

THE COUNTY COLLEGE OF MORRIS' AWARD-WINNING STUDENT NEWSPAPER

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Proposal considers reducing general education requirements for Associate of Arts degree

BY DANIELLE PECCI
Editor-in-Chief

A proposal by the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, which was published in the New Jersey Register Monday, Nov. 15, 2021, states, “the Secretary, upon recommendation of the New Jersey Council of County Colleges (NJCCC), and after review by the NJPC, proposes amendments at Subchapter

2 of the licensure rules to lower the minimum number of general education credits required for an associate in arts degree.” This proposal suggests a reduction in the current number of general education credits from 45 credits to 33 and could affect all two-year colleges in the state of New Jersey, including County College of Morris.

This proposal would only change the general education

requirements for an Associate of Arts degree. “So, there’s no change for Associate of Science, Associate of Applied Science, or Associate [of] Applied Arts degrees, or any certificate programs,” said Dr. John Marlin, vice president of academic affairs.

One probable reason this proposal was introduced is to help students complete their associate degree faster. Some stu-

dents spend over two years getting their degree.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 33 percent of first-time, full-time undergraduate students in fall 2016 at a two-year institution received their associate degree or certificate within roughly three years. Still, not all students can attend college full time. Earning a degree doesn’t always occur within the two-year time-

line or even a three-year one. Sometimes students have issues passing certain required Gen Ed classes, which may also impact their ability to graduate in two-years’ time.

“Maybe they’re an art student and they love art and they’re thriving in all their art classes, but this one . . . requirement is keeping them from obtaining their

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Why choose community college? Hear from students

BY BRENDAN NILSON
Contributor

Choosing to attend or transfer to a community college instead of a four-year university can be a tough decision for many high school graduates and current four-year university undergraduates. That difficult decision is manifested in how local students from County College of Morris, located in Randolph, New Jersey, have differing opinions.

“I chose the cheapest option, which was to stay home and be with my family,” said Gianni Rodriguez, a digital marketing major from Parsippany, New Jersey. “CCM has a great digital media curriculum, so it was an easy choice for me.” Rodriguez decided to attend community college after he graduated from Morristown High School in 2020. After finishing his second year at CCM, he plans to graduate with an associate degree in digital media technology this May.

Choosing to transfer from a four-year college to a community college can be beneficial for students, especially for out-of-state students such as Dylan Lombardi. After conducting personal research, Scranton University undergraduate Lombardi claimed he found that “CCM is in the top 1.8% of county universities in the United States.” Lombardi, a resident of Morristown, New Jersey chose to transfer from out-of-state



PHOTO BY STACY NETHERY

County College of Morris’s mascot Titus the Titan outside of the Student Community Center.

Scranton University to CCM because “it was way more cost effective . . . I don’t have to pay all that money” The estimated tuition and fees for out-of-state students at Scranton is \$48,415. Lombardi only pays \$9,720 after transferring to CCM.

According to Preston Cooper of *Forbes*, the tuition costs of four-year universities are rising at a lower rate. Cooper insists that this results from lower demand for higher education. Covid may

have played a part in this when the education of today’s students was held online. Without the typical high school experience, some students can find it difficult to have their major figured out after they graduate high school, or even a couple of years after.

For students who are unsure of what they want to study, some may say that they are wasting their money attending these expensive out-of-state four-year universities. CCM transfer student James

Bensen has similar feelings. “I really didn’t know what my plan was,” explained Bensen, who transferred to CCM for the spring semester after spending his fall semester and first year of college at Moravion University in Pennsylvania. “I was paying a decent amount of money . . . so I just had to come home and do a semester at county because it was affordable and the better option for me.” Moravion University’s out-of-state tuition for Bensen’s fall

semester was \$23,399. He will be saving approximately \$18,439 this spring semester by only having to pay roughly \$4,860.

As students who have experienced online learning for most of the past two years, Rodriguez, Lombardi and Bensen are all enjoying what may feel like the luxury of in person classes on campus this current spring semester. CCM offers a variety of online courses as well, both synchronous and asynchronous.

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Why students choose County College of Morris

BY ETHAN LEAVER

Contributor

Every year, students consider which college they should attend. Factors such as money, convenience, and education quality must be taken into consideration. It is not an easy choice, but these students decided on the County College of Morris to help them with their future endeavors.

CCM student Winter Hodnett had a variety of reasons for his decision. "I just think it is the perfect place for me right now," Winter said. "It is not a far drive. It is cheap and I get to see my friends too. I want to have as little student

debt as possible in the future and CCM is as affordable as colleges can be."

Hodnett is a broadcasting major and believes CCM represents a significant step forward in pursuing his career. "This college has great professors and being able to learn so much while saving money at the same time is the perfect scenario," Hodnett said. "I am glad I chose CCM, and I think I will look back on my time there fondly when I eventually graduate."

CCM student Lexi Sickley thought her choice of colleges was simple. "It did not seem like a hard decision to make," she said. "I wanted to get an education, but I

also wanted to spend time with my family and friends. So, I decided why not both? The commute is not long and obviously CCM is much cheaper than other colleges. I feel I would have grown homesick at a different college, but I have a sense of familiarity and comfort here that I would not have had somewhere else."

Sickley said she feels her time at CCM will only get better. "I just started my second semester here and I still have so much to learn and so many more friends to make," she said. "The teachers have been very thorough and understanding and I have really enjoyed the classes so far."

CCM student Joe Batelli missed familiar surroundings when he made his decision. "I went to Keuka College in New York for my first semester, and I did not realize how much I would miss home," Batelli said. "It was a completely different environment, and I just did not feel like home over there. It did not feel like the right fit, so I decided to transfer to CCM."

Batelli said he believes he made the right call in coming back to New Jersey. "I am feeling so much happier here and I am glad I decided to change my situation as soon as I could because I do not want my emotions to affect my

education," Batelli said. "CCM is the ideal place for me to continue my education and I have no regrets about changing my mind."

CCM may not be every student's first choice, but it is among the top community colleges in the nation whilst being one of the most affordable colleges in New Jersey. CCM has been ranked number one for associate degrees by Intelligent, in the top 1.8% of best community colleges in the nation and has been number one in alumni salaries for four consecutive years by Payscale, according to the CCM website. "Affordable" is not a word one sees too often in this state.

The dilemma of choosing a higher education path

ZACHARY DEVIVO

Contributor

The biggest decision for a high school student is choosing where they will spend the next two to four years of their lives: in a college or university. Definitively altering the course of their lives, students made this decision based on numerous factors. The students who chose County College of Morris made their choice for several reasons.

The choice of college has more impact for those who decide to specialize early and chose their major from the get-go. A student

with an exceedingly difficult major to complete, such as chemistry, has put further pressure on themselves about making the right decision regarding their schooling. "I wanted to stay close to home, but more importantly, I knew that I would be saving a lot of money going to County College of Morris," said chemistry major Alyssa Dowd. "Taking out student loans was not in the cards."

Student loans brought about debt and stress for students throughout the early portion of their lives until fully paid off. Students often did not realize how

much a four-year college costs until student loan bills landed on their doorstep; however, students who attended community college minimized the debt they incurred.

Debt and loans are not the only reason a college attendee would have chosen to go to community college over a four-year institution. Students said it's the accessibility to the school and their commute that made the school more appealing. "I would definitely say it was more accessible than some other schools around our area," said liberal arts major Greyson Secoy. "Instead of spending crazy amounts of money,

County College of Morris was the more logical option for me."

Community college offered students an easier and more convenient method of learning without the need to dorm to be closer to campus. Secoy found an easier and more cost-efficient way to achieve his goals through CCM.

Community college served as a buffer for students who struggled to decide their major. "County College of Morris really helped me save on money," said liberal arts major Zack Zink. "I didn't know what I wanted to major in, and County College of Morris

helped me pass my core classes." High school students struggled to know the exact path they should take directly after they have graduated. An extra two years made all the difference for Zink who gained more time to plan his future endeavors through his attendance at CCM.

All three — Dowd, Secoy, and Zink — found significant benefit through their presence at CCM. These college students obtained flexibility, cheap expenses, and an easy commute after having decided to attend the County College of Morris.

Students Weigh Benefits of Attending Community College

BY RAIZZI STEIN

Contributor

No matter one's goals or aspirations in life, County College of Morris provides students with a passion for bettering their future with an abundance of opportunities and resources. It doesn't matter if one is starting their academic career as an 18-year-old straight out of high school or post-middle age wanting a fresh start, CCM offers over 90 differ-

ent degrees and certificates that should satisfy almost anyone's interests at a relatively low cost.

Unsurprisingly, deciding on where to attend college and what major to pick can be a major stressor for many people. It's one of the most significant choices someone can make in their life because it can dictate the trajectory of their future and cause the accumulation of immense student debt.

According to an analysis of

May 2021 census data, 43 million Americans owe a combined \$1.6 trillion in student loan debt. With COVID-19 impacting student morale, not to mention rising inflation costs, and putting a massive strain on the job market, starting off at a community college rather than a four-year university allows students the opportunity to pursue higher education at a fraction of the cost.

As stated in a report by Education Data Initiative, in the United States, the average cost of a four-year college for a full year is \$35,331. However, an in-county resident attending CCM full-time can expect to pay an average of \$15,000 for both years.

"Because of the pandemic, I didn't want to pay all this money to a four-year college just for them to tell me it will be virtual, so I figured CCM was a good choice especially since it's local," said Christa Toscano, a first-year liberal arts major with a passion for film. "While it feels a bit like high school because of the smaller class sizes, I actually like that better because I think going to a four-year right out of high school, and dorming with strangers would have been a bit intimidating having finished my last two years of high school during a lockdown in my bedroom."

There's often a common and somewhat elitist misconception that attending a community college automatically equates to subpar amenities and professors. However, according to a 2021 Academic Influence article,



PHOTO BY RAIZZI STEIN

A rainy afternoon at the CCM campus outside of the Learning Resource Center.

CCM is ranked as the 17th best community college in the nation. So apart from the financial benefits of attending CCM, there are advantages of having access to smaller class sizes and a tight-knit community of students and professionals.

"I get a lot of support from the college because if I need any help at all, all my professors are able to make themselves available to help me however they can, and I get to establish a real relationship with them," said Lorena Cabrera, a computer science major who fell in love with coding during the lockdown "It's also easier to socialize in an environment with fewer people because the smaller class sizes sort of force you to get to know one another."

If one isn't set on a clear path yet, has familial obligations, needs to work to support themselves, or wants to avoid tens or even hundreds of thousands of

dollars' worth of anxiety, starting off at or even coming back to a community college can provide the accessibility for a student to continue their education while also balancing other obligations.

"I definitely would recommend CCM to anyone because I feel like it's a place where you can always come back even if you feel like you've run out of time," said Fnu Rida, a marketing major with a minor in psychology who is currently attending CCM as a visiting student from Rutgers University.

Inspired by her father, she wants to follow in his footsteps in becoming a marketing manager so she can travel the world. "I know somebody in my class who's in his 30s now, and he's coming back to get a degree here, which just goes to show that CCM gives people a fresh start where one can grow and become more prepared for other opportunities out there," Rida said.

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All students are welcome to contribute articles to The Youngtown Edition either in person or via e-mail. However, students cannot receive a byline if they belong to the organization on which they are reporting. The deadline for articles is the Monday prior to a production.

DEGREE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

dream,” said Dr. Philip Chase, an interim department chairperson in the English and philosophy department, and a chairperson on the General Education Committee.

The state has not yet set regulations; however, more proposal details should arrive sometime this month. Marlin pointed out that if this proposal goes into effect, it will not affect any student currently enrolled at CCM. The degree requirements that a student has entered college under will remain in place unless a student believes it is beneficial for them to attend under the new requirements. In this case, they can petition to switch over. New Students who attend CCM, if this proposal is enacted, could be affected.

While the state of New Jersey sets the minimum requirements for a degree, CCM’s academic departments will need to decide if they will keep Gen Ed credits how they already stand, if any changes will be made, or if they will fully follow the states’ minimum general education credits. Therefore, CCM could keep required credits for an Associate of Arts degree at 45, lower it to 33, or choose a number in between, such as 39 credits.

“I’ll have to say right now, the number that we have of 45 [credits] is really high,” Marlin said. “I did some looking around the US, and I saw that in, say, Maryland, I think it was about 36, in New York it was 30, and I think in Michigan it was 33 to 36. This sort of pulls us down more into the national range. This does not change the number of credits that are required for a degree. There will still be 60 credits required for a degree.”

Under this proposal, students may end up taking more classes related to their major or free electives, depending on how CCM’s administration and the Board of Trustees respond.

“This is all hypothetical, but what could happen, for instance, is that, let’s say the international studies program, which has right now 45 credits of general education and 15 credits of international studies, decides, you know what, we want only, let’s say, 39 credits of general education, because we would like all of our students to also take a course in international politics because there’s no space right now in their program for it. And we want them all to take a course in international business. So, it’d still be a 60-credit degree,” Marlin said.

Administrators and faculty rest on a spectrum of opinions regarding this proposal; however, some of CCM’s faculty are not entirely supportive of the proposal and have some concerns. “Many of us are concerned about the quality of the education that we’re offering,” Chase said. “If you’re reducing the number of Gen Ed requirements, one of the things that was talked about was getting rid of history altogether as a requirement for an associate in liberal arts, which is kind of alarming to me personally and to

a lot of other people.”

Although, as the proposal stands now, history may experience a reduction from six to three credits. This could mean that only one history course instead of the current two courses as a Gen Ed requirement.

“That’s concerning to me because I believe that civic knowledge is incredibly important and somebody with a degree in the liberal arts should have a minimum of knowledge about the way our country works and our past and how we’ve gotten here, because an informed citizenry is essential to a healthy democracy,” Chase said. “I think history is an important subject, and I know a lot of people would agree with that.”

While reducing the number of history courses may aid students who don’t like history and perhaps struggle to pass history classes, the fear that some faculty have is if this proposal goes into effect and Gen Ed requirements are reduced, the education students receive may not be of the same quality that it is now.

Chase further noted that the current proposal might eliminate some math, science, and technology from the required Gen Ed credits for a liberal arts degree. For instance, the current four-credit math course called Math for Liberal Arts may decrease to three credits, requiring fewer hours for the course.

The OSHE proposal allowed interested persons to submit their comments to Eric Taylor, Director of Licensure, with the commenting period ending Jan. 14.

Dr. Rita Heller, associate professor of history, wrote a letter to Taylor Dec. 22, 2021, opposing the proposed reduction in Gen Ed credits required for an A.A. degree. She wrote, “As is commonly known, we live in a scary, politically polarized world where intemperate extremes prevail. Empirical evidence tells us that American students are woefully ignorant of their history, which they get from generally intemperate and sensationalized social media.” Further stating, “Historical perspectives are vital in a free democratic society.”

While it seems like there are two sides to this proposal debate, “There probably are a lot of subtle positions in between,” Chase said. “But the basic thing is you have people who believe that reducing the number of Gen Ed credits is going to make it easier for students to graduate, and that serves the students. And on the other side, you have people who say that there’s a real risk here that we’re watering down what the education that students are getting and that they’re going to be leaving our institutions with less knowledge than they used to. Rather than having that broad liberal arts tradition of having knowledge of many different branches of the humanities, you might have students leaving with a lot narrower focus.”

Another concern is possibly endangering the Lampitt Law, which New Jersey passed in Sept. 2008. It is a Comprehensive State-wide Transfer Agreement that states, “Seamless transition from public associate to public

baccalaureate degree programs and supporting the successful acquisition of baccalaureate degrees by transfer students.”

Within the agreement’s contents, it further states that those with an A.A. degree from a New Jersey community college should have all their credits transferred in full when pursuing a bachelor’s degree. Therefore, the student would not begin their bachelor program as a freshman or sophomore because they already attended community college. This agreement ensures students enter their bachelor’s program as a junior.

Chase stressed the importance of students graduating from CCM and other community colleges having their dedicated work acknowledged when transferring to a four-year state institution within New Jersey, like Rutgers. There is an agreement with all these schools because of the Lampitt Law, that if a student graduates from a community college with their associate degree, their credits must be accepted. Instead of four-year institutions selecting which credits they would accept, the Lampitt Law helps protect students and their efforts when achieving an associate degree, later pursuing their bachelor’s.

If this proposal goes into effect and a student whose requirements run under this change, there is a chance that “They would be taking classes that they normally would have done in the first two years, and it could even result in the students taking longer to obtain their bachelor’s degree,” Chase said. “Plus, they would have classes that they took at the community college, which wouldn’t count toward their degree any longer.”

The issue that could arise from the possible disconnect between two-year and four-year institutions under this proposal is that students may take classes for their associate degree that do not line up with the bachelor’s degree program, resulting in four-year institutions no longer accepting certain credits from transfer students, possibly causing a disruption with the Lampitt Law and the students’ ease with transferring.

“Thus far, CCM has not made any changes to the 1130-degree program,” said Nieves Gruneiro-Roadcap, dean of liberal arts. “The General Education Committee has held several forums for faculty input and is in the process of writing a report with recommendations to our vice president of academic affairs. If the reduction in general education credits is approved by the state, CCM will continue to support and focus on the Associate in Arts as a transfer degree.” The 1130-degree program is a curriculum checklist for liberal arts & sciences, humanities/social science for an A.A. degree, which helps students plan their classes.

Currently, students choose their required and eligible courses needed for graduation from a list of courses related to their major; 15 credits of core classes and 45 credits of general education classes. However, it is not known

right now if when students transfer to a four-year college, they will need to take the Gen Ed courses they should have taken while at their two-year institution if this proposal is enacted and changes are made to the A.A. degree programs.

“I know when this Gen Ed list was developed, [it] was the result of a lot of proliferation on the part of faculty over years,” Heller said. “In other words, it was created so that community college students could transfer their whole package without the four-year colleges picking and choosing. So that if they abided by the rules, the entire degree could be transferred. That’s the premise. And the premise was also promoting more cooperation between the four-year college and the community college and the seamless transfer. Okay. Your students take this, this many credits. These are our accepted courses. So, it was part of really a cooperative kind of goal.”

Discussions between two-year and four-year institutions may need to take place to protect the Lampitt Law and make sure that students can smoothly transfer while still having the credits from their associate degree counted toward their bachelor’s. Department chairpersons at CCM want to make sure if any changes are made, what they decide will be transferrable because they do not want to see students losing credits while transferring.

According to the transfer agreement for the Lampitt Law, “It is in transfer students’ best interests that community college courses be well aligned with the courses offered at the four-year institutions. This alignment is best accomplished by faculty-to-faculty discussions across the institutions in all sectors.”

The differing opinions and beliefs regarding this proposal show how reaching an agreement that produces the best outcome for students and even faculty is imperative.

Marlin personally believes 33 credits are too low, but 45 are too high. “I think that by having a few extra courses that could be moved out of general education into something else gives our departments some opportunities to really help students out, opportunities to create pathways into bachelor’s degrees, opportunities to help get students employable skills, [and] adjust the majors that we have to the changing nature of discipline,” he said.

Chase believes general education credits should not be reduced. “My fear if we keep watering down what [students] need in order to have an associate degree in the liberal arts in the humanities, then what we could end up with is even more of what we have already, which I think is a lack of knowledge of what’s going on in the world; lack of knowledge about how our nation is supposed to operate.” However, he also understands where the people who are making the proposal are coming from, and that everyone on all sides has the students’ best interests at heart.

Gruneiro is uncertain of her stance regarding this proposal. “I have mixed feelings about this

possible change but also see a potential opportunity to further enrich the liberal arts experience at CCM,” she said.

The proposed new state minimum of 33 credits has not been decided yet; however, if it is, “The new state minimums might be effective this fall,” Marlin said. “However, program changes at CCM will take longer than that because faculty will want to sit down, they’ll want to take time, they’ll want to review their curriculum. And then, of course, if they change their curriculum, they have to take the changed curriculum through an approval process, which we have here, so that the curriculum committee, which is composed of a number of faculty; administrators would get a chance to review it and say, yeah, this makes sense, let’s do it this way, and otherwise can examine new curriculum and make sure that what we’re doing makes sense for our students.”

However, changing a degree program may take the college longer to implement because it involves a lot of decision-making. “I think the very earliest would be this fall semester, but I would be surprised if we were able to act on it that fast,” Chase said. “Whatever changes occur are more likely to . . . be maybe in the fall of 2023. But I could be wrong. Maybe the board will say we want this done now.”

While this proposal is still in the works, faculty and administrators are considering all feedback from anyone who wishes to state their opinion on the matter.

“The college has deputized the General Education Committee to look into the proposed state guidelines concerning general education for students looking to earn an Associate of Arts degree at CCM,” said Professor John Soltes, chairperson of the General Education Committee.

“Our committee consists of representatives from each major discipline on campus, and they have been working hard over the past year — listening to faculty, staff, chairpersons and deans concerning these proposed changes. We have hosted numerous listening sessions and meetings with a variety of stakeholders, including the Curriculum Committee, Academic Standards Committee, deans, chairpersons, and individual academic departments. We have gathered opinions, debated amongst ourselves, sent representatives to the state to learn more about the changes, and researched other institutions and their policies. Our goal is to produce a report for the college community this spring semester, and it will hopefully be a report that conveys the collective thoughts of our committee and the research we have been able to compile.”

Soltes further stated, “Future students will be the ones who are most impacted by these proposed changes, and the General Education Committee welcomes comments from the student body. I can be reached at jsoltes@ccm.edu, and I am happy to pass on any messages to the committee. We are in the process of reaching out to some student groups to also gather their vital opinions.”

REVIEW: Ancient Dreams in a Modern Land (Deluxe Edition) by MARINA

BY LAURA SAN ROMAN
Entertainment Editor

“Why be a wallflower when you can be a Venus fly trap?” is what singer Marina asks in the title track of *Ancient Dreams in a Modern Land*, “Venus Fly Trap.” Marina has never been one to shy away from making a statement. With her albums *The Family Jewels*, *Electra Heart*, *Froot*, and *Love + Fear*, Marina has never been afraid to let her true self shine through her music and lyrics in her many years of creating songs. This is surely true for Marina’s latest album, *Ancient Dreams in a Modern Land*.

The album comes two years after the release of her 2019 *Love + Fear* album. Many fans had criticized *Love + Fear* for not being “Marina” enough and for lacking her usual sound, in exchange for more generic pop beats. However, *Ancient Dreams in a Modern Land* returns to her roots, while also maintaining a fresh pop rock sound. Many of the album’s lyrics are reminiscent of previous eras in Marina’s career. Having flashbacks to past albums is a terrific way to incorporate the old and the new, especially since Marina’s previous eras are so iconic.

The album starts off with the song “Ancient Dreams in a Modern Land,” a pop rock track that uses synthesizers and has lyrics that urge the reader to be themselves and not conform to society’s standards. The song is especially addictive with its synthesizer sound and Marina’s echoing vocals in the chorus. The album continues with “Venus Fly Trap,” where Marina encourages the listener to be a “Venus fly trap”



PHOTO COURTESY OF TWITTER

and seize life by the reins.

“Man’s World” is a piano based track that talks about the cruel treatment that women and minorities have faced through the years, taking inspiration from the Salem Witch trials in her lyrics. The song features beautiful lyrics such as, “I’m a strawberry soda, raise my lashes to heaven.” “Purge the Poison” is an anthem for saving

the world, as Marina sings about purging poison from the Earth and stopping humans from causing damage to the environment. The song “New America” also takes on the environment, criticizing America for its bloody history with catchy lyrics and sweeping violins.

Marina’s personal experience with relationships also found its way into the album with songs like

“I Love You But I Love Me More” and “Flowers.” “I Love You But I Love Me More” is a pop rock song that talks about loving someone else but having to leave them to take care of yourself and your mental health. The song is full of cool guitar riffs and great vocals from Marina. The soft piano track “Flowers” features Marina singing about how her significant other

never brought her flowers, and this could have saved their failing relationship. This is one of the prettiest songs on the album, with stunning vocals from Marina. The last track “Goodbye” bids adieu to Marina’s old self, ending the album with striking piano and intriguing lyrics.

The deluxe version of the album was released Jan. 7, 2022, featuring five new tracks, including “Happy Loner,” “Pink Convertible,” “Free Woman,” and the demo versions of “Venus Fly Trap” and “Ancient Dreams in a Modern Land.” The demo versions are an interesting glimpse into Marina’s songwriting process, showing the listener how she came up with these amazing songs. “Happy Loner” is a relatable song for introverts who feel happier being alone, with understandable lyrics and a soft piano ballad. “Pink Convertible” features Marina singing about driving through the streets of Los Angeles while the world turns into the apocalypse, a happy sounding song with dark lyrics. “Free Woman” details Marina’s experience about being a free woman, who is more than her beauty and more than what other people may say about her. It is an inspiring song to be true to yourself, even when others with bad intentions may try to pull you down.

With beautifully written lyrics, catchy tunes, and stunning vocals, *Ancient Dreams in a Modern Land* is a wonderful homage to the eras of Marina’s past while also celebrating the present. Marina’s activism shines through in this album, showing her passion for solving issues in the world. If you haven’t heard this album yet, you won’t regret checking it out.

COLUMN: Why David Ortiz doesn’t belong in the Hall of Fame

BY PROFESSOR
KENNETH SHOULER
Adviser for the Youngtown Edition

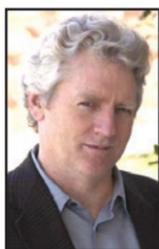
An Arab proverb states that if a camel gets his nose in the tent, it will be impossible to prevent the rest of him from entering. Now that David Ortiz has become the first performance-enhancing drug using member of the 500-home run club voted into the Baseball Hall of Fame, how will voters keep out the other seven players who cheated to hit 500?

David Ortiz may be the first player in history to be better known by his nickname than by his real name. “Big Papi” was the avuncular leader and centerpiece of the Boston title teams in the early 2000s. That aside, Ortiz should never have been inducted by 77.9 percent of the Baseball Writers of America Association in January. There are three ways of determining if a player cheated, and Ortiz checks all three boxes. First, we see if the player failed drug tests. Ortiz did. He was one of 104 major league players to test positive for steroids in 2003. While the test was supposed to be anonymous, names were leaked, including Alex Rodriguez, and Ortiz’ teammate Manny Ramirez. Many others were pun-

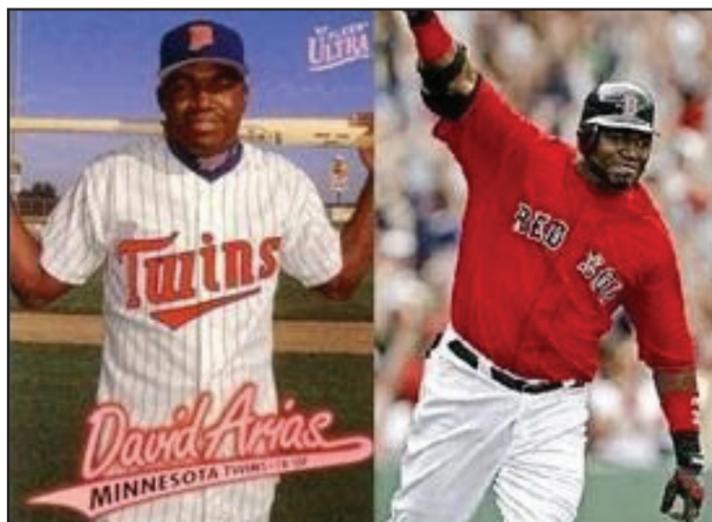
ished, but Ortiz wasn’t. In fact, he was aided by the intercession of Commissioner Rob Manfred, who said in 2016 (Ortiz’ retirement year), “Even if your name was on that list, it’s entirely possible that you were not a positive.” “Entirely possible,” should be replaced by “highly unlikely” as the evidence shows.

A positive test alone should have been sufficient — though hardly necessary — but with Ortiz, we have two more ways of knowing what occurred. Curiously, the two ways are in accord with the two main knowledge traditions in the history of Western philosophy: empiricism and rationalism. The former tradition says trust your sensory observations, while the latter says apply math and inductive and deductive logic.

Empiricism, from the Greek *empeiria* meaning experience, says the evidence of the senses is telling. The eyeball test shows the complete change in the bodies of players, even



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David Ortiz, aka “Big Papi” – Before and After PED Use

head size, consistent with the anticipated effects of performance-enhancing drugs. Ortiz is no exception. His metamorphosis — including the tell-tale thickening of his upper body — occurred after he played six mediocre seasons in Minnesota and his subsequent free-agent signing with Boston.

But as revealing as the positive drug test and the changes in physique are, they pale beside Ortiz’ highly suspicious surge in production. Had the voters done their due diligence and conducted the neces-

sary statistical analysis, they would have found that in one respect Ortiz is the most statistically egregious case in the history of slugging. Ortiz’ ledger reveals more late-career long balling than all 28 of the players who reached the 500-homer mark. Consider: he hit just 11 percent of his 541 home runs through age 26, over six years in Minnesota. Having peaked with 20 homers with Minnesota in 2003, his numbers spiked dramatically, with totals of 31, 41, 47 and then 54 in 2007. All told, he clubbed 89 percent of his homers

after the age of 26, over 13 seasons. Not only is that post-26 percentage the highest among all 28 who hit 500 home runs (cheaters and non-cheaters included), but it places him just behind Rafael Palmeiro (87 percent after 26), Barry Bonds (81 percent) and Sammy Sosa (78 percent) — all kept out of the Hall of Fame due to performance-enhancing drug use. That said, some voters have made up their minds in advance.

For many scribes, Ortiz’ “Big Papi” moniker conjures an image of the grinning and gregarious centerpiece of Boston’s three World Series titles from 2004 through 2013. That may be why Ortiz always drew a free pass on steroids, but others didn’t.

The changes wrought by PED use allow us to draw some conclusions about baseball’s history. Some problems with baseball — such as the “Black Sox” scandal when Chicago threw the 1919 World Series, or the refusal to break the color barrier and integrate the game until 1947, or the indentured servitude of players unable to switch teams prior to free agency — are long gone. But steroid records aren’t. The effect of steroids lingers like a foul smell, forever polluting a record book that people treat as accurate.