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College campuses stay busy all season

With conferences and festivals, quiet quads no more

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT AUGUST 03, 2014



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Zanib Albendawi, 13, of Lynn worked on a model of a suspension bridge as part of the Lynn Youth Summer English Language Learning Academy Program at Endicott College.

Bagpipers skirling through Endicott College. Colby College alumni pretending to be students again — taking in lectures, eating in dining halls, and sleeping in dorms. Brides and grooms exchanging “I dos” with verdant Dean College as a backdrop.

Summer once meant dormant dorms, lonely lecture halls, and quiet quads. But increasingly college campuses in New England and beyond are abuzz between commencement and Labor Day.

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“It’s stunning. There’s just so much activity now,” said Richard Doherty, president of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts.

There is, of course, educational programming, including an abundance of offerings for middle and high school students, including those from abroad. But local campuses also host conferences, outdoor festivals, flea and farmers markets, recreational camps, and sports clinics, along with cheerleading, music, fitness, and dance classes.

The activities generate revenue for campuses and can pay off years later if summertime programming participants decide to enroll.

“A lot of it is a philosophy that if we can get kids onto a college campus, it introduces that aspirational feeling into their lives,” Doherty said. “It allows them to see their future.”

Although colleges have long sought to energize campuses during the slow period, beyond summer school for their own students, many institutions have now transformed into year-round hubs of activity.

Assumption College a year and a half ago began exploring ways to boost summer activities, said Francesco C. Cesareo, president.

“Our summers were very, very quiet,” Cesareo said. “We had lots of facilities that could be put to use.”

This summer, Assumption debuted a summer semester for local college students and programs for international high school students, including multiweek programs in which students from Argentina, Japan, and China live and learn on campus.

There are also football, lacrosse, and soccer clinics the school has been hosting for years.

“I went into the dining hall the other day, and it looked like a normal day during our academic year,” Cesareo said.

Summer session

Some of the unusual offerings at area colleges this summer.



Endicott College raises money for scholarships at a weekend event featuring, among other things, a fancy hat competition.



Dean College plays host to business executives who plot strategy at company retreats.



Roxbury Community College partnered with local organizations to host its first annual “Roxbury Rocks” music festival last weekend



Overall, he estimated, the college drew more than \$500,000 in additional revenue this summer.

“It’s an important financial piece as we look for new areas to generate revenue,” he said. “It’s also a very important recruitment tool.”

Last summer, the college introduced an academic camp for high school seniors. Four of its participants will start as freshman at Assumption this fall.

High school students who take summer classes at a college campus may become more attractive postsecondary candidates overall. But area college administrators say the offerings do not necessarily boost a student’s chances of being accepted to that school.

In addition to hosting weddings, Dean College in Franklin plays host to business executives who plot strategy at company retreats.

Endicott College in Beverly has been hosting summertime programming for more than 20 years, said Eileen Geyer, director of event and conference services.

The campus attracts unique events. Members of the College of Piping in Glasgow have visited for a weeklong instructional program the past two summers. And for the past five summers, Endicott has raised money for student scholarships by drawing thousands to a weekend event on the college’s dazzling seaside grounds that features rare and vintage automobiles and motorcycles, fashion shows, a fancy hat competition, and art exhibits.

“We have such an eclectic variety, whether it’s culture and music, sports, academic-based, adult learners, international students, or corporate events,” Geyer said.

Some colleges run programming to strengthen ties with alumni and other donors.

The alumni gatherings at Colby in Waterville, Maine, often attract individuals who are decades past their college days. Alumni pay a registration fee and do not receive credit, but they are able to experience the

campus again from the student perspective, said Colby spokesman Jacob McCarthy, and “hopefully, it will recharge their connection with the college.”

Such efforts can also bolster town-gown relations and foster relationships with neighboring entities that may offer internship and career opportunities.

Roxbury Community College partnered with local organizations to host its first annual “Roxbury Rocks” music festival last weekend, featuring live music, dance performances, and food trucks.

“Some of these events are to encourage students to learn more about the college and the environment so they might think about Roxbury as a place to go to school,” said Valerie R. Roberson, college president.

The College of the Holy Cross teamed up with the city of Worcester to bring summer baseball back to campus this year, two years after the former independent league franchise, the Worcester Tornadoes, shut down. The new home team, the Worcester Bravehearts, a squad made up of college players, draws local families during June, July, and August. On Friday nights, fireworks light up the sky above the 2,000-seat campus stadium.

Campus administrators cite few downsides to the increased activity, although scheduling maintenance and construction projects, most of which has historically been saved for summertime, can be a bit more challenging.

Staff who may have grown accustomed to the more laid-back pace of summer are busier, but not overtaxed, said Cesareo, the Assumption president.

“I think it actually keeps a level of energy going on the campus,” he said. Plus, “there still is a little relaxing down time immediately after the semester ends in May, and a couple weeks before school starts in the fall.”

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Correction: An earlier version of this story misidentified the college that debuted a summer semester for local college students and programs for international high school students. It was Assumption.



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