



BROOME COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff Frederick J. Akshar II

Undersheriff Sammy L. Davis

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BROOME COUNTY SHERIFF OFFICE PRESS RELEASE

Sheriff's Office Partners with SUNY Broome to Bring "Life Skills" Course to Broome County Correctional Facility

(TOWN OF DICKINSON, NY) The Broome County Sheriff's Office and SUNY Broome have partnered on a program to begin introducing community college "life skills" curriculum to incarcerated men and women at the Broome County Correctional Facility.

The pilot program consists of five, 1-hour weekly classes taking place over five weeks, offered in both a male and a female housing pod. The classes serve as an introduction to Student Success: Foundations of Self-Management (State University of New York Press, 2023), a textbook authored by SUNY Broome Professor Gian P. Roma.

The textbook focuses on self-reflection, decision making and personal growth across five elements of behavior:

- Communication, which conveys appropriateness
- Choice, which conveys judgement
- Caring, which conveys concern for others
- Commitment, which conveys duty
- Coping, which conveys fortitude

For the past several weeks, classes have been held within selected housing pods and open to all incarcerated individuals housed in the pods. Undersheriff Sam Davis has served as the instructor for each class, utilizing personal time in a volunteer capacity. Undersheriff Davis previously served as the Director of Training for the Broome County Sheriff's Office and taught several criminal justice courses at SUNY Broome over the past 8 years.

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“This new pilot program is personal for me,” said Undersheriff Davis. “I am incredibly fortunate to serve in my current role at the Sheriff’s Office, but I knew there was more we could do. Oftentimes, only a small number of choices, opportunities and circumstances can mean the difference between finding yourself on the inside or outside of the Correctional Facility. The life skills detailed in this textbook and shared in this course are universal. They not only apply to college students. They are applicable and helpful in every facet of life. It’s my goal to share this information, facilitate productive conversation with our incarcerated population and hopefully help them to better equip themselves with the right tools to improve their situation and learn from past mistakes.”

"Although the purpose of education is to give all people the tools that they need to fulfill their unrealized potential, there is no formalized curriculum that deliberately and precisely lays out the self-management skills needed to succeed individually or collectively. By teaching this course at Broome County Correctional Facility, we are giving individuals a comprehensive self-management framework to help them reflect on their own behavior so that they can more effectively deal with their daily challenges and in doing so achieve their goals," Professor Gian Roma said.

"I'm so very proud of SUNY Broome faculty member Gian Roma, and our partners and neighbors at the Broome County Sheriff's Office, for being leaders of progress and reform by making this critically important course available," Dr. Tony Hawkins, President of SUNY Broome Community College, said. "We are committed to providing opportunities for education and upward mobility to this population of learners by providing additional programming to incarcerated individuals, and we hope that when they reacclimate into society, they will continue their education here at SUNY Broome."

Sheriff Fred Akshar said, “When Undersheriff Davis proposed adding this class to our full schedule of programming offered to our incarcerated population, it was clear that this course fit perfectly with our mission and mindset to provide constructive and rehabilitative programming for those who find themselves incarcerated. This is only the beginning of our partnership with SUNY Broome and our continued efforts to utilize every community resource available to ensure our incarcerated population go on to become successful, contributing members of our community when they exit our Correctional Facility.”

After successfully completing the five-week course, participating inmates will receive a free copy of the Student Success textbook, paid for by the BCSO Commissary Fund.

Three weeks into the pilot program, the responses from participating inmates has been overwhelmingly positive. Written comments from incarcerated individuals in each housing pod included:

- “Jail is the place for self-reflection. Our choices led to our current circumstances, and our ability to do self-management is crucial to our future. I liked the casual nature of the presentation. Making it personal, non-authoritarian, one human to another, based on mutual care and respect. Good <expletive>!”
- “I feel and think like him (Davis). We come from the same place.”
- “I really like the way the course was presented. I think it will be beneficial to the group to learn how to cope with our lifestyles. The #1 thing that got me was the 5 C’s.”

“This is a new approach, and many of our incarcerated have never seen anything like this in the jail,” said Davis. “The excitement is palpable and we’ve already had several requests to expand the program to other housing pods as well. It’s exciting to see such a positive response and to know that our efforts are being welcomed.”

“This is only the beginning of our plan to bring more opportunities for higher education and improvement into the Correctional Facility,” said Akshar. “We look forward to continuing to partner with our neighbors SUNY Broome on expanded and comprehensive educational programs.”

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