliciano, who has served as a welding instructor at MATC since 2021, moved to Milwaukee from Puerto Rico at age 15. She spoke little English. In high school, she got help from English as a second language teachers. But in college, she was on her own. She spent hours translating her homework into Spanish so she could understand the concepts, then translating it back to English to communicate her ideas to her instructors.

She persevered and earned a degree in welding from Waukesha County Technical College. She worked as a welder, assembler and plant supervisor at various firms before turning to teaching. Her own experience as a student motivated her to develop a bilingual (English/Spanish) welding program at MATC, modeled on one she started at WCTC.

She started the program in June 2022 with 15 bilingual students. The first cohort graduated in the spring of 2023, and another 32 students signed up for the second cohort, receiving their technical diplomas in May 2024.

“My students inspire me,” Feliciano said. “I see the challenges I faced when I moved to Wisconsin. I know how much I struggled when I was first starting out in this career. But I see myself in their successes, too.”

Today, Feliciano is the program chair of MATC’s welding department, and she has gained the respect of her peers and college administrators for her strong leadership. She is a role model for her team and provides a large department with the organization and resources needed for student success. And, she manages a welding grant funded by Congress.

In July 2024, she was honored as the Women in Construction Educator of the Year by the Daily Reporter, a newspaper that covers the construction industry across the state.



“I realized that I not only had a passion for metal fabrication and welding, I also had a passion for education,” she said. “You could say I found my calling in life. At MATC, I get to incorporate my love for metal fabrication, welding and teaching all at once. And I have the privilege of watching my students learn and improve their skills.

“I have no words to describe how grateful I am to this college and to the Manufacturing, Construction and Transportation Pathway for the opportunity and for believing in me from day one,” Feliciano added. ■

## REFLECTING OUR DISTRICT

People of color make up a significant portion of the college’s student body and workforce

**63%**  
of students

**50%**  
of staff

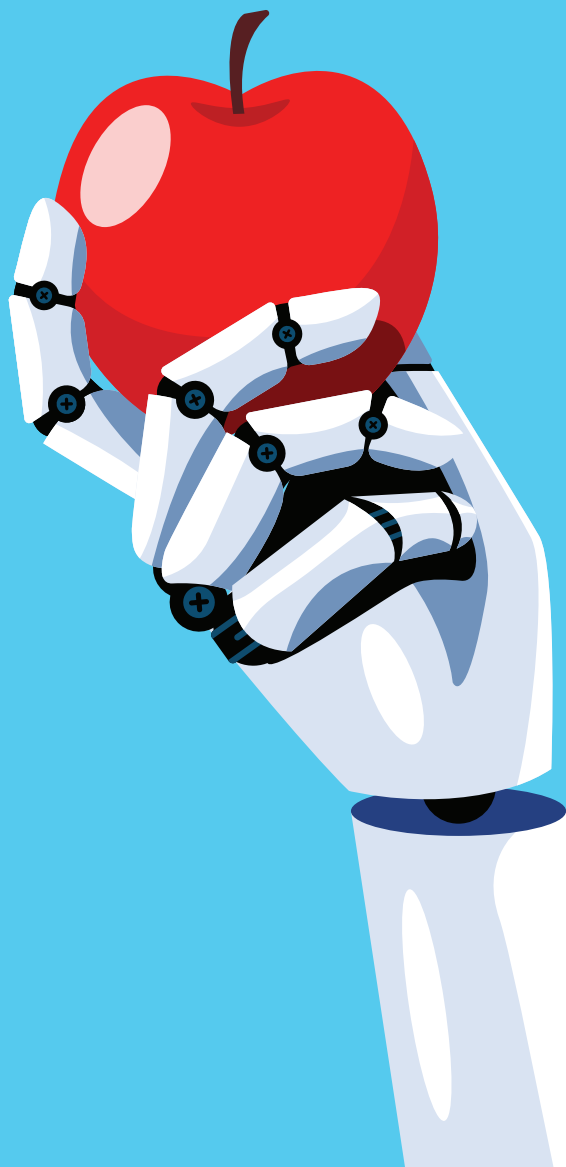
**39%**  
of all employees

**30%**  
of faculty

**49%**  
of administration

\*Expressed as a full-time equivalent (FTE) as of November 1, 2024.





## Teaching Smarter With Artificial Intelligence

**MATC instructors are using the intuitive  
technology in their classrooms**

Looking at his recently graded test in electricity class, the student was shocked.

One of his answers was incorrectly marked wrong. It had to be, the student argued. The answer provided by his instructor didn't match what ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence platform, said.

"So I asked the student when exactly did ChatGPT attain its degree," said Levi Cook, an Electricity program instructor at MATC since 2014. "I have to admit, in the

beginning I looked down my nose at AI."

Cook soon had a revelation.

In the summer of 2024, he attended a professional development course. AI was a mere bullet point on one slide during the course, but it soon dominated discussion at the session, Cook recalled. He began to see how easy using AI could be, and, more important, how helpful it could be in his classroom.

Since then, Cook has used AI to help

develop lesson plans, quizzes, test reviews, rubrics, assessments and hand-on classroom activities. Now he's so proficient that he can use AI to devise a test review handout summarizing what he had taught during one unit while students take a break.

"My ignorance came from not knowing how to utilize the tool. I had had zero experience with AI," Cook said. "Now I use it as a virtual assistant. In the past it would take me between two and three hours to develop 20 questions, answers and the incorrect answers for a multiple-choice quiz. With AI, that takes me 15 minutes."

Cook is not alone. More MATC instructors are using AI in their classrooms, fully supported and encouraged by college administrators and state officials.

MATC President Anthony Cruz, Ed.D., has made incorporating AI one of his strategic goals. He wants the college to be a model when it comes to adopting AI technologies and data analytics. "AI can help foster a more vibrant and engaged community, and enhance the student and employee experience," Dr. Cruz said.

In July 2024, a session on the Wisconsin AI Workforce Action Plan was held at MATC. Created by Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers, the task force was appointed to adapt and equip a workforce capable of capitalizing on AI's benefits.

"We need to learn AI because our students are using it. It's not a choice whether we want to be engaged. We have to start working with it," said Center for Teaching Excellence Director Julie Ashlock, Ed.D.

The college held a session on AI at its annual MATC Day on October 15, 2024. There, Brian Kirsch, an instructor in the Information Technology department, used AI to create content for an eight-week truck driving course, along with quizzes and tests.

It took him about 30 seconds.

"You can do this with any subject. That's the power of AI," Kirsch told the crowd at the session. "These things can be time-consuming, and you can have AI do them."

While AI can build out a truck driving course, Cook and others pointed out you couldn't print it out, get into a truck and teach the course.

"AI still needs a human brain to function. If you use it right, no one will be losing their jobs," said Marlena Ward Dodds, lead faculty in the Business Pathway since 2023, at the MATC Day session. "We need to cross-reference what we get from AI. Don't take everything AI spits out as gospel. You still need to do due diligence."

Also at the MATC Day session, Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning program

instructor Doni Bartley, Ed.D., said he uses AI for certain, specific tasks. “Everyone likes shiny new tools, but you need to make sure they’re the right fit,” Dr. Bartley said. “AI helps you think outside the box. Use it as a starting point.”

By using AI, Cook said he has time to do more interactive, hands-on teaching, which engages students at a much higher level, especially in trade programs.

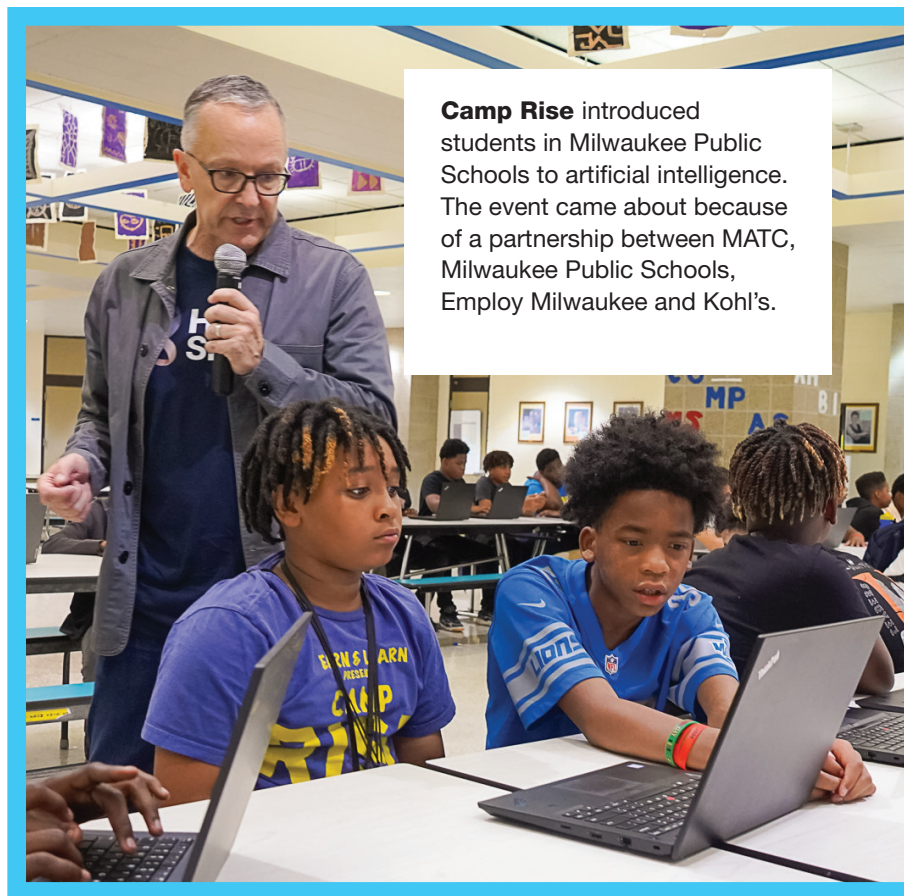
In MATC’s Automotive Technology – Comprehensive program, students are trained on TruVideo, a software application that incorporates AI in multipoint inspections, often the first step to any car repair.

TruVideo allows an automotive technician to send a video directly to customers that shows the findings of a multipoint inspection in non-technical language. The program eliminates the longtime paper inspection sheet given to customers that listed required service.

“I have learned that customers don’t have confidence in work because of a piece of paper, but rather because they see and understand the issues,” said Gregory Chavez, a student in the Automotive Technology – Comprehensive program.

Cook is now so comfortable with AI technology that he shared his expertise in November 2024 at the Wisconsin Technical College System’s annual Faculty Showcase.

“AI is not going away. You can dislike it, but you can’t ignore it,” Cook said. “I’m learning new things every day about refining the process. I don’t think I have even scratched the surface of what it can do.” ■



**Camp Rise** introduced students in Milwaukee Public Schools to artificial intelligence. The event came about because of a partnership between MATC, Milwaukee Public Schools, Employ Milwaukee and Kohl’s.

## MATC SPOTLIGHT

### MATC Expands Artificial Intelligence Program

When an emerging technology disrupts the workforce, MATC reacts by enhancing training programs to better prepare workers. With the advent of artificial intelligence, MATC introduced the IT Network Specialist (AI, Cloud and Virtualization) in the Fall 2024 semester.

Taught through the STEM Academic and Career Pathway, the two-year associate degree program is the ideal launching pad for a career in information technology. This program update helps students make use of artificial intelligence, incorporating what it is, the ethics of AI and how to use it as a tool, and sets students

up for success using and applying this cutting-edge technology in IT. Students earn an AI ethics digital badge as part of the degree.

The program is an excellent environment for students with existing degrees, adult learners, career changers and displaced workers to learn about AI.

And, because many MATC programs are related, students can earn the IT Networking and Infrastructure Administration technical diploma while working toward completion of the IT Network Specialist associate degree.

Employment opportunities in artificial intelligence are strong. The

Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates there will be 11.5 million data-related job openings by 2026. The demand for AI research scientists is expected to grow 19% by 2023, and the demand for robotics engineers is expected to grow 9% by 2023.

The projections clearly indicate the need for AI engineers will continue to grow in the future. The median salary for working on computers and in IT was approximately \$100,000. On average, AI research scientists earn \$121,393 annually, with experienced professionals earning upwards of \$200,000 annually.









# Lifelines of Support

**MATC delivers critical services, including tutoring, prepared meals and emergency financial assistance, that keep students in class and on the path to success**

With a host of services and programs, MATC has picked up thousands of students when they were down, helped them find their footing and placed them on the path to success.

Support services are critical to student success, and it is critical that institutions actively work to make students aware of these offerings, according to the Community College Enrollment Survey, a study conducted by the nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank New America. Students who didn't know about support services were more likely to stop going to class. Also, students who benefited from support services were more likely to stay in school.

"MATC is committed to finding innovative ways to serve students: food pantries, drop-in child care, dedicated advisors and retention coaches, access to free delivery of groceries, mental health services and emergency assistance grants," said MATC President Anthony Cruz, Ed.D. "We want all our students to succeed."

This is on top of millions of dollars in scholarships awarded each year through the MATC Foundation, the college's philanthropic partner in student success.

Here's a closer look at the many ways MATC supports students and impacts their success:



## Emergency Assistance Grants

After a long list of false starts and second thoughts, Aaliyah Brown finally found her future.

The Milwaukee native worked as a housekeeper and letter carrier after graduating from high school in 2015.

In 2017, she enrolled at MATC, where she discovered her passion for cooking in the Culinary Arts program.

"I had always cooked, but I really started doing it when I moved out on my own," she said. "I cook for my friends and family and make everything from scratch. Now they want me to cook all the time."

But while her career plans were on track, her personal finances were a mess. "I was really struggling," she said.

That's when she applied for aid from the Student Emergency Assistance Grant program, which is operated out of the college's

Student Resource Center and funded by the MATC Foundation. She used the funds to pay several overdue bills, she said.

"The grant helped me tremendously," said Brown, who graduated with an associate degree in May 2024. "It helped me get through a difficult time. I love MATC for all the help they give students."



## Free On-Campus Grocery Delivery

BreAnna Jones has always been super smart and super busy.

In the fall of 2024, Jones, who is planning to transfer to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and become an elementary school science teacher, was taking a full load of classes and working on campus. She was at MATC at least eight hours almost every weekday.

So she made a smart move by ordering her groceries online once a week and having them delivered to the Downtown Milwaukee Campus, where she can pick them up when she's ready.

"Life is busy," Jones said. "Being able to order my groceries and not have to make time to go to the store helps a lot. Being able to pick them up after my classes and take them home helps even more. It just makes life a great deal easier."

In the summer of 2024, MATC became one of the first colleges in the region to receive Kroger Delivery on campus free of charge.

"Our organizations have a shared belief that fresh food should be available and accessible to everyone," said Emilie Williamson, corporate affairs manager for Kroger-owned Pick 'n Save and Metro Market. "In collaboration with MATC, we can expand food access, meeting students where they are — on campus."

The service is available to all MATC students, faculty and staff, and is "ideal for students who don't live near a grocery store, who have children, which can make going to get groceries a challenge, and neurodivergent students who can find stores daunting," said Sara Cappaert, MATC's manager of scholarships.

The delivery service is just another reason why Jones believes she made the right decision when she chose MATC.

"There are an amazing amount of resources on campus," she said.

*Culinary Arts student Joey Naum packages meals made fresh for the Food Pantry, one of many support services helping MATC students succeed.*





### Drop-in Child Care

In July 2024, MATC became one of the first community colleges in the nation to open a free, drop-in, short-term childcare center.

Located at the Downtown Milwaukee Campus, Little Stormers Village is open to current and prospective MATC students. They can drop off children between the ages of 6 months and 10 years old for up to three hours to meet with tutors, advisors, retention coaches and financial aid administrators; take a placement test; or attend an orientation.

The center is staffed by at least two workers every day, said Tamara Allen, who supervises the operation of Little Stormers Village. The center has specific activities and areas for children of different ages. And the center has safety measures in place to ensure children are protected and can be picked up only by authorized parents or guardians, Allen said.

“Child care has been identified as a real gap for student parents,” Allen said. “Community college students usually have so many responsibilities: class, work, family. We’re trying to provide a little bit of help with that.”



### Food Pantries

Maria Dominguez always has a lot on her plate, but sometimes she doesn’t have a lot in the pantry.

While taking classes in the Medical Interpreter program, she was working part time and raising two children.

Money could be tight, so the food pantry at the Education Center at Walker’s Square was a godsend for her and her family.

“This is a real stress relief,” said Dominguez, who came to the United States from Mexico 20 years ago. “With the food pantry, this can help us save money for other things.”

MATC has food pantries at Walker’s Square and all four campus locations (Downtown Milwaukee, Mequon, Oak Creek, and West Allis) and Walker’s Square. The first pantry opened downtown in 2021 with openings at other college locations shortly thereafter.

“Food insecurity is a huge concern,” said Haley Weber, manager of the college’s Student Resource Center. “Anecdotally, students often speak about having to choose between food and gas.”

Feeding America supplies the pantries with essential foods, beverages and snacks, and the college orders almost 1,500 pounds of food each week, according to Weber.

“Students often come back weekly to supplement what they can’t afford, and many utilize the pantry to support their families,” Weber said.

In addition to essentials and snacks, the pantry at the Downtown Campus is stocked with meals prepared by Culinary Arts students in chef Paul Carrier’s Food Advocacy course. The meals are simple, comfort food intended to feed as many students as possible, and packaged in black carryout boxes.

“The people at the food pantry tell us these meals are the first thing to go,” said student Joey Naum. “It’s heartwarming to see how many people we help every day.”

“The people at the food pantry tell us these meals are the first thing to go. It’s heartwarming to see how many people we help every day.”

JOEY NAUM, Culinary Arts Student

With the food pantry at Walker’s Square, students won’t have to find time to travel to the downtown pantry, said Anallely Guadarrama, an MATC student studying to be a bilingual office assistant and who works part-time at Walker’s Square.

“Many students come only here and have asked us about groceries,” said Guadarrama, originally from Villa Guerrero in Mexico and the mother of two children. “Now we have something here for them. This will help so many so much.”



### Mental Health Wellness

One student simply could not sleep, lying awake for hours in the middle of the night, worrying about money. Another confided to a staff member he felt so stressed, so frustrated and so overwhelmed that he was considering suicide.

For students, faculty and staff, balancing work, classes and personal lives can take a toll. Aggravations, frustrations and darker thoughts can occur any time, day or night.



MATC offers students an array of services, including (from far left) Kroger Delivery of groceries at the Downtown Milwaukee Campus, a market-style food pantry, mental health counseling with the CAPS team, drop-in child care and tutoring.



The Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) team offers free and confidential counseling in person, over the phone or virtually, as well as resources and referrals to anyone experiencing life challenges and any kind of mental health concerns that are affecting their personal lives, academics and general well-being.

CAPS has licensed professional counselors who provide safe, non-judgmental spaces where students and employees can talk, share and process feelings, identify options, set goals and strengthen coping skills.

Quality mental health support services are essential at a technical college, where many students are older, might have children and could be returning to school after long pauses, said Nicole Wheatley, Ph.D., one of the college's licensed professional counselors.

While some students struggle with coursework or worry about their futures, others deal with issues like financial stress, housing issues, food insecurity, transportation access and domestic abuse, Dr. Wheatley said. When these challenges arise, counselors provide support 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"I see an amazing amount of resilience with our students. They have a strength," Dr. Wheatley said. "Hope is a driving force for so many people here. Many students are trying to create a better financial future for themselves and their families. But many times there can be stress and pressure that comes with that."

No problem and no issue are too small to talk to someone about, said Kathryn Cunningham, another of the college's counselors.

**"I see an amazing amount of resilience with our students. They have a strength."**

**DR. NICOLE WHEATLEY,**  
Licensed Professional Counselor

"If something is bothering you enough that it's interfering with your academic progress or other important aspects of your life, that's the time to get support and you deserve to get that support," Cunningham said. "Many times, early intervention prevents escalation."

"We're not here to tell people what to do. We're here to help them process everything and figure out the best thing for them to do," Dr. Wheatley said. "We're here to provide a safe, private place to get the help you need to do that."



## Academic Assistance

Suzanne Seilers got serious about college later in life.

As a teenager, she had an artistic soul, an eye for fashion and an ear for music, so she briefly attended a few theater courses at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee after graduating from Cedarburg High School in 1979.

"It wasn't for me, and I didn't do well," she admitted. "But back then, I didn't really have any support systems."

More than 40 years later when she decided to go back to school, she found the support she needed to succeed at MATC, where advisors guide students to graduation.

As an older student back in school after decades away, Seilers needed extra help. She worked with her Community and Human Services Academic and Career Pathway advisor, Maggie Ehlert, and spoke almost weekly to her retention coach, Kim Blackwell, to schedule classes, manage her financial aid and stay on track. With their help, Seilers earned an associate degree in the Human Service Associate program.

"I could always get a hold of Kim and Maggie," Seilers said. "I really needed these resources, especially after not being in school for all those years. Once I started, I decided I was going to finish. I wasn't going to quit."

Also benefiting from sound advice was Jonathan Perez, who wanted to fix cars for a living. He planned to enroll in the Automotive Technology program but switched his attention to the Diesel and Powertrain Servicing program. His advisor, Erik Riley, helped him every step of the way. Perez got into the program. A few days later, he received a \$1,000 scholarship through the MATC Foundation funded by All Within My Hands, an initiative started by the rock band Metallica to help students in "heavy metal" fields.

Perez graduated and quickly got a job in the field, Riley said.

"Jonathan never hesitated to connect with the Pathway when needed and never let challenges in the process derail him from reaching his goals," Riley recalled. "Thanks to his persistence, Jonathan was able to take full advantage of his educational experience." ■

**To donate to the MATC Foundation's Student Emergency Assistance Fund, visit [matc.edu/donate](https://matc.edu/donate).**





# Building for the Future

**MATC completed several major renovations throughout the Downtown Milwaukee Campus designed to create a sense of vibrancy, warmth and community for students**







A



B



B



C

### A Student Lounge

This window-lined space is where students can eat, meet, talk, study, relax and play games, including foosball and pool.

### B Cafeteria

Students dine in style in this modern, brightly lit area. The new commercial kitchen and food stations serve up pizza, global cuisine and sweet treats.

### C Convenience Store

Stocked with snacks to fuel studying on the go.









### **D Coffee Shop**

The aroma of freshly brewed coffee greets students and employees at the remodeled State Street Coffee Shop.

### **E Admissions Center**

Tucked in the Admissions Center is a one-stop shop of services that includes Financial Aid, the Registrar, Admissions and the Cashier.

### **F Grand Staircase**

The grand staircase connects all three floors of the Student Center.

### **G Kiosks**

Visitors can learn all about MATC at these interactive kiosks.



## **MATC SPOTLIGHT**



*Located between West McKinley and West Juneau avenues, the athletic facility will have a double-court gymnasium, a fitness center, locker rooms, concessions, meeting rooms and other amenities. Construction is expected to begin in the summer of 2025.*

### **New Athletic Training Facility in Deer District**

For nearly 20 years, Randy Casey has been trying to gain a home-court advantage.

As MATC's athletic director and men's head basketball coach, Casey has watched many of the college's sports teams play and practice at Alverno College, about 20 minutes away from MATC's Downtown Milwaukee Campus.

On January 22 Casey and MATC took a giant step toward having a sports home of their own: The college signed a lease agreement for a shared-use athletic training facility in the Deer District. The facility will be built across from Fiserv Forum, only blocks away from the Downtown Campus.

"We have been trying to make something like this happen for so long," said Casey, who started at the college in 2008. "I am really looking forward to that first game when we can step on to a floor that's all ours. This is a game changer."

The athletic facility will have a 28,000-square-foot double-court gymnasium that seats up to 1,000 spectators, a fitness center, locker rooms, concessions, meeting rooms and other amenities.

The entire project would encompass just over 340,000 square feet and include 269 market-rate apartments, 13,000 square feet of street-level, mixed-use commercial space and an outdoor plaza for public enjoyment, and a 290-space parking structure. The project is being co-developed and co-owned by the Milwaukee Bucks and developers J. Jeffers & Co.

Representatives from MATC, the City of Milwaukee, the Milwaukee Bucks and J. Jeffers & Co. gathered on January 22 in the Deer District to sign the lease agreement and celebrate the project, which is expected to break ground this summer. The new athletic facility could host its first games in the fall of 2026.

"This transformative space creates opportunities for our student-athletes to connect to their passion, and it enhances the college experience for all students," MATC President Anthony Cruz, Ed.D., said at the lease signing.

# A Huge Head Start

**Dual credit programs help students save money, experience college and begin their careers faster**

Dual credit made Imunique Triplett a singular sensation.

In the fall of 2021, Triplett graduated from MATC's Licensed Practical Nursing program six months before earning her diploma from Milwaukee Public Schools' Rufus King International High School. And despite being the youngest student in her nursing class, Triplett was chosen by her classmates to speak at the pinning ceremony.

Back then, graduating with a college diploma before receiving her high school diploma made her national news: Stories about her appeared in newspapers, magazines, and radio and television shows all across the country.

Today, Triplett is at Marquette University, where she expects to earn her bachelor's degree in registered nursing in May 2026. She plans to attain a master's degree in nursing and become a certified nurse midwife.

Triplett participated in M<sup>3</sup> (pronounced M-cubed) College Connections, a dual enrollment program supported through a collaboration between MATC, MPS and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She took nursing classes at MATC while in high school.

"I would do it all over again in a heartbeat. Once I discovered what I wanted to do, the nursing program aligned right with it," Triplett said in 2021. "It gave me the practical experience, the networking experience, the learning experience. The faculty and everyone at MATC were super supportive and provided inspiration.

"It was worth every tear I shed and every night I stayed up late studying," she said. "It has been a very special experience."

MATC's dual credit programs provide special educational experiences for thousands of students throughout the college district each year, said Josephine Gómez, Ed.D., director of high

school relations and transfers at MATC and the dean of community education and strategic engagement.

The number of students participating in MATC's dual credit programs, which include students spending the entire school day in college and students taking college-level courses at their home high schools, is growing between 8% and 10% per each year, Dr. Gómez said. Today, nearly 4,000 students participate.

Of the 80 high schools in the MATC District, 59 of them had at least one student in at least one dual credit class during the 2023-24 academic year, Dr. Gómez said.

"As the cost of college rises, students, parents and families are viewing these programs as a way of getting a great head start," she said.

MATC's staff of dual enrollment specialists closely monitor what programs and classes resonate most with students, Dr. Gómez said. "They know what schools want," she

said. "The great thing is with 180 programs there is something at MATC for everyone."

## An opportunity to excel

Instructors, students and high school administrators have high praise for MATC's various dual credit programs.

"Students like dual enrollment, and I think the parents like it even more," said Thomas P. Geil, a retired MATC math instructor who teaches college-level courses at Wauwatosa East and Wauwatosa West high schools. "They recognize that this opportunity is a really good one."

Geil has taught math classes in a half dozen high schools in the MATC District, including Franklin, Oak Creek, Port Washington and South Milwaukee. Although he retired as a full-time instructor

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**"As the cost of college rises, students, parents and families are viewing these programs as a way of getting a great head start."**

**DR. JOSEPHINE GÓMEZ**, Dean of Community Education & Strategic Engagement

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## MATC Dual Credit Programs

The college has an array of dual credit programs that give high school students a promising start to their college careers.

### ON CAMPUS

#### Dual Enrollment Academy

Throughout their senior year of high school, DEA students earn high school and college credits while receiving college-level training at MATC to begin careers in high-demand fields.

### Start College Now

Qualified high school juniors and seniors take college courses at MATC during the regular academic year. Credits earned can be applied toward a degree at MATC or many other colleges.



in May 2024 after 23 years, he teaches Calculus III and differential equations in the Wauwatosa schools.

“The instructors in those classes are careful to tell students that they are taking a college class, and I think the students like that,” Geil said. “And students that come to MATC for classes are getting college exposure. It’s a college experience, and they are college students.”

One of those students was Ayden Wucherer. His father was a firefighter for nearly two decades. Another relative protected and served as a police officer. Still another enlisted in the military.

As a junior at Homestead High School in Mequon, Wucherer didn’t want to wait to do his part. He enrolled in MATC’s Emergency Medical Technician program and spent nearly his entire senior year taking classes at MATC’s Mequon Campus. He received his technical diploma on May 19, 2024 — nearly three weeks before he got his high school diploma.

He started college classes in August 2023. “The campus is about five minutes away from my house, so it was very convenient,” he said. “At first, I thought it would feel a little weird taking college courses, but I discovered that I really liked them.”

Wucherer was the first Homestead student to participate in MATC’s Dual Enrollment Academy. He also hopes more high school students consider dual enrollment programs.

“I would much rather do something that would help me in my

career,” Wucherer said. “I, one hundred percent, made the right choice. I felt I was studying things that would have a real effect on what I wanted to do. I felt that it all mattered.”

Farther north at Ozaukee High School, Morgan Howard loved taking shop classes. Her interest in all things mechanical came from her father, who worked in several foundries and machine shops, and from her uncles, who fixed cars.

“Shop classes were always my favorite,” she said. “Eventually, I had taken every one the school offered.”

MATC gave her a chance to take more. During her senior year, Howard and two other Ozaukee seniors traveled to the Mequon Campus four days a week and learned welding. In May 2023, the students earned technical diplomas in welding from MATC on the same day they graduated from Ozaukee High School.

“You can’t go wrong with welding,” Howard said. “There’s a real variety in the type of welding you can do. Plus, you’re learning a skill you can get a job with.”

Andy Gremminger, a counselor at Ozaukee High School, said the school partners with various institutions in “start college now” programs, but MATC’s program is different.

“For us, the Dual Enrollment Academy at the Mequon Campus takes that kind of program to the next level,” Gremminger said. “It’s a hard thing to say no to, especially from a cost perspective. You walk out of high school with not only a high school diploma, but with a technical diploma as well.” ■



*Imunique Triplett is pursuing her bachelor's degree in nursing at Marquette University.*

### M<sup>3</sup> College Connections

This innovative dual enrollment program of MPS, MATC and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee allows eligible students to complete their high school graduation requirements while earning college credits from both MATC and UWM.

### OFF CAMPUS

#### Transcripted Credit

Courses are delivered at the high school, duplicating MATC competencies, curriculum, assessments and resources. Students earn dual credit but must receive a grade of C or better to receive MATC

credit. High school instructors are trained, certified and mentored by MATC faculty.

#### Contracted Courses

MATC instructors come to high schools and teach college courses.



## Dishing Out Assists

**Nigel Harvey's Cream Skills Basketball Association puts students on the right path to success**

*Alumnus Nigel Harvey teaches basketball players the rules of the game and the rules of life.*

Brionne Williams was on the brink.

He was a freshman at Milwaukee Public Schools' Vincent High School. He wasn't a great student, but he was going to class and trying. He wasn't hanging out with the best people, but he never was in any serious trouble.

A nudge here or there could have sent him either way — to graduation, college and success, or to truancy, crime and heaven only knows what.

In the summer of 2018, he joined the Cream Skills Basketball Association, a free, 11-week, co-ed summer basketball league.

Created in 2015 by MATC alumnus Nigel Harvey, the league works to help students aged 14-17 build character, develop life skills, foster entrepreneurship, and prevent violence through basketball and education.

While Williams and other players honed their basketball skills, they developed life skills in

classes on financial literacy, health, fitness and entrepreneurship.

It was just what Williams needed.

"Brionne was a kid who was rough around the edges," Harvey recalled. "As he got involved with the league, I saw him mature. He stopped hanging out with the wrong people."

Williams graduated from Vincent High School in the spring of 2021 and enrolled in MATC where he played basketball for two seasons. During the 2022-23 season, he averaged 8.1 points and 3.6 rebounds per game and helped the Stormers win the National Junior College Athletic Association Division II national championship.

He graduated in May 2024 with an Associate of Arts degree and continued his education and basketball career at Avila University in Kansas City, Missouri.



## The secret sauce

Since 2016, Harvey has shepherded more than 800 students, including Williams, through Cream Skills. He is showing no signs of slowing down as he prepares for the league's ninth season this summer.

"This is where I fit in," said Harvey, who these days sports a long wispy beard streaked with silver. "This is where I should be. I make this something I love to do, so I love doing it. If you make it a treat, it's not a punishment."

Harvey believes the success of the league, what he calls the "secret sauce," comes from the high level of encouragement and education the students receive during the two summer months.

"To me, it's the amount of engagement," he said. "When kids see you're involved and they see you are invested in this, they stay."

Harvey also has a wonderful knack for convincing people to sponsor teams, officiate games and coach players. He convinced his son, a student in MATC's Architectural Technology program, to help him.

"I'm a good salesman," the elder Harvey said with a laugh. "I can sell myself very well, especially if I have a good idea. It's very convincing when you have the proof in the pudding. Also, people see me involved and hear about what we are doing through word of mouth."

## Solutions on the court

Harvey grew up in Pittsburgh and moved to Milwaukee. In 2008, Harvey's best friend was killed after playing basketball with some neighborhood youngsters. "That really struck my heart," Harvey, who is African American, said in 2016. "It really made me look for solutions. I was tired of the same situation, the same scenario — the Black-on-Black violence was getting to me."

He started a youth league in West Allis that lasted a few years. He realized that he needed support from the community and businesses to make his idea thrive.

At the same time, he earned an associate degree in Human Services from MATC in 2012. At the college he met Armen Hadjinian, coordinator and instructor in the Entrepreneurship program, and pitched his idea about a youth basketball league.

"I never thought it would go anywhere, and I figured I would never see him again," Hadjinian said. "A month later he's taking me to meet some local businesses.

"So many people talk about doing things like this, but Nigel has been able to pull it off. He gets so many people to volunteer their time and that has meant a lot of continuity and consistency for the program," said Hadjinian, who serves as vice president and co-treasurer on the Cream Skills leadership team.

The league started in June 2016. Classes were held at MATC and games were played at the COA Youth Center. In the summer of 2024, the games moved to MATC's gymnasium and students started taking classes in MATC's STEM Educational Center on the Downtown Milwaukee Campus.

"The students see a lot of hands-on things; they see a lot of skill at work," Harvey said. "For many of them, this is the first time at a college and they begin to see there is a light of opportunity at the end of a tunnel."

Getting students into the building is important, Hadjinian added, so they can familiarize themselves with the surroundings.

Harvey has so far resisted the temptation to expand the program; he wants to perfect it first. "I use what's working, and then I double down," he said. "But we need more time to polish our product."

He wants to expand programming to operate during the school year, create a league for middle school students, start a girls-only league and perhaps purchase a facility, Harvey said.

Whatever the program becomes, Harvey will always want to help students succeed.

"Bad things happen in this world. We have lost three students in this program to gun violence, but I like to say that we have saved more than 800," he said. "When I see students graduate high school, when I see them mature, when I see them go to college, that outweighs everything else." ■

**Cream Skills Basketball Association is always seeking players, volunteers and support. For more information, visit [creamskillsinc.org](https://creamskillsinc.org).**



*Over the summer, Cream Skills players learn about college life and financial literacy (top) in the STEM Educational Center. Basketball skills are learned in the college's gymnasium.*



## The ‘It’ Factor

**Interior design alumna Aga Artka creates stunning spaces where people live, work and succeed**

Growing up in a small town in southern Poland, Aga Artka’s home crackled with creativity.

Her mother loved to dance and constantly rearranged the furniture. Her father was a musician. Outside in her sandbox, Artka carved out walls, rooms and living spaces, then preserved them by barring anyone else from playing in the box.

“There was a freedom to creatively express myself,” she recalled.

Artka turned her creativity into a career thanks to the lessons she learned in MATC’s Interior Design associate degree program. For more than 20 years, Artka has shaped and molded living and

working places for a variety of clients as an award-winning interior designer at Aga Artka Interior Design LLC.

Last summer Artka was named one of two Interior Designers of the Year by The Daily Reporter, which covers the construction and development industries in Wisconsin. She was honored at the Women in Construction Awards ceremony in August 2024.

“Some people have the ‘it’ factor and Aga is one of them,” said Jenny Rebholz, principal at PushPoint Marketing in Milwaukee and a former Interior Design instructor at MATC. “She has passion and drive and is so committed.”

*Photos courtesy of Aga Artka*



## Shaping her world

Artka's path to MATC is a story about passion, drive and commitment. It began with her childhood goal to move to the United States. When she graduated high school, an ad for a study abroad program presented the perfect opportunity. She signed up and a few months later was living with a host family in West Bend, Wisconsin. As she explored education options in the area, a critical thinking class sparked her desire to make a greater impact on people and create a sense of place.

"I realized there is a bigger world out there, and we all have the power to make a difference and make things better," she said. "I discovered that you could shape the world you want to live in."

Yearning to study something creative, she moved to Milwaukee in 2003 and began taking courses at MATC. The college offered flexibility — classes at night while she worked full time during the day — and was affordable. That was especially important to an international student who could not access financial aid.

In her MATC classes, she learned computer-aided design drawing, commercial and residential planning, design fundamentals, the interrelation of color, lighting and materials. These classes taught her the importance of research, thoughtful planning and precise calculations — critical skills that combined with her creativity provided a solid foundation for any career path.

"MATC taught me the basics that I needed to know," she said. "Everyone

network and connect with others, she said.

Rebholz became her favorite instructor, and Artka enrolled in every course Rebholz taught.

"Aga was one of those students who paid close attention. She was always engaged," Rebholz said. "Her work was always thoughtful and creative. I was always excited to have her in class because she raised the bar. When students are really with you, it's so much fun to teach."

After earning her degree at MATC, Artka worked at Cranston, a home decor store in Milwaukee's Third Ward. In 2006, she became an interior designer at Brookdale Senior Living in West Allis. When her position was eliminated in the recession of 2008 and 2009, she took a chance and started her business.

"I haven't looked back," she said.

## More than four walls

Since then she has helped design senior living and healthcare facilities, hospitality operations, multifamily residential buildings and office environments.

"Most of our time is spent indoors, so aesthetics and functionality have to work in unison," she said. "One can't exist without the other and be successful. Our job as designers is to understand the client and the project, and translate their needs to the best solution that balances both. What we do is so much more than four walls."

Artka's proudest moment came in 2020 when she worked on the Badger State Lofts, a former tannery complex converted into a residential community in downtown Sheboygan. The project revitalized abandoned warehouse buildings while maintaining and respecting their historical value, she added.

Her efforts earned her a Gold Design Excellence Award from the Wisconsin chapter of the American Society of Interior Design. "What I do is one piece of the puzzle," she said. "Collaboration is key. It is absolute magic when

the right team shares the vision and talent to turn an idea into reality."

In 2016, she brought another idea to life. She and Rebholz wrote a book about developing a personal brand called "The Brand of You: The Ultimate Guide for an Interior Designer's Career Journey." The book, which details their personal

and professional journeys, was conceived to help students and young professionals find success and confidence in the field of interior design, Artka said.

The book is now in its third update, with a new forward written by Molly Philaja, another instructor in the college's Interior Design program, who has found the book to be a great classroom resource.

Along with running her own business, book writing, mentoring and speaking, Artka has served on MATC's interior design advisory committee since January 2009, providing faculty and staff with



*At MATC, alumna Aga Artka learned critical skills that gave her a solid foundation in business, allowing her creativity to flourish.*

information and insight to ensure the program remains viable and competitive.

She lives in Cudahy with her husband, her 8-year-old child and their dog. She loves to travel, often returning to Poland, where her parents still live, and enjoys the serenity of nature. "Lately, I'm drawn to water — rivers, lakes. They seem to clear my head," she said.

Artka is also pondering her next life move. She serves on the Cudahy Design Review Board and has applied for the Marquette University's Associates in Commercial Real Estate program, which promotes diversity, equity and inclusion within the commercial real estate industry.

"The beauty of a design education is that it provides a foundation to thinking creatively and solving problems no matter the challenge," she said. "I'm thinking about how my creativity and skills can be applied to the wider community."

"Whatever she wants to do, she'll make it happen," Rebholz said. "Aga has the talent to take everything she does to a higher level." ■

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**"MATC taught me the basics that I needed to know. Everyone develops their own process. The tools ... the customers ... the setting might be different, but the basics are the same for everyone."**

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**AGA ARTKA, Interior Designer**

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develops their own process. The tools you use might be different, the customers might be different, the setting might be different, but the basics are the same for everyone."

The college also taught her about resourcefulness, how to solve problems quickly and effectively, and how to



## On the Same Frequency

**Bela Riveros, the first recipient of a scholarship honoring longtime Milwaukee PBS engineer Ron Pellegrini, is his kindred spirit**

Ron Pellegrini would have loved Bela Riveros.

Pellegrini, a highly respected engineer at Milwaukee PBS, never met Riveros, a student in MATC's Television and Video Production program.

But they would have been kindred spirits, both quiet, unassuming souls endlessly fascinated by the connections between technology and creativity.

As a child, the story goes, Pellegrini dismantled his sister's Easy-Bake Oven to determine how it worked. He replaced the incandescent light bulbs that served as the oven's heat source with higher wattage bulbs. (The oven promptly melted.) As a student at Milwaukee Public Schools' Milwaukee High School of the Arts, Riveros built her own computer.

So it's apt that Riveros is the first recipient of the Ron Pellegrini Scholarship, started by the engineer's family after his death in September 2023 at 68.

The scholarship is for students in the Television and Video Production program who have completed their first year. "The family wanted to see the most fervent students be recognized, the students who are as passionate about the profession as Ron was," said Kevin Pulz, department chair of the Television and Video Production and Digital Content Creation programs at MATC.

And Riveros, who grew up in Milwaukee, shares Pellegrini's commitment and dedication, according to her instructors.

"Bela is very reserved, which caught me off guard initially, but behind that demeanor is an incredibly competent, intelligent and



technically adept person,” said instructor Daniel Brown. “Ron was also a quiet force, exceptional in his knowledge and skills, and a kind, well-liked person on the team.

“Bela is an excellent example of continuing that presence and excellence into her future, honoring the memory of Ron,” Brown added.

### A legacy of excellence

Easily the most technically astute engineer on the Milwaukee PBS staff, Pellegrini’s acumen of cameras, lenses, shading and radio frequency coordination for live production was unrivaled, Pulz said.

“He was so respected throughout the industry,” Pulz said. “When he signed on with us, it was a pretty big coup. He also had a real zeal to help students and was always willing to share his expertise in and out of the classroom. When Ron died, we lost a great ally in taking students to the next level.

“The instructional supervision provided by our inclusion in the Milwaukee PBS facility and family is unique and quite special,” Pulz added. “Ron and all employees here have been integral in the professional and academic development of our students.”

Pulz and Robert Holland, donor and alumni relations coordinator at the MATC Foundation, the philanthropic partner of the college, worked with the Pellegrini family to establish the scholarship, which awards \$500 each semester.

### The right place

“Bela loves the engineering side of production and that has elated the Pellegrini family,” Pulz said.

Riveros grew up in Milwaukee and considered a career in photography while at Milwaukee High School of the Arts. Her older sister was an artist and attended the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, so Riveros, an avid gamer, took the opposite path and pursued engineering after she graduated in 2018.

She studied computer engineering at Milwaukee School of Engineering for two years before the COVID-19 pandemic sent her back home. “I’m a very hands-on learner, and online courses didn’t work for me,” she said.

Riveros watched a lot of television during the pandemic and became keenly interested in the inner workings of the medium. “I knew I wanted to do something that was visual, creative and technical,” she said.

She enrolled at MATC in the fall of 2023. “I decided I would try it, then reassess my path if I had to,” she said. “But I ended up loving it.”

She said she enjoys the technical aspects of producing shows and thrives in the fraught environment of live television. “It can be stressful; it can be tough,” she said. “You have to really like it to do it. But I knew after a month that I was in the right place.”

Along with her technical prowess, Riveros has become a classroom leader, said Lauren Hill, another television and video instructor.

“I told the students in one class that they were in charge of doing rehearsal for the show of that day, and Bela took full charge,” Hill recalled. “It’s been incredible watching her grow.”

Riveros made the deans’ list in the Fall 2023 semester. Last summer, she worked as a studio aide at Milwaukee PBS and as a producer at “Live at the Lakefront,” a weekly live stream of band concerts at Milwaukee’s Discovery World museum.

She started her second year in the fall of 2024. She produced the popular Milwaukee PBS holiday show “Letters from Santa” and received a \$1,000 scholarship funded by the League of United

Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Council 333, the Milwaukee Brewers Community Foundation and the MATC Foundation.

Getting the LULAC scholarship was nice, but receiving the first Pellegrini scholarship was an honor, she said.

“This scholarship is special,” Riveros said. “Ron was someone everyone liked, and all his family and friends have great memories of him. I was very touched to get this. With this, I felt accepted into the TV family.” ■



*Bela Riveros (opposite) shares a fascination with technology and creativity with Ron Pellegrini (left), the late Milwaukee PBS engineer who inspired many television and video students with his expertise and passion for the craft (top and center).*





## HSED: A Love Story

**An immigrant couple from Myanmar, Paul Sum and Lian Nu worked together to get their high school equivalency diplomas from MATC**

Love, the good book says, is patient and kind. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love, along with the rewarding, productive programs and committed instructors found at MATC, helped Paul Sum and Lian Nu, a married couple who came to the United States from Malaysia in 2014, vastly improve their English and, more importantly, earn their High School Equivalency Diplomas (HSED).

The couple, who took English classes at the same time, demonstrated competency in a variety of subjects in the college's HSED 5.09 program and received their diplomas in 2023.

"Having a high school diploma is key to everything for us," said Lian, mother to the couple's three children. "You can get a job, you

can go to college and you can make a better future."

Both Paul and Lian (right) were born in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma. They grew up in the same town in Chin State, a mountainous and sparsely populated area in western Myanmar. They belong to an ethnic group called Zomi, who often faced discrimination and persecution, according to the United Nations.

The couple attended the same church, and their families knew each other. They married in 2009 but quickly left Myanmar because of the strife and turmoil affecting the country.

In neighboring Malaysia, Paul worked while Lian attended college for a year before staying at home to raise their children. In 2014, Lutheran Social Services found them a place in the



United States: Milwaukee. “They told us we were going somewhere very cold,” Lian said.

They arrived in the United States on June 18, 2014, knowing hardly anyone. They struggled to find work and to get around. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the entire family caught the virus.

“We had no car. We didn’t speak much English,” Paul said. “It was a very difficult life.”

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“We almost gave up so many times, but my husband encouraged me, and I encouraged him. He kept reminding me that we needed to fight for this.”

LIAN NU, HSED Student

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The couple also discovered that nearly every job in the United States required a high school diploma. Without proof of completing high school in Myanmar, the couple decided to go back to school and get an American high school degree.

They read online about MATC and had several friends tell them about the college. They began attending English as a second language classes and then started the HSED 5.09 program, a competency-based option designed to be completed in one to two semesters. Students in the 5.09 program must demonstrate mastery of competencies identified by the Wisconsin Technical College System in communication, social studies, science, math, health, civics and employability.

Earning a high school equivalency diploma can help individuals improve their chances to find work, increase earnings and pursue

additional education, said Holly Thielen, MATC’s 5.09 HSED program coordinator.

For Paul and Lian, the path was even thornier because they were strengthening their English at the same time. “They were essentially enrolled in two programs,” Thielen said. “And that is not easy.”

While taking classes, Paul found work at the Amazon Fulfillment Center in Oak Creek, and Lian cared for the couple’s three children, who were 13, 12 and 8 at the time. The days were long, but they wanted to improve their lives.

“We almost gave up so many times,” Lian said. “But my husband encouraged me, and I encouraged him. He kept reminding me that we needed to fight for this.”

The couple praised their ESL instructor, Tammy Ginster, for her patience and encouragement. “She never tired of teaching us,” Lian said. “Many times my body was in class, but my mind was elsewhere, thinking about cooking, cleaning. She helped us focus.”

“Their perseverance has been inspirational,” Ginster said. “They have been juggling English classes along with a busy family life, work responsibilities, and church and community involvement. It has not been easy for them, and even when they felt discouraged, they always seemed to find a way to move forward with positivity. It has been my pleasure and good fortune to have had the opportunity to work with such lovely and inspiring people.”

After getting his diploma, Paul enrolled in MATC’s Audio Production program. He plans to earn his associate degree in the spring of 2026 and work as a sound engineer. Lian is caring for the couple’s three children.

“We are so, so proud to have finally made it,” Paul said in 2023. “Without a high school diploma it is hard to get a job anywhere in America. As immigrant parents, we are the example for our children. We want to encourage them and show them our efforts.” ■



Paul Sum and Lian Nu proudly show off their HSED diplomas (opposite). The couple studied together and received a lot of support from MATC on their journey to high school completion.



## MESSAGE FROM THE Foundation Board President and Executive Director

As we reflect on the 2023-24 fiscal year, we are inspired by the MATC Foundation's transformative impact, made possible through your unwavering support.

This year, the Foundation surpassed \$6 million in donations received for scholarships and student support programs. This achievement represents more than just numbers — it signifies lives transformed, barriers removed and career pathways created for thousands of students. Thank you!

This past year was also marked by significant change as we bid farewell to Dr. Vicki J. Martin, whose leadership as MATC's president over the past decade laid a strong foundation for the future. Under her guidance, initiatives like Wisconsin's first free-tuition Promise program, the full-ride Checota and Froedtert Hospital scholarships flourished, empowering students to achieve their educational and career aspirations as they join the thousands of MATC alumni who power our regional workforce.

In July 2024, we warmly welcomed MATC's 11th president, Dr. Anthony Cruz, whose vast experience and commitment to educational equity is already building upon this momentum. Dr. Cruz brings a collaborative vision for advancing public-private partnerships, reducing the skills gap and ensuring every student has the opportunity to succeed.

In partnership with Dr. Cruz, the Foundation will focus its strategies to align with our newly refined vision: a prosperous region built on expansive access to education and economic opportunities.



Laura Bray and Chantel Byrd

That vision is possible because we have momentum on which to build. Reflecting on the past decade, dramatic increases in donations have fueled staggering growth in scholarships awarded. In 2014-15, the Foundation awarded just \$338,000 in scholarships. In 2023-24, that total exceeded \$5 million — a nearly fifteenfold increase that underscores the power of community support and strategic investment. This remarkable achievement highlights your generosity and the potential for an extraordinary future.

Together, we will continue to redefine what is possible. Whether through scholarships, new programs like the Supplies for Success and Student Parent Scholarship Funds, or emergency grants, your support nurtures dreams and strengthens our community.

Thank you for being part of this remarkable journey. As we look to the future, we remain steadfast in our commitment to transforming lives, industry and community.

With gratitude,

**Chantel Byrd**  
Board President  
MATC Foundation Inc.

**Laura M. Bray**  
Executive Director,  
MATC Foundation Inc.,  
and Vice President, College  
Advancement and External  
Communications, MATC



# MATC Foundation Inc.

## Financial Statements

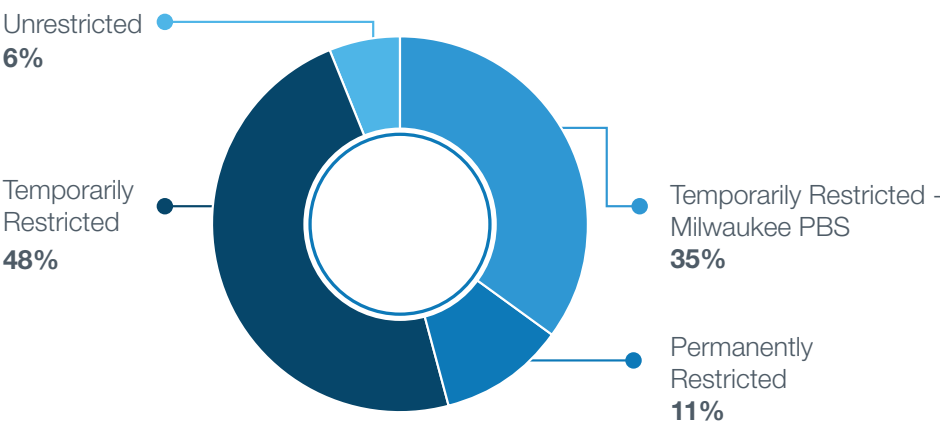
### 2023-24 Revenue

Revenue Type	Amount (in Thousands)
Milwaukee PBS	\$ 7,431
Student Success - Programs	\$ 4,452
Investments - Net Gain (Loss)	\$ 3,644
Scholarships	\$ 2,534
In Kind	\$ 554
Emergency Student Assistance	\$ 96
Other	\$ 429
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 19,140</b>

### 2023-24 Expenses

Expense Type	Amount (in Thousands)
Milwaukee PBS	\$ 7,098
Scholarships	\$ 4,345
Management and General	\$ 492
Student Success - Programs	\$ 1,457
Fundraising	\$ 391
Program Administration	\$ 241
Emergency Student Assistance	\$ 280
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 14,304</b>

**Net Assets \$42,509,872**  
as of June 30, 2024



# New Faces at the MATC Foundation

We are grateful to Milwaukee-area leaders who joined the MATC Foundation Inc. in 2024

## MATC Foundation Board of Directors



### Danielle Bergner

*Attorney, Hall Render and MATC Alumna*

Danielle Bergner is a shareholder at Hall Render, the nation's largest law firm specializing in healthcare. Her career is underscored by a passion for leveraging law as a catalyst for community development and

economic growth. With degrees from MATC, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Marquette University Law School, Bergner's expertise spans real estate law, economic development and nonprofit development. She is nationally recognized in her field, listed in Best Lawyers in America and Chambers USA, and has been honored as a Milwaukee Business Journal 40 Under 40 and a Woman of Influence.



### Edgar Mayorga

*Chief Financial Officer, Global Security Products, Johnson Controls*

Edgar Mayorga holds a Global Master in Business Administration from Thunderbird School of Global Management. As a finance and accounting leader with nearly two decades of expertise in directing and

enhancing organizational financial strategies, Mayorga currently serves as the CFO and executive finance director for Johnson Controls' Global Security Products business unit. In this role, he drives revenue growth, profitability and operational efficiency initiatives. Mayorga's role involves overseeing diverse functions including commercial finance, manufacturing finance, controllership, and financial planning and analysis.



### Troy Dennhof

*Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer for Regions and Markets, Advocate Health*

Based in Milwaukee, Troy Dennhof leads human resources strategy and oversees the business partner, talent acquisition, employee relations, and employee health and safety teams

for Advocate Health, an integrated healthcare provider in Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, North Carolina, South Carolina and Wisconsin. With over 25 years in human resources leadership across healthcare, consumer products and durable goods industries, Dennhof is recognized for his focus on strategic talent development and employee engagement.



### Preston J. McGlory

*Vice President of Global Tax, Molson Coors Beverage Company*

Preston J. McGlory brings over 25 years of expertise in finance, focusing on complex tax, treasury and financial reporting. He oversees a team of 35 tax professionals across five countries, managing tax compliance, financial

reporting, planning and policy shaping. McGlory completed Deloitte's board-readiness program "Making Accounting Diverse and Equitable" in 2024 and has mentored over 30 finance professionals throughout his career. McGlory is an alumnus of Morehouse College, the University of Texas Law School and Georgetown Law.



### Lori Malett

*President Hatch Staffing Services*

Lori Malett is the president of Hatch Staffing Services, a woman-owned boutique recruitment firm in Wisconsin. She has over 25 years of experience in driving sales, opening new markets, creating world-class programs and ensuring customer satisfaction. A

graduate of Marquette University, she holds the credentials of Certified Search Consultant and Certified Personnel Consultant from the American Staffing Association. Malett has served on the boards of the Wisconsin Association of Staffing Services and ArtWorks for Milwaukee. She currently serves on the board of the Wisconsin Policy Forum.



### Rajesh "Raj" Namboothiry

*Senior Vice President and Head of Manpower U.S., Manpower Group*

Raj Namboothiry brings over 14 years of diverse experience within ManpowerGroup to his current role. His journey began in 2007 in global finance, where he honed his analytical and strategic acumen

before transitioning into pivotal roles in sales operations and delivery transformation. Namboothiry is instrumental in enhancing sales operations and spearheading strategic initiatives that accelerate revenue and market penetration globally. Namboothiry is an alumnus of the University of Mumbai, India, and Concordia University.



# 2024-25 MATC Foundation Board of Directors

*\*Indicates new board members in fiscal year 2024-25*

## PRESIDENT

Chantel Byrd - Vice President of Shared Services, Veolia

## VICE PRESIDENT

Dave Megna - Vice President Wisconsin Field Operations, WEC Energy Group, MATC Alumnus

## TREASURER

Matthew "Matt" Partridge - Vice President of Finance, Froedtert Health South Region

## SECRETARY

Julianna "Julie" Ebert - Retired Partner, Quarles and Brady LLP

## DIRECTORS

Jamie Berger - Owner, The Box MKE

Danielle Bergner\* - Shareholder, Hall Render, MATC Alumna

Jim Cosco - Vice President Global Quality, Harley-Davidson Motor Company

Troy Dennhof\* - Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer for Regions and Markets, Advocate Health

Viola "Vi" Hawkins - Community Leader, MATC Alumna

Jaime Hurtado - President and Founder, Insulation Technologies Inc. (INTEC)

Susan Lubar - Founder and former President, Growing Minds Inc.

Tracy Luber - Regional Economic Development Director, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

Lori Malett\* - President, Hatch Staffing Services

Edgar Mayorga\* - Chief Financial Officer, Global Security Products, Johnson Controls

Preston J. McGlory\* - Vice President of Global Tax, Molson Coors Beverage Company

Rajesh "Raj" Namboothiry\* - Senior Vice President, Manpower US

Emily R. Phillips - Senior Vice President and Financial Advisor, The Phillips Ristau Group, Baird

Timothy "Tim" Smith - Retired Managing Director, The Pfister Hotel and Saint Kate: The Arts Hotel (both Marcus Hotels & Resorts)

## EX-OFFICIO DIRECTOR

Dr. Anthony Cruz - President, Milwaukee Area Technical College

## MATC DISTRICT BOARD LIAISON

Eric L. Case - Head of Human Resources, The LiveWire Group Inc.

## HONORARY BOARD MEMBER

Eugene "Gene" A. Gilchrist, Ph.D. - Retired CEO, Stay Clean

## MATC FOUNDATION

### MISSION

As the college's philanthropic partner, the MATC Foundation builds donor relationships to facilitate private investments that remove barriers to education, accelerate careers and deliver skilled talent to the Milwaukee area.

The Foundation also serves as the financial steward of private donations to Milwaukee PBS, a viewer-supported service of MATC.

### VISION

A prosperous region built on expansive access to education and economic opportunities.

# Foundation Staff

## LAURA M. BRAY

Executive Director, MATC Foundation Vice President, College Advancement and External Communications, MATC

## DENISE TREUER

Executive Administrative Assistant, College Advancement and External Communications, MATC

## GINNY FINN

Chief Development Officer

## JASON FLANDERS

Director, Finance and Operations

## NAOMI POLLEK

Officer, Corporate and Employer Relations

## SARA VON HEMERT-DACHELET

Coordinator, Scholarship and Foundation Operations

## ROBERT (BOB) HOLLAND

Coordinator, Donor and Alumni Relations

## SIMONE SMITH

Coordinator, Donor Stewardship and Board Relations

# MATC Foundation

# Accelerating Impact

Through Student Scholarship and Emergency Assistance\*

With generous support from hundreds of donors,  
the MATC Foundation has impacted 13,000-plus students in a decade.

THANK YOU!



**\$13.8 M**

IN SCHOLARSHIPS  
AWARDED

**13,022**

STUDENTS  
SUPPORTED



**602%**

SURGE IN MATC FOUNDATION  
STUDENT SUPPORT\*\*



**\$1.4 M**

IN EMERGENCY  
ASSISTANCE

\* Between 2014-15 and 2023-24

\*\* Compares 2014-15 when 455 scholarships or grants were given with 2023-24 when 3,192 were awarded.



# Thank you to our donors

*As the college’s philanthropic partner, the MATC Foundation is grateful for the support of the following foundations, corporations and individuals.*

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*Individual donors whose gifts total \$50,000 or more over their lifetime of giving and corporations, foundations and organizations whose historical gifts total \$100,000 or more are provided permanent recognition as members of the MATC Foundation’s President’s Society. We are grateful for their generous support.*

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*We are extremely grateful to the following supporters of our MATC Foundation scholarship and program funds.*

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