



ANNUAL REPORT

2024 – 2025

Progress, by Design



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OUTCOMES, BY DESIGN

Dear Friends, Colleagues and
Members of Our Community,

In last year's annual report, I discussed the considerable efforts Bergen has made to develop the "building blocks" that would establish our foundation for the future. These building blocks required the collaboration of many - students, faculty, staff, government leaders, industry partners, higher education advocates and community members. The initial years of my presidency required this type of spade work in order to receive input, strategize and outline our plans. In short, we designed for how we would make progress.

These efforts bring us to this year's annual report and the current state of the institution. We have now reached the point at which we have operationalized our goals and have already begun to realize many of them. We are achieving outcomes that place the institution on stronger footing and provide new supports and resources for our students and the community.

We reached many milestones this year and accomplished great things working together as a community. Our successful reaffirmation of accreditation from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education reflects a central achievement.

In preparation for the Middle States evaluation, we collaborated to analyze issues both large and small, made strategic evidence-based decisions and reshaped our institutional framework. This included conducting a comprehensive mission review, developing a new academic master plan, an institutional strategic plan and working to ensure that our goals matched our values.

Our accreditors recognized this work and our commitment to continuous improvement with their full reaffirmation of our accreditation. I am truly in awe of the work we completed to reach this point, and, am grateful to everyone who played a role in it. I specifically want to acknowledge the continued, and expanded, support we have received from our partners in Bergen County government.

On the following pages, we celebrate this outcome - progress achieved by design.

The trustees and I are grateful for your continued support. The future is bright at this outstanding community college.

Sincerely,

Dr. Eric M. Friedman

President, Bergen Community College



President Eric M. Friedman, ACCT Vice President for Membership and Educational Services Robin Matross Helms, Linn-Benton Community College President Lisa Avery and Association of Colleges Deputy Chief Executive Julian Gravatt.

PROGRESS, BY DESIGN

Achieving the desired result does not happen by chance - it happens by design. Intentionality, planning and foresight provided the foundation for Bergen's most significant projects last year - new initiatives that emerged as the result of strategic priorities and others that represented capstone efforts.

Nearly three years of preparation concluded in the spring with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education's reaffirmation of the institution's accreditation. The commission's decision acknowledges the College's commitment to progress, a culture of continuous improvement and cross-College collaboration by faculty, staff and students that helped convey Bergen's high performance as a model community college worthy of commendation.

Detailed preparation also helped Bergen operationalize the 2024-2029 strategic plan as faculty and staff began to execute tactics related to four central themes: student achievement and enrollment; inclusion and belongingness; marketing and communication; and outreach and innovation.

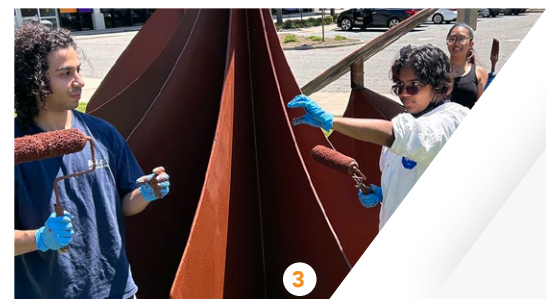
The desire to provide innovative opportunities for students even led Bergen across the pond: the

Association of Community College Trustees and United Kingdom Association of Colleges selected Bergen as an inaugural partner for a collaborative student exchange program with colleges in the U.K. supported by the Cyril Taylor Charitable Foundation (pictured above).

Meanwhile, the physical campus has also undergone a transformation designed to foster belongingness through welcoming, comfortable and curated spaces. From interior classrooms to exterior landscaping, the Child Development Center (photo 2), the Cerullo Learning Assistance Center and a series of sculpture restorations by faculty, staff and students, the campus has never looked better.

In recognition of the comprehensive project to restore the collection of outdoor sculptures at the main campus, the College received a "Bergen County Historic Preservation" award from the Bergen County Historic Preservation Advisory Board (photo 3).

Progress also took place within the College's digital portfolio with the debut of the official podcast, Bergen Banter, which features expert commentary from the institution's faculty on topics of global interest (photo 1).



ACHIEVEMENT, BY DESIGN



Class of 2025 Valedictorian Francesco Maneri (left), Erica Faye Tubera (right) performing the Star-Spangled Banner at commencement.

From the first day of classes in September to the final steps of the last graduate walking off the stage at commencement, Bergen students once again earned considerable accolades for their achievements in the past year.

Let's begin at the end - Commencement 2025. More than 2,000 students earned associate degrees and certificates, including 567 members of Phi Theta Kappa, 71 students with 4.0 GPAs and 220 high school students who earned associate degrees through early college programs.

Erica Faye Tubera performed the Star-Spangled Banner at the ceremony and she's already said "bon voyage!"

Shortly after graduating, Tubera parlayed her Bergen education and vocal talents to a starring role as "Moana" on a Disney Cruise Line ship.

" In life, skill is second... kindness is first. Knowledge means little if it isn't shared generously. Learning is richest in collaboration. The best of us lift others up rather than leave them behind."

**CLASS OF 2025 VALEDICTORIAN
FRANCESCO MANERI**

Speaking of worldly adventures, students Waad Sidahmed, Matthew Luciani, Angela Mae Villaroman, Jordan Rodriguez, Mujtaba Ali and Enrico Crescimbeni each received scholarships to study abroad in France as part of a

two-week bootcamp program offered by Villa Albertine, the French Institute for Culture and Education. The students participated in experiential learning projects while exploring different cultures and networking with other community college students. Ooh la la!

Back at home, student Maria Frometa Lora earned one of 50 spots in the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities Leader-in-Residence Program. She served as a HACU ambassador on

the Bergen campus while also receiving a full sponsorship to participate in HACU's "¡Adelante! Leadership Institute," the student track at the group's annual conference.

TRANSFER TIME

We can't discuss achievement without this snapshot of where Bergen graduates transferred this year after commencement!





SUCCESS, BY DESIGN

1

Bergen once again earned praise for its efforts throughout the past year with programs, initiatives and the College itself receiving honors from industry leaders, professional organizations and higher education advocates.



For the third time in the last decade, the Cerullo Learning Assistance Center notched an honor recognizing it as one of the best tutoring centers in the country. This time, the Association for the Coaching and Tutoring Profession presented the “Learning Center of Excellence Award” to the College, acknowledging the best-practice efforts of the institution’s academic coaches, student tutors, faculty and staff.

Since its inception, Bergen has sought to design and nurture the region’s finest health professions programs to prepare students for careers in the county’s largest workforce sector. Students have taken advantage of the opportunity, frequently passing licensing exams at rates far surpassing industry averages. Last year, the National Conference on EMS presented the paramedic science program with its “Director’s Award” in recognition of the 99+ percent of Bergen students who pass their certification and licensure exams (photo 1).

Sometimes, it’s the design itself that gets recognized. Literally! Last year, Bergen captured two National Council in Marketing and Public Relations Paragon Awards - the highest honor for excellence in strategic communication at community colleges - recognizing excellence in graphic design and editorial content for materials created by its in-house creative team.



Here’s something to smile about: for two consecutive years, every dental hygiene program graduate passed the Commission on Dental Competency and Assessments licensing exam.



NASPA | Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education celebrated Bergen’s work in creating a more inclusive campus environment for individuals with intellectual disabilities through the TurningPoint Program. Recognized alongside major research institutions, Bergen earned a silver “Excellence Award” in the Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice category as one of only two community colleges in the country to earn any of the organization’s 11 awards.

EXCELLENCE, BY DESIGN

For Bergen to stand above its peers as one of the nation's great community colleges, institutional leaders have known the importance of developing an unparalleled faculty and staff. Accolades came from organizations throughout the country this year.



The Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey, which recognized Assistant Vice President of Information Technology Nishika Gupta (right) and Director of Community Affairs Tracy Miceli (left) as “enterprising women in commerce.”



The College also celebrated excellence with the annual employee recognition program for those marking milestone years at Bergen.



Professor Cesarina Vinas received the Don Quixote de La Mancha scholarship from the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, which provided her with a teaching experience at the University of Castilla - La Mancha in Spain.

Phi Theta Kappa honored Chief Financial Officer **Wilton Thomas-Hooke** with the Distinguished College Administrator award. Students from Bergen's Alpha Epsilon Phi chapter of the international organization nominated him based on his support of their work.



The Association of Community College Trustees (AACC) selected Executive Assistant to the Board of Trustees and the President **Maria Ferrara** to receive the “professional board staff member - northeast region” award. The honor recognizes the top board support professional working at one of the hundreds of community colleges in the northeastern United States.

The New Jersey Council of County Colleges (NJCCC) awarded **Tracy Rand**, senior director of student access and transition services, the “Spirit Award” for her “above and beyond” service to community college students. Annually, the NJCCC recognizes the state's best faculty, staff, students, trustees and community partners through the New Jersey Community College Awards program.





ENGAGEMENT, BY DESIGN

As part of a multifaceted strategy of engagement, Bergen is always buzzing with activity. Providing students with outlets for their creativity and interests drives experiential and essential learning that keeps students focused, vested and engaged in their college experience.

For example, Bergen's STEM program once again served as a proving ground this year for thousands of aspiring researchers. Perhaps no event captured the spirit of the program more than the annual STEM Summit that took place in July. The event, which took place at the Innovation Center at Bergen Community College at the Meadowlands, featured panels with industry experts, a showcase of student work and an opportunity for students to network (photo 1).

STEM also served as the center of activity for the College's first-ever hackathon - a 12-hour event in March with more than 130 participants. Sponsored by Amazon Web Services, the hackathon challenged students to work in teams of four to develop solutions to real world challenges in three categories: education, environment and transportation. And how's this for engagement: a group of STEM students organized the entire event (photo 2)!

Meanwhile, for aspiring entrepreneurs, the Bergen for Business workforce development program provided students with a trio of initiatives to connect them with the local workforce - including a new data analyst cohort

developed as the latest piece of the program's portfolio (photo 3).

Humanities students had opportunities to get involved through events such as the Beacon Conference, which Bergen hosted at its main campus in June. A collaborative of 15 mid-Atlantic community colleges, of which Bergen remains a charter member, have partnered to organize the event since 1993. Supported by faculty mentors, the conference's interdisciplinary approach allows students to submit their research, essays and analysis for possible inclusion in the conference. Bergen students placed first in five categories, the most for any college with students competing in the event. Bergen's winners were: Vincent Jericho, Hanieh Kachooee, Francesco Maneri, Catherine Park (photo 4) and Dylan Rehm.

Members of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society - perhaps the most engaged student group of them all at Bergen - once again made their presence known. Among the group's shining stars, Elizabeth Girard earned the 2025 Hites Transfer Scholarship, PTK's most prestigious scholarship offering at \$7,500. Additionally, Maria Formeta Lora and Franzen Angeleen Quicho secured spots on the New Jersey All-State Academic Team and received 2025 Coca-Cola Academic Team scholarships of \$1,500 and \$1,000, respectively (photo 5).

ADVOCACY, BY DESIGN

Under President Eric M. Friedman's leadership, Bergen has greatly expanded its standing as a bellwether for New Jersey community colleges by participating in government relations activities. Among them, the president has traveled to Washington and Trenton to advocate for the needs of community colleges and their students. In fact, testimony from President Friedman before the Senate Budget Committee helped reverse a series of otherwise devastating multimillion-dollar reductions in state support to community colleges. As the state's community colleges' "advocate-in-chief," New Jersey Council of County Colleges President Aaron Fichtner (photo 3) frequently organizes visits for College leaders with elected officials and accompanies them on visits.

Visitors to Rep. Josh Gottheimer's Washington office included President Eric M. Friedman, trustees Dorothy Blakeslee, Sheetal Ranjan and Kaylie Quezada (photo 5). A delegation of Bergen students, Vice President AJ Trump and the Office of Student Life's Greg Fenkart and Jared Farra had an opportunity to visit the New Jersey Statehouse (photo 4).

Back in Bergen County, the College frequently hosts elected officials for town halls, constituent meetings and special events. Last year included a visit from U.S. Senator Cory Booker, who returned to his home county - he grew up in Harrington Park - for a community engagement forum (photo 1 with Bergen County Executive James J. Tedesco III).

Bergen also sought to raise issue-based awareness through events and activities throughout the year as well. These included:

- A two-part conference on human-trafficking that featured local social service professionals and sociology Professor Shari Franschman.
- The "More Than One Story" initiative that compiled the accounts of Bergen County residents and their immigration experiences and corresponded with the institution's "common read" book, "A Map is Only One Story: Twenty Writers on Immigration, Family and the Meaning of Home," edited by Nicole Chung and Mensah Demary.
- A visit from author Matthew Desmond (photo 2) to discuss his Pulitzer-Prize winning book "Poverty, by America" during the "Poverty in Our Communities Summit."





STRONGER, BY DESIGN

When Bergen leaders reflect on their commitment to continuous improvement, they respond with a question: how can we make the College even stronger? This concept, now wrapped in Bergen's guiding ethos, encourages leaders to reach higher, reverse paradigms and provide new tools that will move the community up and forward.

In 2024-25, grants once again stood as the strongest engine for growth at Bergen, allowing the College to build on existing initiatives, expand access and develop new programs that support student success, workforce development and institutional improvement. This year's grants included:

- A \$2 million New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce award - the New Jersey Manufacturing Skills Initiative - to offer 250 students the opportunity to enroll in a tuition-free manufacturing education and training program with pipelines to employment through industry partners (photo 2).
- Nearly \$3 million from the federal government to develop support programs that help students remain enrolled and positioned to earn associate degrees under the "Bergen Rebounds: Assist, Advance and Achieve" initiative.
- Approximately \$300,000 from the New Jersey Builders Utilization Initiative for Labor Diversity Women and Minorities in Construction Trades grant that seeks to prepare women and minority candidates for jobs in construction management (photo 1).

The College's participatory and shared governance structure also contributes to its institutional strength. By prioritizing transparent, collaborative relationships between students, faculty and staff through initiatives such as the All College Forum (photo 3), town halls and Pizza with the President, the College ensures everyone has a voice ... and that everyone's voice is heard!



A COMMUNITY, BY DESIGN



It's right there in Bergen's name: community. And as a community college, Bergen has a responsibility to the people it serves. That responsibility encourages Bergen to design learning experiences that stretch beyond the classroom and create community.

The Bergen Institute for the Creative Arts remains "front-and-center" at the College's efforts to create community. From fashion shows, to Bergenstages performances and Gallery Bergen, the College has become an important part of Bergen County's culture scene. The creative arts faculty have even worked their professional contacts to bring major artists, such as Georgia Stitt, to campus for "lunch and learns" with students and evening performances.

Heritage, culture and awareness weeks and months also give Bergen its community character. Designed to reflect the community in which we live, inclusivity and belongingness always have a home at Bergen.

Meanwhile, events such as the annual "Give Kids a Smile Day" does exactly what it promises by providing complimentary dental care for children from Bergen's dental hygiene program students.

Kids and teens also come to campus for a comprehensive summer camp program designed by the Division of Continuing Education and Workforce Development. Bergen's youngest learners not only have the opportunity to explore their interests, but spend some time as "big kids on campus."



Local high schoolers have the chance to thrive as part of the College's early college programs as well. Collectively, 2,962 students from 53 high schools participated in one of the four programs last year, giving them the opportunity to earn an associate degree or certificate before they even graduate from high school! Partners include the Applied Technology High School, which operates at the College's main campus in Paramus. More than 50 students graduated with associate degrees and high school diplomas through the program this year.

SUPPORT, BY DESIGN

When it comes to providing support for students, faculty and academic programs, leave the design to the Bergen Community College Foundation and the generosity of its donors. Last year, nearly 200 students received scholarships through the College's 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization to support their education, including Isabella Santelli (photo 1 with President Eric M. Friedman and Foundation Board of Directors Chair Daniel M. Foley).

Of special note, the foundation once again awarded five \$1,000 "send-off scholarships" to randomly selected graduates in attendance at commencement. The scholarships, which have become an annual tradition to signify the end of the graduates' Bergen education, aim to provide the selected graduates with a special head-start on their post-Bergen journey. This year, Assistant Director of Information Technology Business Operations Kirsten Perino and her family foundation personally sponsored the scholarships by donating to the Foundation (photo 3). The Perino Family Foundation Graduation Scholarship will continue next year; the family has already made a \$5,000 donation for the class of 2026. Inspired by the Perino Family Foundation, four platform guests - President Eric M. Friedman, Vice President of Student Affairs AJ Trump, Trustee Howard Haughton and Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost Andrew Tomko - spontaneously announced that they would sponsor \$1,000 send-off scholarships too!

The foundation also plays an important role in honoring the history of the College through the professor emeritus program - an honor reserved for the institution's most exemplary faculty members. Selected by their colleagues, the College inducted five longtime professors into the exclusive group this year: Carlo Annese, Philip Dolce, Weiping "Bill" Jiang (posthumous), Mauro Marzocco (posthumous) and Lou Ethel Roliston (photo 2). With the latest inductees, only 74 faculty members have earned the rank of professor emeritus.



Spring 2025 Foundation scholarship awardees.



SUPPORT, BY DESIGN OUR DONORS

The Bergen Community College Foundation Board of Directors acknowledges those listed alphabetically for their contributions during the past fiscal year. This generous support remains critical to removing the financial barriers many students face to accessing the promise of a Bergen education. We are very thankful for the thoughtfulness and commitment to our students.

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Progress, By Design is a publication of the Office of Marketing and Communications.
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ANNUAL REPORT

2024 – 2025

Progress, by Design