




Bergen Community College

Building Blocks

Annual Report 2024-2025





Brick-by-brick, rung-by-rung and step-by-step, Bergen Community College remains in constant motion. Refusing to rest on its laurels, Bergen seeks to build better, strive higher and grow stronger. We have the opportunity to do so because of the foundation on which the College sits, fortified by more than 50 years of a commitment to providing transformative educational experiences that allow students to learn, belong and succeed.

This year's annual report spotlights many of the projects, initiatives and success stories that emerged from this incredible year of growth that added to our foundation for the future. Perhaps no other item exemplifies this idea better than the Meadowlands Innovation Center, which opened its doors in November. We have taken the facility to another level, positioning it to emerge as the growth engine we envisioned for southern Bergen County for many years.

We have also intentionally built a culture of belongingness, rooted in the institution's vast diversity of people, culture and thought. Bergen always valued its inclusivity; I am proud that we have embraced this signature element of our institution and made it our own by focusing on how we can take steps to not only recognize our differences, but how we can ensure an environment where all feel welcome.

Bergen has grown externally, too. We will remember this year for the extensive work we have initiated to enhance our partnerships with industry, elected officials and advocacy organizations. Maintaining an active role in our community ensures that we give voice to our students, faculty and staff.

I thank you for your support of our institution as we build for the future each day.

Sincerely,

Dr. Eric M. Friedman
President, Bergen Community College

Building the Future



Building for the future takes vision. It takes bold ideas. And it takes innovation! That’s exactly what Bergen Community College at the Meadowlands has become: an innovation center designed to

prepare students for careers in areas exploding with growth and opportunity. The Innovation Center, which opened in November, encompasses an entire floor of the Lyndhurst location and includes cybersecurity, gaming and Bloomberg Finance laboratories and an “innovation” lounge where students can network and connect.



Whereas the Innovation Center brought clean, crisp lines from technology, Bergen builds for the future by getting its hands dirty, too. A \$250,000

“Trees for Schools” program grant through the Sustainability Institute at the College of New Jersey funded by the New Jersey Department of Environmental

Protection helped renew the main campus tree population thinned by a changing climate, disease and invasive insects.

The commitment to enhancing the physical campus also resulted in the renovation of the main campus athletics fields. The baseball, softball and soccer/track fields all received significant upgrades to improve accessibility, team comfort and playability.

Meanwhile, Bergen took steps to solidify its future success by adopting a new strategic plan; aptly named “Focusing on the Future.” The document, developed as part of a collaborative initiative that sought input from internal and external stakeholders, streamlines the College’s priorities for the next five years into four themes: 1) student achievement and enrollment; 2) diversity, equity, inclusion and belongingness; 3) marketing, communication and outreach; and 4) innovation.



Board of Trustees Chair Dorothy Blakeslee, President Eric M. Friedman, Bergen County Executive James J. Tedesco III, and Bergen County Commissioner Tracy Zur at the Innovation Center opening.

Focusing on the future also continued in the form of preparation for the College's 2025 Middle States Commission on Higher Education reaffirmation visit. Members of the College community worked to compile the building block document — the Self-Study — that will serve as the foundation for the evaluation visit process.

LATINXCEO

The acquisition of grants once again played a critical role in ensuring the College's future financial stability, helping to support programs and initiatives that may not otherwise have the wherewithal to succeed. Notably, U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) secured \$75,000 in federal funds for the LatinxCEO program, a workforce development initiative that targets underrepresentation in the workplace. Additionally, the College continues to operationalize its many grant programs, including the NextGen and HSI awards from the federal government that will allow Bergen to enhance its agricultural sciences, culinary and agribusiness offerings.



A New Cornerstone

Planning for future enrollment growth often requires bricks and mortar, too. The College will soon break ground on its first new academic building/annex in more than a decade with the construction of a culinary arts center. Bergen will expand the footprint of West Hall to create a culinary-focused facility that includes teaching laboratories and a signature event space. The building will continue the physical transformation of the Paramus main campus and provide learning opportunities that will expand and strengthen the curriculum in this high-growth field.



Athletics improvements.

Building Leaders



The next generation of leaders turned their tassels at the College’s 55th annual commencement exercises on May 14. Among the graduates:

- Valedictorian Shiwa Yangzom (top, left) led the class of 2024 on the strength of a 4.0 GPA and numerous extracurricular activities and awards through Phi Theta Kappa.
- Biology graduate Liliana Hopkins (top, right) earned entry into the Governor’s STEM Scholars Program, a

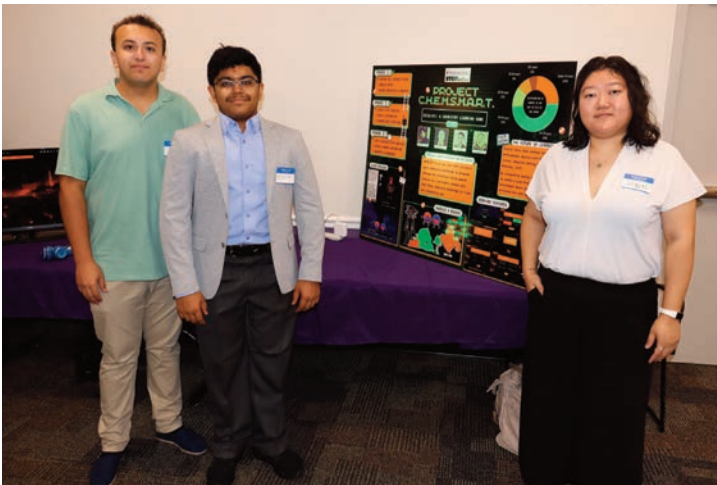
state funded initiative that pairs a college mentor with a team of high school students to conduct scientific research about a problem and design a solution based upon United Nations sustainability goals.

- The New Jersey Business and Industry Association selected Liangy Gomez (bottom, left) as one of five standout college students for the organization’s “Rising Star Awards” that recognize academic and community service excellence.
- Cat Clayton (bottom, right) performed the national anthem at commencement, while Student Government Association President Kaylie Quezada offered closing remarks.

Meanwhile, the College’s Phi Theta Kappa chapter once again excelled at giving students a chance to grow as future leaders. The chapter captured 26 individual and group awards at regional and international conferences, while individuals such as Mateo Armas earned the \$5,000 Guistwhite Scholar award as one of only eight students selected from 3,000 applicants. As a group, the chapter secured the REACH, Five-Star and Honors in Action Theme awards recognizing the group’s overall quality, membership and community service initiatives.



Members of the newest class of Phi Theta Kappa inductees.



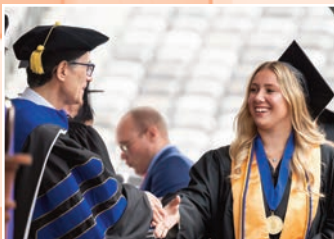
Partnering with PepsiCo, the multinational company provided mentorship opportunities for aspiring “women-in-STEM.” Students receive access to PepsiCo mentors and skills-building activities to develop their leadership capabilities. Future STEM leaders also took part in a “summer showcase” (pictured) event that offered students a chance to present their research projects.



“ When I consider all of my future academic endeavors, affordability plays such a huge role, and in some cases, forces me to consider turning away from wonderful opportunities. Being selected as a 2024 Jack Kent Cooke Scholar has broken that barrier for me, I feel that now I can truly shoot for the stars. ”

Something to Build On

Perhaps no Bergen student built such an incredible runway for success more than Ricardo Santana, who earned the \$55,000 per year Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship. The nation’s most prestigious scholarship for community college students, the program drew 1,700 applications; only 60 students received the award. Santana majored in political science at Bergen and aspires to become an attorney. He now attends Williams College.

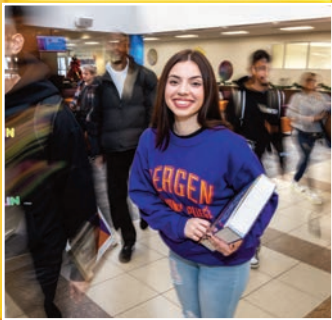


Snapshots from Commencement 2024.

Building a Community



The vibrancy of Bergen Community College comes through each day from the students, faculty and staff that give the College its strength. Building this community has taken more than 50 years — and we're not done yet!



Building Belongingness

Everyone belongs at Bergen! Bergen’s diversity has always represented a point of pride for the institution. President Eric M. Friedman has sought to build on the College’s history of inclusivity by leading projects such as the development of Bergen’s first diversity, equity and inclusion plan, which launched this year. The collaborative effort features the input of internal and external stakeholders and aims to memorialize the College’s efforts to continue to build a more inclusive Bergen.

Central to those efforts, Bergen hosts celebrations of its diversity throughout the year with guest visits, special events, and activities designed to recognize the many cultures, ethnicities, and people that make up the College.



Among this year’s events, world-renowned pianist Edwin Sungpil Kim’s performance in the Anna Maria Ciccone Theatre served as the gateway to creating a “cultural enrichment” endowment through the Bergen Community College Foundation that supports

diversity in arts at the institution. The event coincided with the “Arrivals/Departures — East8oWest” art exhibition on immigration in Gallery Bergen (pictured, right).

Also, custodians Rajmonda Bilalaj, William Dekker, Rafael del Rosario (pictured, page 11) earned recognition through the “Custodians are Key” program sponsored by the Tennant Company. The annual award program recognizes facilities staff members throughout the country who make a difference in their communities and organizations.

Additionally, as a community college committed to access to education, Bergen represents the first stop for



Belongingness takes many forms, including at heritage days, attendance at the Jersey Pride Festival in Asbury Park and Women’s History Month activities.



individuals seeking to assimilate to the United States through learning English. In this year alone, the Philip Ciarco Jr. Learning Center assisted 1,940 students who came to to begin their journey of learning the English language.

The College has also ensured belongingness remains inclusive of neurodiverse individuals in its community. Among the efforts last year, Phi Theta Kappa and health professions students worked with the Office of Specialized Services to make sure the unique needs of neurodiverse students become normalized parts of the College’s approach to student support services.



An Ethic of Care

While the Kansas City Chiefs may have lifted the Lombardi Trophy, Bergen hosted its own “Souper Bowl” to provide hot meals for those in need. The project, organized by Executive Assistant to the Board of Trustees Maria Ferrara collected more than 1,000 cans of soup for the on-campus Bergen Cares Center. The Cares Center offers students holistic support through resources such as a clothing closet, transportation assistance and referrals to social service agencies. The Cares Center represents a key effort in the College’s commitment to supporting student wellness and helping to keep them enrolled so they can earn a college degree or certificate.

Building a Reputation

The buzz about Bergen continues to build!

For the second consecutive year, Bergen earned a spot on *Diverse* magazine's "Most Promising Places to Work in Community Colleges." Only 18 institutions from across the country earned the designation. Researchers used a web-based survey to examine categories such as family friendliness, salary/benefits and professional development opportunities to determine honorees.



While elevating the image of the College represents the responsibility of the public relations and marketing department, the group of communicators made headlines for themselves last year, too. The group received a Paragon Award from the National Council in Marketing and Public Relations — the highest honor in strategic communication at community colleges — and an institution-record four Medallion Awards as part of the organization's regional recognition program — seen here with Assistant Director of PR Jessica Fagnoli.

Now in her 22nd year as a trustee, Board of Trustees Chair Dorothy Blakeslee (pictured, center) notched two major honors last year — the New Jersey Council of County Colleges Ronald D. Winthers Community College Trustee Leadership Award and finalist recognition in the American Association of Community Colleges' "Trustee of the Year" program.



Meanwhile, the New Jersey Council for the Humanities recognized Bergen with its highest honor: the Stanley N. Katz Prize for Excellence in Public Humanities for a series of projects revolving around the "Faith Ringgold: Coming to Jones Road" Gallery Bergen art exhibition.

Plaudits continued when the Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey recognized the College twice, bestowing Bergen with the "Companies That Care" honor for its work in supporting military veterans and the "Environmental Leader" prize for its commitment to stewardship.



Vice President of External Affairs Suzanne Wetzel, Professor Robert Dill, President Eric M. Friedman and Creamer Environmental Executive Vice President Tracy Straka accept the "Environmental Leader" award.



Students participated in the Meadowlands Chamber "Eggs and Issues" advocacy event.

Cerullo Learning Assistance Center academic coaches Mana Mehdizadeh and Daneiah Nasser earned the Association of Coaching and Tutoring Professionals Academic Coach of the Year Award. The honor recognizes the outstanding contributions of professional academic coaches in the U.S.



COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA

Finally, after an intense application process, education advocacy organization Complete College America selected Bergen

as one of only seven institutions from throughout the country to paint a representative portrait of the American community college experience through photography. Photographers from the organization captured promotional photos of Bergen’s main campus and students during a four-day shoot for use by colleges nationwide.



Getting Engaged in Governance

As the state’s bellwether community college, President Eric M. Friedman has prioritized ensuring Bergen, and its students, take a prominent role in advocacy and external affairs efforts. Among them, President Friedman and Student Government Association President Kaylie Quezada (pictured) testified before the New Jersey Senate Budget Committee in the hopes of reversing a \$20 million cut to the state’s community colleges. Their efforts succeeded.

This work occurs internally, too, as the College continued to enhance its participatory and shared governance mechanisms by expanding initiatives such as the All College Forum, town hall meetings, and “Pizza with the President.”



President Eric M. Friedman and student Daisy Alvarado went to “the Hill” to advocate on behalf of community colleges.

Building Partnerships



The deepening of the College’s relationship with Bergen County government remains one of the most visible examples of the institution’s stated goal of building meaningful relationships that benefit the community. President Friedman has worked with government partners such as Bergen County Executive James J. Tedesco III and the Board of Commissioners (pictured) to ink shared service agreements that reduce costs for the College and the County through facilities and law enforcement training



initiatives while also hosting County events at the College’s campuses.

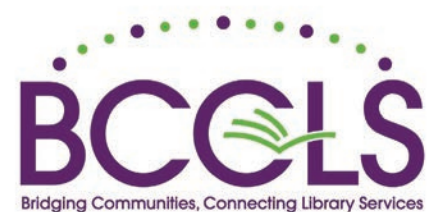
Also, President Eric M. Friedman and Bergen New Bridge Medical Center President and

CEO Deborah Visconi (pictured), communicate frequently, often attend the same events and serve on local nonprofit boards together. They both serve as advisers to County government officials for economic development. Each believe their unique relationship will help inspire new initiatives for Bergen County residents as they work together to create pathways for students to internships and employment.

Another key partnership continued to blossom last year, as Bergen continues to connect with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU). The advocacy organization provides access to programs, initiatives and funding for Hispanic students, including an internship program with the federal government of which two students participated. To continue the expansion of the HACU partnership, Assistant Vice President of Financial Aid and Compliance Yessika Garcia-Guzman and Bergen Community College at the Meadowlands Campus Executive Joao Sedycias were appointed to serve as official liaisons to the organization.



In the final year of a four-year grant term, Bergen served more than 2,200 New Jersey residents and helped place 1,300 individuals into apprenticeships and employment



Bergen began, continued or expanded partnerships with dozens of businesses, nonprofits and community organizations this year.

through a \$12 million U.S. Department of Labor healthcare education grant. Led by the Division of Continuing Education and Workforce Development, the College served as the lead agency in a consortium of 90 education and healthcare industry partners that provided education and placement for enrollees — some at no-cost. The grant specifically targeted assisting residents in the state’s underserved populations.

Nearly three-quarters of Bergen students enroll in the institution’s transfer programs, indicating their desire to earn an associate degree and continue their pursuit of a bachelor’s degree at a four-year college or university. To create additional pathways for Bergen graduates, College officials signed revised transfer agreements with Ramapo College of New Jersey, Montclair State University and Thomas Edison State University to further enhance the partnerships between the colleges.



Party City



Partner Pipeline

Did you know? Bergen even has students enrolled in college classes even before they graduate from high school! The College’s dual enrollment program continued to expand its reach last year, growing to more than 60 partner schools that give students a jumpstart on their college degree.

Building a Foundation

For many students, the building blocks for success unfortunately sway from time to time due to financial issues. To stabilize students' futures, the Bergen Community College Foundation and its Board of Directors work tirelessly with individual donors, nonprofits and major corporations to secure charitable gifts that lessen the burdens that students encounter. Donors contribute to the Foundation through one-time gifts, endowments and grants that support student scholarships, educational programs and special initiatives at Bergen.



In the spring, the Foundation awarded 368 students \$270,162.69 in scholarships for use during the fall semester. Students applied by submitting information such as their program of study, GPA and essays. College faculty and staff volunteers evaluate the applications,

score them and match the highest ranked entries with individual scholarship criteria outlined in the donor funds.

Also last year, in what has now become an annual tradition at commencement, the Foundation closed the ceremony by randomly selecting three graduates in attendance to receive a \$500 “send-off scholarship” to help them jumpstart their future plans. Graduates Brandon Oliff, Madison Adrianna Miret and Zachary Carter had their names randomly pulled for the awards. Inspired by the energy in the arena, President Eric M. Friedman spontaneously sponsored a fourth scholarship — awarded to Myrna Kayal (pictured) — before Foundation Chair Dan Foley and the Hon. Judge Neals did the same, pulling JB Xavier Jopia Abarquez and Robert Anton Pfautsch as the fifth and sixth random scholarship winners. When Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost Andrew Tomko returned to the microphone as the master of ceremonies, the graduates compelled him to sponsor a seventh scholarship. He obliged, pulling graduate Amanda Halliday’s name.



The College’s professors emeriti, which convene under the Foundation’s auspices, held their annual lunch in Gallery Bergen during the fall.



Meanwhile, the Foundation continues to maintain a deep connection with its student veteran community. Among the many initiatives the institution sponsors to support student veterans, the College’s veterans committee once again hosted the Hero 5K to both honor the sacrifices of veterans and to raise funds for veterans’ emergency support. In 2023, the event earned \$14,945 for tuition, fees, books, supplies, housing and other essentials for Bergen vets.



The Foundation and donors celebrated their work as part of a signature event — the “Goodbye to Summer Soiree” — that took place at the Indian Trail Club Lake House in Franklin Lakes in September 2023. The evening featured steel drum music, dinner and the last chance for “summer vibes!”



Pianist Edwin Sungpil Kim met with attendees after his performance in the Anna Maria Ciccone Theatre that helped establish a “cultural enrichment” fund through the Foundation.

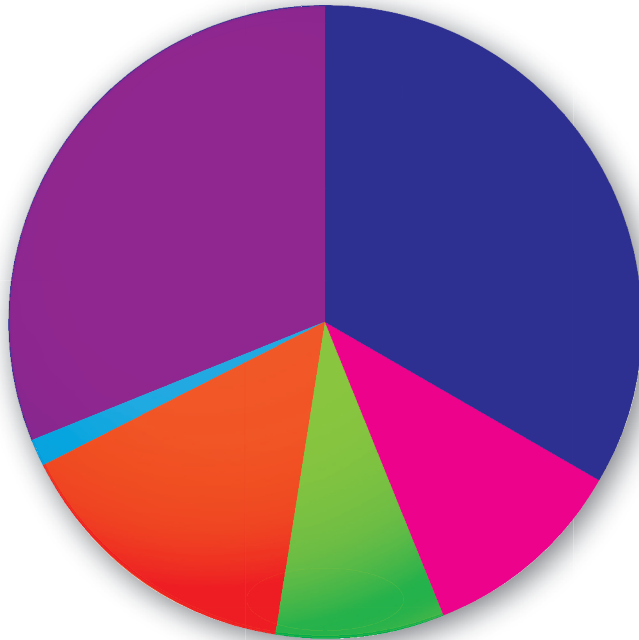


“It’s no secret that Bergen provides the best environment for students by giving them easy access to free tutors, extracurricular activities, and many other school resources,” Were said. “It’s also one of the few community colleges in New Jersey with a research center giving students more than enough access to everything they need.”

Building Blocks for Success

Panuha Were, who recently graduated with an associate degree in engineering science, earned two Bergen Community College Foundation scholarships during his time at the institution. The awards — the W.F. Coggie Endowed Scholarship and the Philip Begonia Memorial Scholarship — remained instrumental to his success.

FY2024 Budget

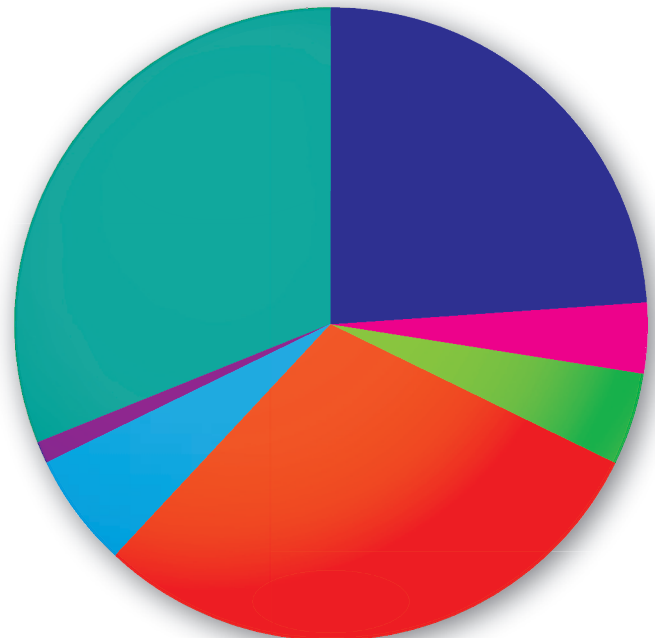


Revenues

■ Tuition	\$51,054,455
■ Student Fees	\$16,558,307
■ State	\$13,087,248
■ County	\$23,758,529
■ Other New Jersey Counties/ Enterprise/Other	\$2,111,692
■ Student Aid and Other Grants	\$47,500,000

Expenditures and Transfers

■ Instruction	\$36,826,926
■ Academic Support	\$5,900,515
■ Student Services	\$7,125,284
■ Institutional Support	\$45,622,029
■ Operation & Maintenance of Plant	\$9,363,475
■ Principal & Interest/ Auxiliary Enterprise Expenditures	\$1,732,003
■ Student Aid and Other Grants	\$47,500,000



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Bergen County Executive

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Continuing Education and
Workforce Development*
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*Vice President of
External Affairs*

The Office of Public Relations and Marketing compiled the 2023-2024 annual report. Share your feedback with lhavenka@bergen.edu.

Bergen Community College is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

For more information, visit bergen.edu/aboutus/accreditation

