BERGEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE



COMMUNITY

Learn • Belong • Succeed

2025–2026
ANNUAL
REPORT

Bergen
COMMUNITY COLLEGE



BERGEN.EDU

Bergen Community College

MISSION

Bergen Community College provides accessible and transformative programs and services to its diverse community. As a comprehensive community college, we are committed to student success, innovation, and inclusivity.

VISION

Bergen Community College will be:

- A first-choice option for its community.
- A national model for innovation and partnerships.
- An institution recognized for its ability to meet the needs of an ever-changing student population in a landscape of evolving employers' workforce needs.

VALUES

Consistent with Bergen Community College and who we are as a community, these core values guide our daily work:

Commitment

We are committed to providing education in the liberal arts, sciences, technical fields, and a variety of non-credit programs that fosters critical thinking, facilitates upward mobility, and instills a sense of purpose.

Creativity

We are imaginative and innovative in promoting success for our students and in accomplishing our goals.

Collaboration

We emphasize teamwork and acknowledge and take pride in the contributions of others.

Communication

We regularly and openly share what we do with both internal and external community members.

Care

We identify, prioritize, and resolve issues by leading with an ethic of care.

Challenge

We challenge ourselves to improve upon our programs and services.

Celebration

We acknowledge, honor, and take pride in the quality of our work and the work of others.

A MESSAGE OF UNITY



Dear Community Members,

Sharing this year's annual report brings me a great sense of pride. It stands as a celebration of Bergen Community College's growth and success in 2025-2026 as we recognize the *unity* within this *community*.

We celebrate accomplishments such as Bergen's recognition as one of the "most promising places to work in community colleges" - an honor we have now earned for a fourth time. This award acknowledges Bergen's inclusive culture and our shared commitment to building a community where faculty and staff work together to transform our students' lives. It also highlights our efforts to build an on-campus community through our participatory and shared governance initiatives that ensure everyone at Bergen has a voice in shaping the future of this great college.

Students remain at the center of our community. They come to Bergen with diverse goals, but a shared ambition: to move up and forward. At events like Commencement, we see the realization of their dreams as they stand beside each other as members of a learning community prepared to succeed in the future.

We also see the power of unity in our partnerships with government, nonprofit and industry leaders. By aligning with regional partners, Bergen serves as a civic hub where our community gathers in the spirit of shared purpose and innovation.

Bergen has become a vibrant community because of our extraordinary faculty, staff, students, and partners. Your ongoing support strengthens our mission and positions us to lead amidst rapid change. Thank you for standing with us as we demonstrate the true power of *unity in community*, empower our students, and strengthen our region.

Sincerely,
Dr. Eric M. Friedman
President, Bergen Community College







President Eric M. Friedman, Bergen Cares Center Coordinator Annie Echeverry and student Julia Huber accepted a $7,500 donation from grocery retailer Stop & Shop on "Giving Tuesday" in December.

SERVING THIS COMMUNITY

"You belong at Bergen."

It's an ethos that has defined the College in recent years, conveying the institution's desire to create a welcoming, safe and community environment where everyone feels connected. In 2025-2026, Bergen continued to not only sponsor initiatives that enhanced belongingness on campus, but strengthened ties with the local community as well.

And the word is out!

In recognition of the College's efforts, for the fourth consecutive year, the EDU Ledger recognized Bergen as one of the "most promising places to work in community colleges." The program recognizes colleges with best practice professional resources, administrative structures and work environments.



The College's Cerullo Learning Assistance Center - a bedrock program in the institution's support of students - received the "Coaching Program of Excellence Award" from the Association for the Coaching and Tutoring Professions. It represents the latest honor for a tutoring center that has previously won awards naming it the best in the country. Pictured: Dean of Learning Support Khairia Fazal, Academic Coaching Supervisor Kelli Hayes, Writing Center Supervisor John Findura and Cerullo Center Manager Candice Kaup Scioscia.



2025 BELLWETHER COLLEGE CONSORTIUM Finalist

Bergen's renowned Turning Point Program for young adults with intellectual disabilities notched recognition for its commitment to belongingness last year, becoming a finalist for the Bellwether College Consortium Award.



Bergen received recognition for extending a hand to the youngest members of its community last year as well. Executive Assistant to the Board of Trustees and the President Maria Ferrara organized a group of volunteers to stuff, fluff and dress teddy bears delivered to the Valley Hospital's smallest patients just days before Christmas. The Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey recognized Bergen with a "Companies That Care Award" for the initiative.

Conversations about community outreach often include the Philip Ciarco Jr. Learning Center in Hackensack, which tailors each of its programs to meet the needs of residents within the city limits and immediate surrounding area. Last year, the Center provided English-as-a-Second-Language courses for 350 students, hosted high school equivalency courses and launched a number of health professions-focused certification programs.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Thanks to a major donation from the Southpole Foundation, the Center for Community Learning hosted a week-long summer program that offered local Korean-Americans the opportunity to participate in lectures facilitated by Bergen professors, panel discussions with business leaders and a luncheon at the main campus. Phi Theta Kappa students also created connections with the Korean community with the backing of Southpole when they joined Korean Community Services of New Jersey to help hand-deliver prepared meals for isolated senior citizens.



Taking its cue from the first Thanksgiving where people of different cultures came together to express gratitude, Bergen hosted a holiday celebration for international students as a way to introduce them to the uniquely American holiday.



The dental hygiene program sponsored the annual "Give Kids a Smile Day" to provide complimentary check-ups for local children.

A COMMUNITY PILLAR

Bergen has become even stronger in living its mission because of the foundation built by investments in its personnel, facilities and resources.

For example, the last five years have represented a transformational period for the institution's participatory and shared governance structure as College leaders seek to ensure everyone at Bergen has an opportunity to contribute toward institutional improvement. The All College Forum, an open platform for participation in College affairs, elected new leadership as the outgoing inaugural chair, Assistant Vice President of Information Technology Nishika Gupta (pictured center), completed her term. New chair, Professor Julie Seda (pictured right), will work alongside vice chair and NJ STARS Coordinator Julia Gibson, who was elected to the position.



The Faculty Senate, another integral part of the College's participatory and shared governance structure, welcomed new leadership as well. Professor Christine Eubank (pictured) became chair of the unit as longtime chair professor Alan Kaufman passed the baton.



Initiatives such as "Pizza with the President" and periodic town halls helped to reinforce the College's commitment to participatory and shared governance.



Bergen's renowned faculty notched new honors last year as well, with professors Leigh Jonaitis (pictured left) and Coleen Kennedy (pictured right) receiving the 2025 National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development Excellence Award for their commitment to teaching and student success.

Meanwhile, Bergen continues to make investments in its facilities to provide new resources and enhance the campus experience. Among the developments in the last year, the College opened Bergen Brew, a new student center café (pictured below). The coffee spot not only features a fresh look, but a fresh approach to campus dining. Based on students' overwhelming requests for improved coffee, hospitality partner American Dining Creations (ADC) partnered with Pour City Roasters, a local brewery in Franklin Lakes, and students participated in a contest to name the cafe. Student feedback also led ADC to reshape the menus at both the coffee café and Primo Pizza.



Also, as Bergen expands its digital footprint, the College launched the "Book Club Conversations" podcast with President Eric M. Friedman. The periodic podcast hosted by President Friedman features a deep dive on a piece of literature selected by the president and a guest including Academic Vice President/Provost Andrew Tomko.



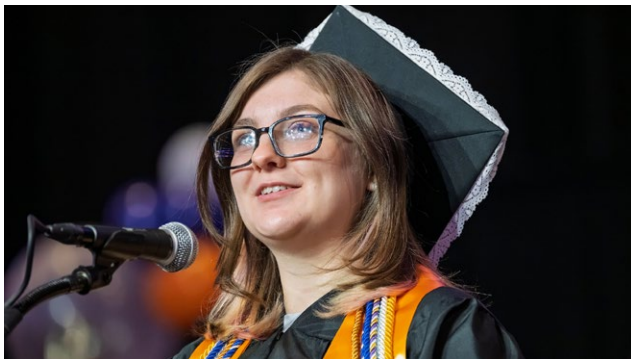
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

When it comes to communicating with the community, Bergen continues to receive accolades for its approach. Last year, the Office of Marketing and Communications secured four National Council for Marketing and Public Relations Medallion Awards, a bellwether recognition for communicators in a region that includes more than 650 colleges in the Northeast and Canada. Bergen earned honors for printed pieces promoting membership in Phi Theta Kappa and NJ STARS and another aimed at recruiting previous students with a lapse in enrollment. Studio Bergen: Remix, a five-minute digital news magazine, won in the video category.



AT THE CENTER OF OUR COMMUNITY

It should come as no surprise that students stand at the center of the Bergen community. More than 24,000 enrolled in degree, certificate and continuing education programs last year each with different goals but united as members of this community. Here are a few of their stories:



Valedictorian Alexie Kotfisz led the class of 2026 as its top student during Commencement 2026 at the Prudential Center. Kotfisz entered Bergen expecting to pursue a career in the culinary arts after earning acclaim as a top high school pastry chef. However, enrolling at Bergen unlocked another interest - mathematics - that ultimately inspired her to change her entire professional outlook. She has now transferred to Ramapo College of New Jersey under a full scholarship to study to become a teacher.



In all, the class of 2026 included more than 2,000 graduates, including 66 students who earned 4.0 GPAs, 15 members of the Turning Point Program for neurodiverse adults and 206 local high school students who earned degrees through the early college program.



Out of 5,000 students from more than 130 countries, Bergen Model U.N. President Hind Fettachi earned the "Outstanding Delegate" award at the National Model U.N. Conference in New York City, making her the only community college student from New Jersey to win the honor. She also led the Bergen team to "Outstanding Delegation" recognition at the conference.



The New Jersey Business and Industry Association recognized student Alicia Brownstein with its "Rising Star Award" that celebrated five female college students who have excelled in the classroom and made significant contributions to their communities.



The Bergen Byte Squad, a robotics team of STEM students led by mentor Yolonda Sheppard, earned the "Judges' Award" at the VEX-U Push Back Annual Tournament that took place at Monroe County Community College in Michigan.



Phi Theta Kappa students Beixi Chen (pictured, far right) and Endri Dobrovoda (pictured, third from left) each won elections among their peers for international executive officer positions with the organization. Chen now serves as the Middle States region executive vice president, while Dobrovoda serves as the Division I international vice president.



On the sports page, the Bulldogs men's soccer team captured a Region 19 East Region B title and advanced to the national "final four" before ending their season in the tournament semifinals. Individual postseason awards went to winger Jonathan Remache, who earned Region 19 "Player of the Year" and first-team all-region honors, and striker Onur Can, who won Most Outstanding Player of the Region 19 Tournament honors and also made the all-region first-team.



Also in sports news, Miloida "Milly" Hilaire placed first in the high jump competition at the National Junior College Athletic Association's Division III National Championship with a winning height of 1.49 meters.

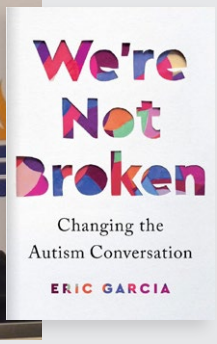


The Bergen Alumni Theatre troupe presented "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)" in collaboration with the College's Bergenstages thespian group.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

The Bergen community is defined by the diversity of its people, ideas and campus life. Bergen's vibrancy shines through in the events, activities and programs it offers, including through academic programs, special guests and unique opportunities for engagement.





Visitors to campus last year included journalist Eric Garcia, the author of "We're Not Broken: Changing the Autism Conversation." The College has made neurodiversity a central focus, selecting Garcia's book on the topic as the institution's "common read." The initiative encouraged all members of the College community to read the book and participate in discussions, activities and projects surrounding the work throughout the year.

Internationally recognized sociologist and ethnographer Terry Williams also visited campus for the "Beyond Poverty: Life Under the Surface" discussion. Recognized as one of the world's preeminent ethnographers, his work includes explorations of teen drug cultures and crack houses, after hours clubs and sex clubs, teenage suicide survivors, the lives of building supers and the homeless.

Additionally, the College partnered with the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History to bring two traveling exhibitions to the main campus that spoke to its commitment to diversity and the rights of diverse communities: "Immigration: An American Story" and "Who Can Vote?: A Brief History of Voting Rights in the United States."

Meanwhile, the arts play an important role in Bergen's inclusive campus, with the Bergen Institute for the Creative Arts sponsoring performances, exhibitions and showcases throughout the year.



Terry Williams, renowned ethnographer.



Last year's exhibitions in Gallery Bergen included "Personal Effects: Works by Gregg Biermann," which featured large-scale video installations and still images by the faculty member.



High fashion takes center stage at the BICA Gala.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



County government leaders share the College's goals of inclusivity and diversity. Nearly each week, members of county leadership gather to host celebrations of community by recognizing cultures, people and traditions. Bergen faculty, staff and students frequently find themselves at the center of these celebrations, with numerous individuals earning accolades from county officials last year. They are:

Gianfranzo Apezzato
Student (Hispanic Heritage Month)

Jim Bumgardner
Professor (Pride Celebration) - pictured

Jensy Jimenez
Student (Dominican Day)

Luis Jimenez
Professor (Hispanic Heritage Month)

Jang Luis Mok Perez
Student (Caribbean Heritage Month)

Linda Seidman
Professor (Pride Celebration) - pictured

Yahendry Tavarez
Student (Caribbean Heritage Month)

A COMMUNITY PARTNER

It goes without saying that a *community* college must partner with the community it serves. But Bergen has taken partnership to a whole new level - across the ocean, in fact!





As an inaugural partner in the "U.S.-U.K. Community College and Technical Education Exchange" program organized by the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) and U.K. Association of Colleges (AoC), Bergen hosted students and faculty from Southport College (England) at its main campus for an international learning exchange focused on sustainability. Based on its record of excellence in STEM education, the ACCT and AoC selected Bergen as a flagship partner for the learning exchange program launched last year with financial support from the Cyril Taylor Charitable Foundation.

Meanwhile, the College continued to develop initiatives in support of the multimillion-dollar USDA "NextGen" program to develop learning initiatives that contribute to the growth of future food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences professionals. Faculty and staff have led students through projects such as creating hydroponic gardens, farm-to-table production systems and new waste management solutions.



Bergen also prioritizes partnerships with the workforce community as it seeks to move members of the community up and forward. These partnerships take many forms, including through public grant programs such as the Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education initiative made possible through a $347,696 New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development grant. Forty-four students graduated from the program and can now immediately enter the healthcare industry facing a shortage of qualified employees. The College also partnered with Bergen New Bridge Medical Center to offer the program and to provide graduates with potential employment opportunities.

Transfer partnerships also remain incredibly important to Bergen - and the students it serves. These "articulation agreements" create pathways for graduates to enter four-year colleges with advanced status at institutions both in-state and out!

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Partnerships extend to local high schools and four year colleges as well. Bergen's dual enrollment program for high school students taking college courses now accounts for more than 15 percent of the institution's overall enrollment. Key partnerships such as the Bergen County Technical Schools district, which includes the Applied Technology High School at the main campus, provide high school students with an opportunity to get a head start on their college education while still enrolled in high school. More than 200 students even graduated with associate degrees last year!



Bergen County Executive James Tedesco, Bergen County Technical Schools Superintendent Howard Lerner and President Eric M. Friedman.



Bergen continues to strengthen its relationships with government leaders, who represent some of the College's most ardent advocates. Nearly the entire Bergen County government delegation attended the College's Black History Month opening ceremony.



U.S. Representative Josh Gottheimer (D-5) frequently visits to participate in College events.



Board of Trustees Chair Dorothy Blakeslee, President Eric M. Friedman, U.S. Representative Nellie Pou (D-9) and Trustee Ana Marti.



New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Ed Wengryn attended a celebration of the horticulture program.



COMMUNITY LEADERS



Celebrating his fifth anniversary as Bergen president, Eric M. Friedman has become a fixture in the Bergen County community. In the past five years, Friedman has prioritized building a community through serving the community. He has positioned Bergen to thrive as a centralized hub for learners, industry partners and community members. Organizations have taken notice of Friedman's leadership. In October, the NAACP Metuchen Edison Area Branch recognized him with the Booker T. Washington Education Award, celebrating his commitment to providing transformational educational opportunities for all members of the community, and ROI-NJ named him as an "ROI Influencer in Higher Education" and to the "ROI-NJ 2026 Power List."

ROI
roi-nj.com



Meanwhile, Board of Trustee Treasurer Patrick Fletcher received the Ronald D. Winthers Community College Trustee Leadership Award from the New Jersey Council of County Colleges. The honor recognizes an individual who "exemplifies visionary trustee leadership at the local, state and national levels."

NJ CCC New Jersey Council of County Colleges

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

As the most important day of the academic year, commencement always features words of wisdom from local leaders who seek to inspire the graduates and wish them well in their future endeavors. This year proved no different, as State Assemblywoman Lisa Swain (D-38, below, left) served as the keynote speaker, Bergen County Executive James J. Tedesco III (below, center) and Bergen County Board of Commissioners Vice Chair Tracy Zur (below, right) all attended and provided the graduates with a memorable moment.









Additionally, NJCCC President Aaron Fichtner celebrated the completion of Trustee Sheetal Ranjan's two-year term as council chair at the close of 2025 by presenting her with a plaque. Among the progress initiated under Ranjan's leadership, the NJCCC developed the "Opportunity Agenda," a shared vision for the state's community colleges in spring 2024 and updated that vision in fall 2025.



Michele Dilorgi



Ourania Nassis Rahman



Suzanne Wetzel



Anna Gergen

Two new trustees joined the board last year as well - Michele Dilorgi, the executive director of the Housing Authority of Bergen County and longtime county government leader, and alumna Ourania Nassis Rahman ('25), who joined as alumni representative.

Other leadership notes from last year include Vice President of External Affairs, Suzanne Wetzel, receiving the "Distinguished College Administrator Award" at the Catalyst Conference and Assistant Director of PTK and Honors Anna Gergen earning the "Distinguished Advisor Award" from PTK.



CREATING OPPORTUNITY







In the 45 years since its founding, the Bergen Community College Foundation has provided thousands of students with the opportunity to succeed. This year, the 501(c)(3) added two new signature events in order to take its ability to support students to new heights.

In December the Foundation hosted its inaugural "Scholarship Gala" at The Venetian in Garfield, raising more than $200,000 for student scholarships through two dozen sponsors and hundreds of individual donors. Over 300 community leaders, elected officials, donors, faculty, staff, alumni and students attended the organization's signature fundraising event that recognized Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Chair Kevin O'Toole (pictured with Foundation Chair Dan Foley and Foundation Director Peter Kirk), the Southpole Foundation, and Dr. Hillel Ephros for their commitment to supporting education.

In June, the Foundation hosted the inaugural "Birdies for Bergen" golf outing in support of the College's athletics programs. Eighty golfers hit the links at White Beeches County Club, raising more than $50,000.

Through the generosity of Foundation donors, signature event attendees and special gifts, 573 students received more than $515,000 in scholarships last year.

OUR DONORS

Annual Giving Circles recognize donors who support the Foundation each year. These loyal supporters of the College renew their commitment annually by making restricted or unrestricted gifts through the Annual Campaign during Bergen's fiscal year (July 1 to June 30).

Founder's Circle (Donations to $100,000)

Anonymous

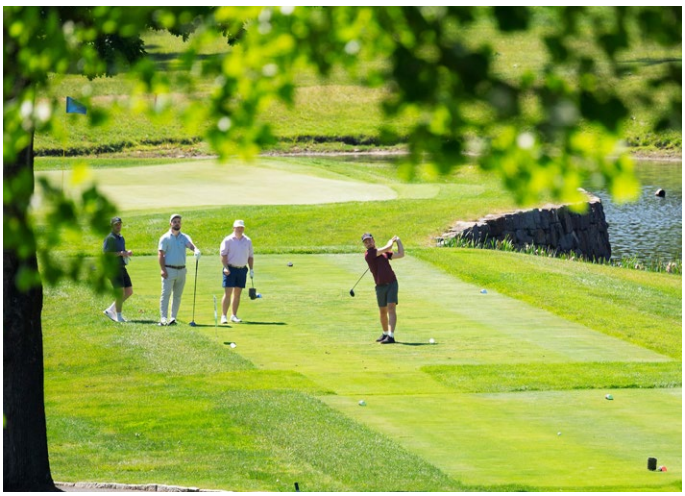
Samsung Electronics America Inc.

Southpole Foundation, Inc.

The Perino Family Foundation, Inc.



Scholarship awardees.







COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Assistant Director of Information Technology Business Operations Kirsten Perino and her family foundation have made an enduring impact on students in recent years. Notably, the family has become a title sponsor of events such as both the gala and golf fundraisers. In perhaps the most visible sign of the family's philanthropy, they have also become the title sponsor of a commencement tradition - the "send-off scholarships." For the second consecutive year, the Perino family sponsored five $1,000 scholarships for students randomly selected at the conclusion of Commencement 2026. The scholarships seek to provide the students with a final Bergen memory and set them up for success as they depart the institution (pictured top left, page 16).

Trustee's Circle
(Donations to $49,999)

Anonymous

Mitzi And Warren Eisenberg Foundation

The Samowitz Foundation Trust

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GIVE TODAY, CHANGE TOMORROW

FINANCIALS

Bergen Community College

Student Revenues	$32,272,860
Pell Grants	$26,763,529
County Appropriation	$24,233,699
State Appropriation	$14,925,988
State/County/Private Grants	$12,579,772
Federal Grants	$9,952,671
Other Nonoperating Revenue	$4,461,956
Investment Income	$4,380,869
Other Operating Revenue	$593,612
Auxiliary Enterprise	$301,768



The College also received a capital appropriation of $5,710,323 last year.

Institutional Support	$44,277,541
Instruction	$39,799,360
Physical Plant	$10,066,969
Student Services	$9,026,591
Depreciation	$8,043,812
Academic Support	$6,863,346
Scholarships/Fellowships	$3,288,430
Amortization	$1,364,045
Interest Expense	$734,247
Auxiliary Expenses	$376,124



Bergen Community College Foundation

Operating Revenue	$1,259,154
Investment Income	$1,298,804



Institutional Support	$806,796
Scholarships/Fellowships	$508,737





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Paramus, NJ 07652

Bergen Community College at the Meadowlands
1280 Wall Street West
Lyndhurst, NJ 07071

The Philip Ciarco Jr. Learning Center
355 Main Street
Hackensack, NJ 07601

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