

ACC News You Should Know



ACC Alumna on Frontlines of COVID-19 War



Instructor Innovates to Make Labs Virtual



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A Message From Our President

ACC Alumna on Frontlines of COVID-19 War



Katie Flemington

Katie Flemington always knew she was going places, but even she never imagined her career in nursing would take her to the frontlines of a pandemic—and certainly not in America.

Seemingly born with wanderlust in her heart, Katie graduated from Alpena High School in 2009 with no idea what she wanted to do in her life, except she knew she wanted to travel. She enrolled at Alpena Community College and bounced around working a few part-time jobs to fund school and mission trips before graduating with two associate degrees.

Katie had searched the world and her heart for what she wanted to do with her life and finally decided to follow her mother's path and enroll in the nursing program at Alpena Community College.

Of her time at ACC, Katie now says, "The classes are tough, and you want to quit at least every other week, but the knowledge gained surpasses that of any four-year college that I've heard about. I was blessed to be able to be a part of a nursing school that had such a small staff-to-student ratio that each instructor could really get to know the students, and I believe that in itself made all the difference."

After graduating from ACC in 2015 with a certificate in Licensed Practical Nursing—Level I and in 2016 with an Associate of Applied Science in Nursing—RN Level II, Katie went on to get a bachelor's degree in nursing and is now working on a master's degree. In between, she's been to far-flung corners of the world—Peru, Mexico, and Uganda—to use her nursing skills in service to the poorest among us. Her greatest service, however, has been right here in America fighting against the most sizable public health crisis the world has seen in a century: COVID-19.

Katie is now a nurse at Our Lady of the Lake Hospital in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Prior to the novel coronavirus pandemic hitting the United States, Katie worked in the trauma intensive care unit at the hospital, which is a level-one trauma center. There, she treated an array of patients, ranging from victims of violent crimes, auto collisions, and traumatic brain injuries to patients who "code" throughout the massive hospital. She is used to being on her feet nonstop and busy all the time. She is not used to COVID-19, though.

Transitioning from treating victims of physical trauma, Katie is now devoted to caring for the hundreds of COVID-19 patients who have sought help at her hospital. She describes this virus and what it does to its victims as something all her schooling and experience could have never prepared her for.

"Patients come in with a cough or low oxygen saturation and, shortly after, they get put on a ventilator. That's when they come to me," Katie explains. "The last few weeks have been hell, for lack of a better word. Patients appear fine for one day—maybe two—then go into respiratory failure at the drop of a hat."

Katie explains that the high levels of sedation necessary to combat acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) in her patients often cause the kidneys and liver to shut down. Patients get started on dialysis and, due in part to liver failure, blood clots develop that complicate dialysis. But that's not all.

"Within three to four days, the patients develop a heart condition and ultimately succumb to cardiac death. This all sounds morbid, but that isn't the worst part," Katie says. "The worst part of the virus is having to stand outside of your patient's window trying to comfort them through the glass. It's holding up their phone to Facetime their loved ones for quite possibly the last time as your team prepares the intubation. It's telling family that their loved one will most likely pass away today but, 'No, you cannot come see them.' Skilled senior physicians yelling "I hate this virus!" across the nurse's station because the same pattern we've been watching is happening to another patient." **Continued...**

...ACC Alumna, continued.

Not being able to fix the physical damage COVID-19 does to her patients is devastating, but nurses don't just tend to the physical form of their patients. What haunts Katie are the barriers this virus creates that prevent her from being able to physically and emotionally comfort her patients.

"We're ICU nurses, trained to read the telltale signs of an impending code, and taught to rush into the room to fix the patient. We can't do that now. Every time we have to enter the patient's room, we are exposing ourselves to the virus. We put on and take off our personal protective equipment (PPE) every time we enter the room, and supplies are limited week-by-week," Katie explains. "COVID-19 isolates the patient, endangers those involved in care, and keeps healthcare workers and patients from seeing their families for extended periods of time."

Katie takes comfort in her coworkers; talking to her mother, Carol, who is a nurse in Alpena; and leaning on the preparation she received at ACC.

"ACC prepared me in many ways for what I'm facing today. The nursing instructors at ACC have such a wonderful spectrum of personalities, with each teacher telling us stories from what they've seen and how it isn't necessarily the medical utopia that the schoolbooks try to teach. Colonel Kutschman's war stories, Tony Pratt's ICU stories, Beverly Banks' constant bubbly personality and immense cardiac knowledge, Melanie Thomas's realism and ER expertise, Barb Jacquemin's motherly nature and kind heart, Julie Miller's incredible pediatric stories and expertise of all things OB and pediatric...the way they pour their experiences into their teaching allowed me to relate everything to real-world scenarios and remember it more easily down the road."

Katie is a Lumberjack we can all be proud of. Her education took her from Alpena to Uganda to Louisiana and many points in between and gave her the skills, knowledge, and compassion needed to be of service to people in the fight of their lives. That is the value of an ACC education.



Scott Ratz

Instructor Innovates to Make Labs Virtual

A single email—that was the only hint Alpena Community College chemistry and algebra instructor Scott Ratz had that he might soon have to totally change how he did his job.

A month ago, Ratz was enjoying his spring break when an email arrived from ACC Vice President of Instruction Deborah Bayer. She referenced the emerging COVID-19 threat and suggested ACC instructors without accompanying laboratory components consider moving their face-to-face courses to an online learning system to minimize the number of students on campus. Bayer said that lab courses would continue on-campus, but that proper social distancing protocol needed to be observed.

Ratz wasn't that concerned about the prospect of moving his lecture courses online, as he's spent a fair amount of time over the years considering how those courses could be transitioned to an online or hybrid format. When he heard later in the day, however, that the University of Michigan had moved all its courses—including engineering and science lab courses—online because of the threat COVID-19 posed to students, Ratz knew that it was time to get creative so he would be prepared if the same thing happened at ACC. The question was how to take a hands-on lesson and make it virtual without sacrificing the opportunities for students to effectively learn.

"When it came to labs, I had always been very skeptical of online lab experiments," Ratz said. "I felt that these virtual lab experiences had too many shortcomings and did not allow students to learn enough about hands-on lab etiquette and safety, nor did it allow them to make real-world mistakes and to learn from those mistakes. Furthermore, I had met students that took these virtual labs at other colleges, and I was disappointed with the quality of their experience. It just seemed that a lot of these virtual lab experiences were nothing more than cartoons with a chemistry theme."

Ratz didn't want to shortchange his students, so he began to think in earnest about how he could give them close to the same quality of instruction and hands-on learning virtually as he did in the classroom. But he wouldn't have long to think; soon, it became time to act.

In short order, ACC canceled its first two days of classes after spring break. Then Alpena Public Schools announced it would be closing all facilities for three weeks. Ratz saw the writing on the wall. In the span of two short days, he went from thinking he should start a plan to address a worst-case scenario to actively carrying that plan out to get his classes operational online.

"At this point (Thursday night), I decided that it would make the most sense to transition my PowerPoint lecture notes for my chemistry courses into animated lecture videos," Ratz explained.

Ratz began the laborious, time-consuming process of turning his class PowerPoint lecture notes into engaging, interesting videos that...*continued.*

...ACC Innovates, continued.

capture his in-class teaching style and provide the same level of easily grasped material mixed with his signature humor. But soon, it became clear that just taking the lectures online wouldn't be enough.

"After concluding that students would probably never return to an ACC chemistry lab for the balance of this semester, I made the decision to use a similar lab video approach for my chemistry labs," Ratz explained.

So how do virtual lab activities work? Basically, Ratz performs the lab assignments himself, with the same level of detail, demonstration, and instruction as you'd find on a cooking show on Food Network. He begins each lab with an overview, as well as safety concerns—just as he did when teaching face-to-face labs—and tries to keep the experience as real as possible. Ratz captures as many detailed photos and close-ups as he can so students feel as if they are in the lab with their instructor. Ratz even shows his students what mistakes they may have made if they had conducted the experiments themselves in class.

"They are not Hollywood productions by any stretch of the imagination, but they are effective. I don't just set the video camera up and record an hour-long lab experiment as if the students were watching a web cam from afar, but rather I walk them through practically every step of each experiment," Ratz explains. "So, other than not being able to touch and feel everything throughout the experiment, the lab videos seem to cover all the bases. Students are still responsible for completing their post-lab assignments outside of class—just as they always have—and emailing me electronic copies of their results."

Feedback from his students so far has been positive. Ratz says they appreciate being able to go back and re-watch certain parts of the videos if necessary. "So, there are at least a few upsides to this lab video approach," he adds.

Most of us would have a hard time imagining having only one week to totally change the way we do our jobs. In that time, however, Scott Ratz went from thinking about just putting his lectures online to taking his courses completely on the Web and shooting detailed instructional videos to give his students the best alternative to in-person lab sessions as possible. That's the kind of innovation and dedication to the education of their students that faculty and staff across all Alpena Community College campuses have shown during this unprecedented time in our college's history.

Looking ahead, Ratz is already planning for next semester. "Believe it or not, I actually look forward to improving and using this lab video approach for my summer chemistry lab course!"

We have no doubt his students are looking forward to what Ratz has cooked up for them.



ACC Students Say Thanks

ACC Foundation Offers Lifeline to Students

In the best of times, the Alpena Community College Foundation provides vital support to students who otherwise would not have the means to afford postsecondary education. These, however, are not the best of times and the ACC Foundation is needed more than ever to assist students in staying in school.

According to the latest report from the National Center for Education Statistics, nearly 90% of all ACC students receive some form of financial aid. It's important to note that these statistics were gathered prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While many consider the Alpena Community College Foundation to be synonymous with scholarships, the Foundation is much more than that. In addition to scholarship support, the ACC Foundation stands true to its mission to "enhance the ability of ACC to meet the lifelong education needs of the growing and changing communities it serves."

While our communities certainly are changing, so is the way that education is delivered. Students who have recently come upon hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic may have varying needs to see their dreams of a college education become reality. Because of this the Foundation's role in being a lifeline for ACC students has never been more vital.

Millions of Americans have been furloughed from their jobs and many small businesses will be unable to survive the lost revenue that has resulted from the shelter-in-place society we have become to fight the spread of this pandemic. Historically, people seek education in times of economic hardship to help them gain new skills in a changing job market. Community colleges offer opportunities to millions of people seeking to replace their job with a career. In economically turbulent times, financial aid is more important than ever to enable our family, friends, and neighbors to attain the education they need to better their lives.

The Alpena Community College Foundation is both the gatekeeper and caretaker to hundreds of scholarship opportunities to students in need. But what about the students who need help to keep a roof over their heads, food in their stomachs, transportation to get to school, internet to take their classes which are now totally online, or even electricity to charge their laptops, which have become...continued.

...ACC Foundation, continued.

...as vital as paper and pencils once were to education? The ACC Foundation takes its role seriously to meet students wherever they are on their educational journey and help them along to graduation.

And for students in Northeast Michigan, the need goes far beyond scholarship monies as a necessary component to obtain an education.

Since the COVID-19 threat necessitated classes at ACC being moved to an online-only format and campus buildings closed, students who are in need of food assistance don't have access to the campus food pantry when they likely need it the most. Many students cannot afford Wi-Fi services or depend on their cell phones to power their internet access. The needs of ACC's student body are many and varied, but with your help, the ACC Foundation will be able to assist students with whatever they need to stay in school and get the education they need to live a better life. If that's access to food from a local grocery store, assistance with the payment for internet services, or gaining access to a laptop computer, so be it. The ACC Foundation will help remove these barriers to student success. In order to do that, however, your help is needed.

The ACC Foundation invites you to be a hero to students in need by making an unrestricted gift in any amount to be used where it is needed most to help ACC students. To donate securely online, please visit the [ACC Foundation page](#) on the ACC website. If you'd prefer to donate via mail, checks can be made out and mailed to: ACC Foundation, 665 Johnson St., Alpena, MI 49707. Through the contributions of generous donors, together we will ensure Alpena Community College students have the necessary support to successfully complete their education at ACC.

A Message from Our President

Greetings alumni and friends of Alpena Community College:

I hope this note finds you safe and well, surrounded by loved ones. Our vision for this inaugural e-newsletter certainly did not include the COVID-19 pandemic affecting every aspect of life at ACC these past three weeks. We intended this newsletter to reconnect you to the many good stories going on here, such as:

- Beginning construction on the \$8.7 million Center for Health Sciences renovation of Van Lare Hall.
- Finishing fall enrollment up 4.4% in credit hours and 4.52% percent in headcount, highest among Michigan's 28 community colleges.
- Graduating students at a 40% higher rate than the aggregate of comparable community colleges in Michigan.
- Passing a 10-year millage renewal vote by a margin of 63.5-36.5 percent.
- Landing \$3.25 million in federal and state grants since July 2019.
- Earning national recognition for innovation in delivering distance learning from EdTech magazine.
- Winning the national collegiate lineman's rodeo and the top individual lineman in the competition.
- Celebrating the ACC cross country team earning Academic All-American status for the 5th consecutive year.
- Attaining a 100% pass rate on the most recent NCLEX (Nursing) exams.
- Enjoying the rapid pace of campus beautification, partly captured in the following video from last week honoring the ACC custodial and maintenance crew: [Lumberjack of the Month Video](#)

Unfortunately, COVID-19 changed our best-laid plans. Like all of you, we were forced to adapt and change. Responding to perhaps the most challenging event in the history of the College, three weeks in we're still taking things day by day. Faculty, staff, and students rose to the occasion in remarkable fashion. It's been truly inspirational to witness their resolve, resilience, and innovation. I can't speak highly enough of their collaborative effort. Because every day the past three weeks has brought fundamental and unprecedented change to the way the College has done business for the past 68 years, Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle applies: isolating a single moment for descriptive purposes cannot be done. To set a baseline, I've included my statement to staff upon their return from Spring Break on March 16.

Welcome back. What a week it's been. I'm not sure words can adequately describe the front edge of a pandemic.

Last Monday morning I was in East Lansing at the Kellogg Conference Center at MSU for the Phi Theta Kappa state awards ceremony. At this inspirational event, several colleagues, community college presidents at larger downstate schools, discussed with me their somewhat embryonic plans to respond to coronavirus on their campuses. We agreed this was a fast-moving, unprecedented scenario that would test our institutions in ways never seen before. We just had no idea how quickly it would arrive at our doorstep.

On Tuesday, the first COVID-19 case was confirmed in Michigan. MSU, Michigan Tech, and Eastern promptly announced they were shutting down their campuses and going to all online courses. Later that day, the rest of the public universities followed. Back on campus, we organized our Emergency Management Team to begin making decisions. Continued...



Dr. Don MacMaster

...Message from President, continued.

On Wednesday the Governor arranged a conference call with the community college presidents. Among other requests, she asked community colleges to discourage public gatherings of 100 people and to move course delivery to online formats to mitigate the potential spread of the coronavirus. We began cancelling events scheduled at ACC.

On Thursday, the NBA suspended play. The NCAA shut down March Madness. The stock market tanked. We learned about social distancing and flattening the curve.

On Friday all K-12s across Michigan were ordered shut down by Gov. Whitmer for three weeks beginning on Monday, March 16, today.

In some fundamental ways, our world changed in a week. We will need to change with it. At ACC we convened our Emergency Management team on Wednesday morning and have met daily since then. It has been an inspiration to work with this team of college leaders to sort out a plan to keep the campus community safe while continuing to deliver instruction. Bottom line, we can do this. We can get this done on behalf of our students and the community. It will require all of us to rise to the occasion, plug in, collaborate, innovate, and solve problems as they arise.

We do not need to panic. We do need to take this seriously.

We have a great team at ACC. I see it every day in so many different settings. Let's stay professional, demonstrate leadership, extend patience and grace, keep the big picture in mind, and work together. We will get through this challenge. When we reach the far shore, and this is behind us, I believe we will look back and see that this, collectively, was our finest hour.

Good luck. Take of yourselves, take care of your students, and take care of each other.

Thank you and God bless.

Since that message went out three Mondays ago, the College made the following decisions:

- Moved all coursework in 48 hours to an online format
- Created a webpage in one day to aggregate essential communication to all stakeholders
- Reached out to all students to assist them in the change
- Maintained the primary functions of the College remotely
- Closed campus buildings to students, non-essential staff, and the public
- Postponed graduation
- Cancelled all spring sports
- Cancelled all community events until further notice
- Asked all students in College Park Apartments to return home and will return their final two months' rent
- Kept everyone on staff employed as they were prior to the pandemic
- Continued delivery of dual enrollment and Early College coursework with K-12 partners, despite their closing for the remainder of the year
- Established Wi-Fi hotspots around campus buildings to assist students with internet connectivity
- Distributed laptops to students without computers at home
- Donated personal protective equipment (PPE) to MidMichigan Alpena
- Offered up empty apartments for use by MidMichigan and Alpena County first responders
- Began virtual registration activities for Summer and Fall 2020 semesters

In the midst of this whirlwind, a community member recently approached me with the following heartfelt sentiment: "Keep doing what you're doing."

Thank you for being part of the ACC team. Rest assured, we intend to keep doing what we're doing.

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