



### SECOND CHANCES: PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT COLBY SCHULTZ OVERCOMES OBSTACLES TO RETURN TO MC

**“Whatever you are going through, Montgomery College can provide the resources for you to come back from it. The College is rapidly expanding resources each day and provides an image for us that makes me proud to be a Raptor.”**

— ATPA Student and Psychology Major Colby Schultz

Colby Schultz’ non-traditional journey to pursuing a college degree shows us that success is not a linear journey and asking for help can make all the difference.

Colby grew up in Syracuse, New York and took an interest in psychology from a young age: “I’ve always been emotionally invested in people.” His intrinsic desire to help others, as well as personal mental health experiences, led him to Montgomery College: “I realized I needed my education, and it was what I wanted. My mother is an immigrant from Germany and never had the opportunity to go to college. Among my siblings, I am the first one in my family to go to college.”

In 2018, Colby moved to Germantown, Maryland and enrolled at MC, with plans to begin that college journey toward his future career. However, a series of unprecedented and devastating incidents occurred, which threw him off course: “In 2019, I fell victim to fraud. This went on for two years, into the COVID pandemic. Then, in 2020, I suffered a major spinal injury at work. My whole plan was thrown off because of all these things. I was essentially forced to drop out of college.”

After leaving MC, Colby was hit with even more challenges: “In 2021, someone very close to me, like family, suffered a stroke, and then my mother was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. I couldn’t be with her because I was here in Maryland. It was so hard for me not to be there.”

Colby reflects on that difficult time: “Processing everything was difficult. I have struggled with my mental health my whole life, and for about 2 years between 2020 and 2022, I hid myself because I didn’t know how to handle all of this.”

My mother is an immigrant from Germany and never had the opportunity to go to college. Among my siblings, I am the first one in my family to go to college. I realized I needed my education, and it was what I wanted. I feel like I have a lot of wisdom and a story to tell. I want to use my experiences in a career I can grow.

Still, Colby re-enrolled at MC for the Fall 2022 semester, as he knew it was crucial to achieve his dream to be a mental health professional: “For some people, moving up in management in retail is their thing, but I didn’t want that. I feel like I have a lot of wisdom and a story to tell. I want to use my experiences in a career I can grow.” When Colby resumed classes, he also took another risk, one that can be incredibly scary for those experiencing trauma. He asked for help: “One thing I definitely learned from my injury is to reach out to people for help because there is always something that can be done. It’s too late to prevent my injury, but there are always people out there who care.”

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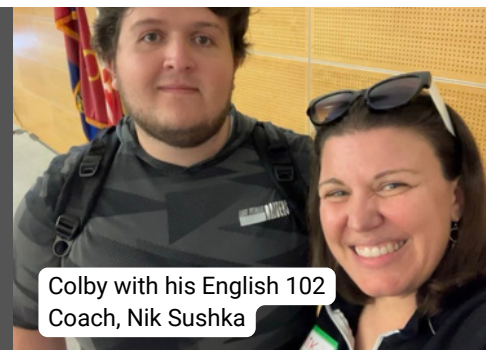
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ATPA Student Colby Schultz

During his first semester back at MC, Colby took English 102 with professor Teresa Lew and embedded academic coach (and ATPA director) Nik Sushka. Colby shares that during that time, MC helped him grow and deepen his connections to various resources: "I utilized Disability Support Services, I began talking to my professors more, and I found ATPA through Nik Sushka." After earning a B in English 102, Colby continued to be involved with ATPA, meeting regularly with his personal academic coach Gail Hoelscher: "I was all over the place. A lot of the past held me up, and it was a challenge for me to come back to school, but she helped reassure me to take that battle day by day. I initially felt awkward and uncomfortable, but she reminded me this is a process. She helped me grow as a person."

When I first came back in Fall 2022, I had to start from the beginning, but it was a motivational boost when I got the Dean's Award for Academics. That was a good feeling for me. I came back hard, with a vengeance to prove to myself that I was capable, and I needed to prove to myself that I could come to fight and conquer. I've earned A's and B's every semester since. No words can describe the amount of support provided from DSS, Financial Aid, my professors, and ATPA.



Colby shares that the connections he made to faculty and staff offered not only some mental encouragement but also concrete resources that have made a huge difference, including tutoring through the Learning Centers, additional embedded coaching support, and more. In particular, Colby notes that Disability Support Services has been especially helpful: "Any stigma you experience in high school when it comes to accommodations, it's not something you see here at MC. I've never experienced shame or difficulties in my communications with DSS; they have been so welcoming to me. I have a hidden disability that impacts my academics, so I had to work on my communication because not everyone knows when or if something is going on with me. Accommodations through DSS have been immensely helpful to me. They give me time to work with my professors and establish a timeline and a guideline for my work."

Today, Colby feels he has completely turned around his college experience; he tells us this turn-around was not a solo journey but instead a process that required vulnerability, patience, and community. He encourages other students to engage with the seemingly infinite resources and sources of support at Montgomery College. He's thankful for the circle of genuine support around him and wishes the same for fellow students: "Any questions you have about services, ask them! We have the SHaW Center, the TRIO Program, the transfer advisors, there's always something for someone here with what you need, whether that's food or money or whatever. Dr. Williams, the head of the college, he's assisted me personally. There are not enough words for me to describe how kind he is, connecting with students."

I see Colby more and more confident in his own innate academic abilities. I'm certain that his growth mindset will lead him to a deeper understanding of the human condition in his chosen field of psychology.

-Gail Hoelscher, Colby's Personal Academic Coach

Through ATPA, Colby's also connected with another non-traditional student of psychology, retired Montgomery County police officer Matt Frasca. Like Colby, Officer Frasca's personal and professional journey has taken many unexpected turns. Seeing first-hand the need for more mental health resources for emergency responders, Officer Frasca went back to school to earn a Master's Degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, then co-founded a local therapy practice serving adolescents, military service members, and first responders. Officer Frasca is now another person in Colby's circle of support, helping him continue to reach his dream of also working in the mental health field.

What's next for Colby? He's been accepted to the University of Maryland's limited enrollment psychology program through MTAP and hopes to complete his bachelor's degree in the next two years. After that, he plans to continue with graduate studies and become a counselor. Still, he's focusing on one goal at a time: "I have a lot of goals in mind, but what I've learned is that I gotta focus on the next chapter first, instead of moving too far ahead. I want to build my circle of people and connections through UMD and beyond. I believe that what's most important in college life is to build relationships."

meet your newsletter author,  
ATPA Coach Constance Roberts ✨

## Tattooing by Day... Tutoring by Night

My name is Constance Roberts, and I am the author, curator, editor and designer of the ATPA semesterly Newsletter! As an MC alum, student employee and now part-time faculty, MC has remained a part of my life for many years as I maintain strong mentorships with individuals I met as a student, and I continue to make connections with students and faculty to this day.

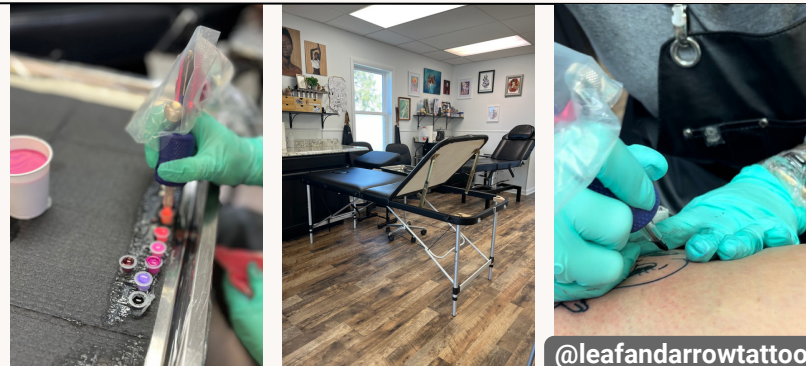
After leaving MC I graduated from UMBC and then completed my Masters in Social Work at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. Since then I have held many titles and explored many identities including: therapist, case manager, activist, academic advisor, and now academic coach x tattoo apprentice!

I have been an artist ever since I can remember, cultivating my skill and appreciation for well over 10 years, largely in "secret" and in no professional capacity. It was instilled in me to follow a "safe" and well-tread path of education, employment, career and retirement, and not stray from this, in order to achieve "success." However, I have chosen to believe there is no conflict between my identity as an educated professional and simultaneously as an artist, and I have made my pipe dream a reality by entering a tattoo apprenticeship under an experienced tattoo artist of 18+ years, Sarah Zeller.

I feel honored to enter the tattoo industry; this is an art form primarily passed down via coveted mentor/mentee relationships and placing art directly into the skin is a unique and special interaction between client and artist.



Posing with a work in progress piece in Procreate on Instagram @artfully\_constance



@leafandarrowtattoo

Supporting evening students at MC as a coach and writing tutor has given me the flexibility to spend my days in the tattoo studio, learning everything from proper hygiene techniques to practicing on pig skin to eventually putting my first tattoo into human skin!

Although professional convention may frown upon jumping from one thing to the next, I encourage students to dip their toes in everything, to explore all the textures of their personalities, to never deny themselves a curiosity, to never ignore a path that calls to them. The roles I've held exploring different jobs has given me so much perspective, and I found myself as an artist again thanks to this process. I believe I've found where I belong, and I wouldn't have gotten here if I'd remained in sameness.

My favorite subjects to draw are nature inspired, primarily wild animals in a tattooing style called "neotraditional." However, I am skilled in everything from realism to anime, to digital work in Apple's digital art program Procreate, to acrylic painting!

Please check out my art and follow my apprenticeship journey on Instagram: @artfully\_constance

I'm working my way up from small and simple black lined work to complex full color pieces! I'm also accepting bookings from prospective clients who contact me via Instagram.



# Fall 2023 Coaching Data Spotlight



The difference between this and other semesters is stark. Student achievement and engagement was noticeably better this semester, and I have to attribute this to [the ATPA Coach's] help and support. I cannot say enough good things about her.

ATPA Host Faculty



After my first exam for NURS126, I noticed I was failing and knew I had to do something different. I noticed a complete academic turnaround. I want to emphasize the advantages to every student of having a coach for every semester; it is a necessary tool for success.

ATPA Student



I have had a few students that have had significant progress in their studying strategies and quiz grades since the beginning of this semester. They look more confident about their ability to learn the course material, which makes me so happy when I talk to them.

ATPA Coach



4.4/5

Student satisfaction with quality of embedded academic coaching (Fall 2023)



1,991

Students participating in individualized support with an embedded coach across 241 course sections



5.3

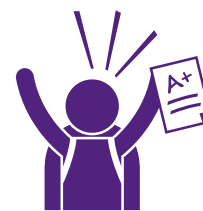
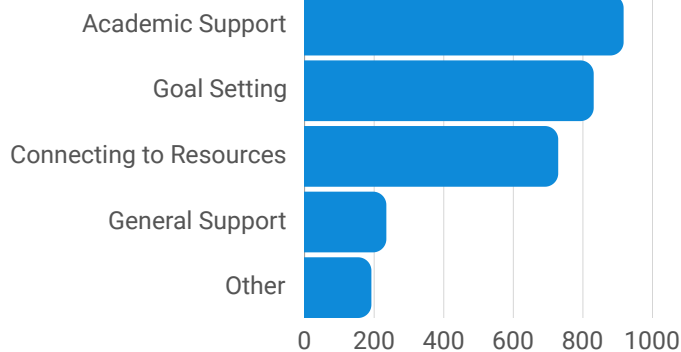
average number of embedded coaching sessions with students



1,408

Personal academic coaching sessions during the Fall 2023 semester

## Focus of Personal Academic Coaching Sessions



79.8%

Course pass rate for students working with a personal academic coach

ATPA represents at the

# *national mentoring summit*

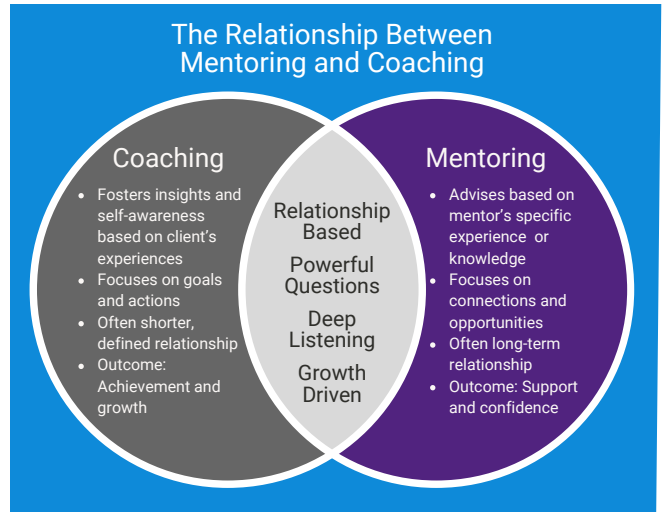


In January, ATPA representatives attended the National Mentoring Summit, hosted by MENTOR, a national organization that aims to drive equity and close the mentoring gap through quality mentoring relationships for young people. As a member of MENTOR Maryland | DC, the regional affiliate of MENTOR, ATPA seeks to build bridges and strengthen relationships between youth mentoring organizations and Montgomery College's academic coaching supports.



ATPA Student Assistant Andre Ferguson with his ATPA Coach, Daon McLarin Johnson

Daon is also the Program Support and Outreach Manager for MENTOR Maryland | DC



“Mentoring is telling someone how to do something from your own experiences. Coaching is asking questions to unlock their own answers. Coaching can open the door to mentoring.”

ATPA Coach Chang Suh on the relationship between mentoring and coaching at an AAPI Air Force Mentoring Panel



ATPA attends the MENTOR Maryland | DC lunch during the National Mentoring Summit in Washington, D.C.

# Humans of ATPA

UP CLOSE WITH ACADEMIC COACHES



## Eye-Catching Elegance: Lash Designer and AmeriCorps VISTA Hanan Sinnokrot

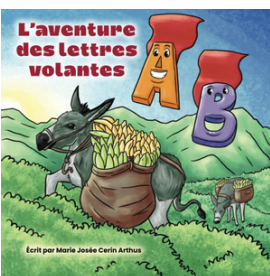
While MC alumni and ATPA Program Assistant Hanan Sinnokrot is doing a year of national service with AmeriCorps VISTA, she is also serving her community in another, unique way: she's the owner of Queenn H Palace in Rockville, where she's a lash designer specializing in lash extensions. Not only does she create customized and tailored lash sets that enhance her clients' natural features and eye shapes, she also supports beginner lash techs and prides herself on helping other lash artists succeed.

Hanan shares that she's found surprising connections between her social work degree, experiences as an entrepreneur, and goals to be a trained esthetician. Through creative videos, podcasts, and other social media, Hanan is promoting women entrepreneurs, as well as client health and satisfaction, using her social work skills to understand and meet people's needs in truly creative ways.



## Literary Playgrounds: Children's Author and ATPA Program Coordinator Marie Arthus

Published children's author Marie Arthus has a strong interest in ensuring children of color have access to educational materials that represent their cultures, history, and traditions. Marie attributes this interest to her experiences as an Haitian immigrant, time living in Argentina, and years spent working in foster care in Philadelphia as a social worker and mental health therapist.



Marie takes great joy in teaching her own children to be proud of their Haitian heritage. Inspired by her sons' time in Haiti, Marie created *L'aventure des Lettres Volantes*, a beautifully illustrated tale about the letters of the alphabet on an adventure across Haiti. In the future, Marie aims to bring more stories of Caribbean and African Heritage to life.



Marie reads *The Adventure of the Flying Letters* at the Happy Kids Daycare

## *Pitch Perfect: American Tenor and Coach Vincent L. Briley*

American tenor Vincent L. Briley, a native of Ohio, began his operatic career with Opera Columbus, appearing in productions of *Romeo et Juliet* and *Pagliacci*, *Turandot*. Career highlights include performing, recording, and touring with the Raise Chorale 21 Spirituals for the 21st Century and performing in Haydn's *The Seasons* and Mahler's *Symphony No. 2* with the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus. In addition to his background onstage, Vincent has served on the boards of various theaters and musical committees, most recently as the co-chair of the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus Operating Committee, which donated \$45,000 to The Cleveland Orchestra's Preservation Fund in 2020. Vincent continues to perform as a soloist, receiving invites from organizations nationwide!



## *A Dream Stage: Program Coordinator Andrea Herman at Carnegie Hall*

Andrea Herman is a lifelong musician, who loves the rehearsal process. Last May, a dream came true when Andrea performed on stage at Carnegie Hall in front of a full house: "We were 120 singers, soloists, and orchestra performing a "Requiem" on Memorial Day, a demanding, emotional, and beautiful experience."

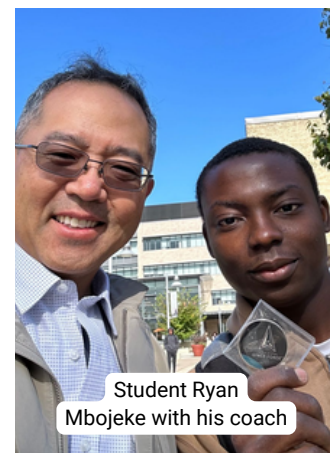


## *Classroom to Canine: Biology Professor and Host Faculty Kiersten Newtoff*

MC professor Kiersten Newtoff has volunteered with Guiding Eyes for the Blind since 2017, after meeting raisers at a Student Life puppy de-stress event. As a volunteer, Kiersten trains guide dogs to aid people who are visually impaired. During training, dogs join her on campus and in the classroom, becoming famous with MC students and colleagues alike. You may spot Professor Newtoff's current puppy-in-training, a yellow Labrador named Ives, around the Germantown campus!

## *Dostoevsky to Semper Supra: Space Force Guardian and Coach Chang Suh*

ATPA Coach Chang Suh spends his days as a Principal Strategist for Organizational Culture with the United States Space Force. At an AAPI Air Force Mentoring Panel last year, Coach Suh spoke about the ways cultural diversity is a vital component of deterrence and force readiness, as he reflected on the power of mentoring and coaching to help more people pursue opportunities to serve.



A public servant for over 20 years, Coach Suh's journey has included studying Slavic Literature and Languages at Columbia University, service at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, and positions in the Department of Defense.

# WHY STUDENTS

*say you should get a coach*



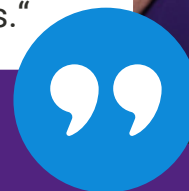
“My Academic Coach was amazing!!! I was so scared of taking this class, but she made learning biology so much fun and easy. She was **always respectful** and was also never afraid of sharing some things about herself to connect with students. She would always be encouraging, **a good listener**, and very clear in her explanations.”

“I passed the class! There was a moment when I doubted myself, but [my coach’s] belief in me fueled my own. [Her] **unwavering support** helped me succeed.”

“[Coach] helped me understand core concepts of statistics through basic interpretation and their fundamental use. His help **encouraged me** to show up to his meetings whenever I had the time to do so, and he installed **a welcoming and comfortable climate** during all his meetings.”

“I like that they were **flexible with the times** they could meet. It was extremely helpful to my schedule to have sessions later in the evenings or Saturday/Sunday mornings.”

“I am a part-time HVAC student, and I am working full time as a truck driver. I am constantly doing my best to balance my college classes and my work schedule. I enjoy being part of the Achieving the Promise Academy Program (ATPA), **an especially valuable resource** that helps students to achieve their educational goals.”



“He helped the class to **maintain positivity** in going the right way and **wanting the best for us.**”