

inside Bergen

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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Board of Trustees Chair Dorothy Blakeslee, President Eric M. Friedman, Bergen County Executive James J. Tedesco III and Bergen County Commissioner Tracy Zur cut the ribbon officially opening the Innovation Center; Upper right - the Gaming Lab; Lower right - Bloomberg Finance Lab.

Innovating in the Meadowlands

Anchored by newly renovated Bloomberg Finance, cybersecurity and gaming laboratories that will provide students with comprehensive experiential learning opportunities, The Innovation Center at Bergen Community College at the Meadowlands has opened. President Eric M. Friedman, cut the ribbon on the facility alongside Board of Trustees Chair Dorothy Blakeslee, Bergen County Executive James J. Tedesco III and Bergen County Commissioner Tracy Zur at a morning event on November 29.

"After years of transition, I am incredibly proud to say this location will now fulfill its promise as a first-choice destination in higher education for southern Bergen County," President Friedman said. "All it took was a little imagination and innovation."

President Friedman said he worked with faculty, staff, students and industry partners to develop the "innovation center" concept in response to the explosive growth of information technology and business careers that require hands-on experiential learning.

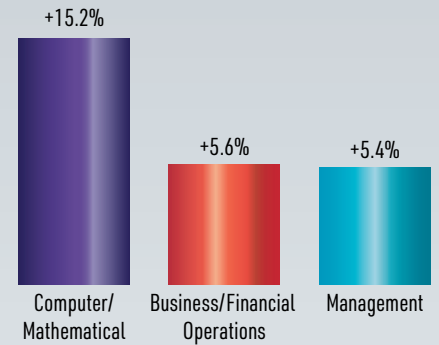
The Center encompasses an entire floor of the College's Lyndhurst location and represents the latest initiative in Bergen's commitment to

developing programs that prepare students for employment in thriving workforce sectors. The demand for information technology professionals continues to outpace available talent, as the U.S. Department of Commerce has estimated the global shortage of cybersecurity professionals at more than three million. Gaming industry leader Activision Blizzard has said "talent is scarce" for the current 30-50,000 gaming-related employment positions currently open across the sector.

The Center's signature laboratories each contain specific resources designed to bring real-world applications into the classroom. For example, the cybersecurity lab features multiple large cyberthreat monitors that display actual security breaches occurring throughout the world. The Bloomberg Finance lab includes a 16-foot LED ticker displaying real-time stock prices from various international markets. The gaming lab not only includes six 65-inch overhead monitors and software such as SpeedTree 3D modeling, but also serves as the "home court" for the College's e-sports athletes. Renovations began in summer 2022 as the College built the labs and an "innovation lounge" for students to collaborate and work on shared projects. ■

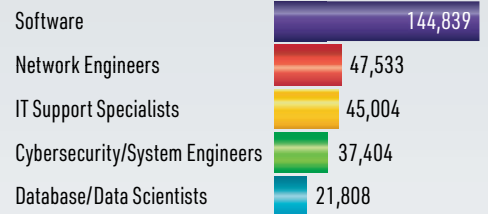
BY THE NUMBERS - Technology and the 21st Century Workforce

Projected Changes in Employment (2022-2032)



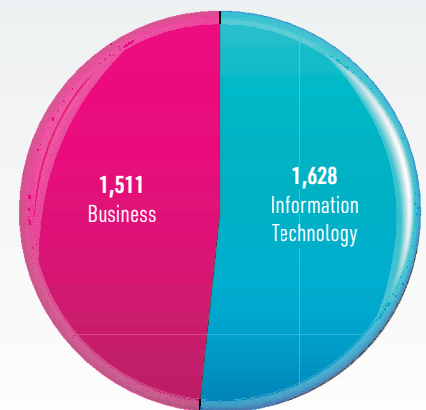
*U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023

Top Five Technology Industry Jobs - NYC Metro



*U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Lightcast and CompTIA, 2022

Student Enrollment in Business/Information Technology and Related Fields at Bergen





Planning team members recently reviewed plans for the planting of 125 new trees at the Paramus main campus.

Planting for the Future

Bergen has secured a \$250,000 state grant to renew its main campus tree population decimated by a changing climate, disease and invasive insects. The "Trees for Schools" program administered through the Sustainability Institute at the College of New Jersey receives funding through the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

"Symbolic of sustainability and renewal, the Trees for Schools grant will allow the College to develop a more resilient tree population that will benefit the campus community for generations," President Eric M. Friedman said. The program made \$2.5 million in grants available to public school districts, colleges and universities this year.

As part of the initiative, Bergen will plant 125 new trees to create a natural perimeter buffer "climax forest," or collection of trees that can withstand local environmental stressors. Bergen will remove dozens of green ash and plum trees originally planted in the 1980s that have fallen prey to the emerald ash borer insect and black knot fungus.



The grant outline, which runs through July 2026, calls for a spring 2024 planting of the new trees. Importantly, the initiative also contains an experiential learning component, which will see biology and horticulture students participate in all phases of the tree removal, planting and maintenance.

The College has tapped a number of experts from various disciplines to assist in the project including horticulture program coordinator Steve Fischer, Ph.D., who will integrate outside partners such as the New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association. Retired employee and longtime environmental steward Hugh Knowlton will also assist.

The grant reinforces Bergen's commitment to participating in sustainability initiatives that promote health and wellness as part of its campus environment. The Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey and Commerce Magazine recently recognized Bergen's sustainability efforts with an award for environmental stewardship, while the federal government awarded the institution a \$4.5 million grant to create pathways to education and employment in agricultural fields. ■

Middle States Matters



According to Accreditation Liaison Officer Professor Gary Porter, "this is a busy time for the participants in the Self-Study process, as the seven standards subcommittees are finishing the first drafts of their chapters."

Subcommittee members are currently analyzing the drafts, which focus primarily on providing descriptive summaries of compliance found within in each of the seven standards.

"The subcommittees will be expected to ask questions like, 'Does the College have this documented? Did the College follow the documented process? Does this process or system work?' The answers to these analytic questions will help chart the way forward to making Bergen a stronger institution. The final 'analyzed' draft from the subcommittees should be completed by mid-March," Porter said.

The greater College community will have its first chance to review near-completed chapters as early as late spring. Review of the remaining chapters will occur in the fall.

A working draft of the Self-Study must be completed by July 31 and shared with the Middle States visitation team chair. Porter expects the chair to visit during the fall 2024 semester. ■



BioTech

Soil Study Published

Mentored by Professor Luis Jimenez, STEM students Ana Rumora, Liliana Hopkins, Kayla Yim, Melissa F. Baykus and Luisa Martinez recently had their research article "Detection and Characterization of Electrogenic Bacteria from Soils" published in the international journal, *BioTech*. The research, conducted in the summer of 2023 at the College's main campus, "contributes to the understanding of the distribution and diversity of electrogenic bacteria in temperate soils and the optimization of electricity generation by bacteria." ■

Snapshotted



President and Mrs. Friedman Visited NJIT President and Mrs. Lim



Student Aoi Kono Studied Abroad this Fall in Costa Rica



Phi Theta Kappa Fall Induction Ceremony



The Chess Club's Fall Tournament



December 2023 Nursing Graduates Get Pinned



Students Spread Holiday Cheer

Students, faculty and staff partnered with relief organization Operation Christmas Child to collect donations of toys, school supplies and hygiene products for distribution to poverty-stricken communities throughout the world. Led by Associate Dean of Nursing Darlene Zales-Russamano and Personal Counselor Lois Carmichael, students from the nursing department, Office of Specialized Services and other student clubs collaborated to fill nearly 200 boxes of donations, which they assembled during a “packing party.” The students also raised

\$1,980 through bake sales and donations to cover shipping costs and included handwritten notes in the boxes.

“This was a huge success due to the collaboration efforts of student clubs, staff and faculty,” Zales-Russamano and Carmichael said in a co-signed statement.

Operation Christmas Child is a project of Samaritan’s Purse, an international relief organization. ■

Communicators Bring Home the Gold

Bergen has notched an institution-record four National Council in Marketing and Public Relations Medallion Awards recognizing excellence in strategic communication.

NCMPR, an affiliate of the American Association of Community Colleges, honors colleges annually as part of the Medallion program, which features entries from the more than 650 colleges in the Northeast and Canada. Bergen has earned 13 Medallions in the last eight years.

Bergen earned Medallions in four categories, with first-place gold honors in two areas (communication success story campaign and micro-site/landing page) and second-place silver in the other pair (newsletter and interior signage/displays).

Above right: Assistant Director of Public Relations Jessica Fagnoli accepted the NCMPR Medallion Awards at the organization’s Boston conference.

The communication success story award came on the strength of a social media and print campaign that spotlighted the stories of Bergen’s New Jersey Stars students. Featuring the students’ own words, the campaign focused on how the College helped contribute to their success. The other gold award recognized the College’s Center for Online Learning landing page at col.bergen.edu. The landing page became a key tactic in the College’s promotion strategy of the new online learning initiative. The completely redesigned *Inside Bergen Community College* newsletter and campus history wall installation earned the silver awards. ■



President Eric M. Friedman, Veolia New Jersey Utility Operations VP and General Manager Alan Weland, STEM Center Director Chris Tully and Veolia VP of External Affairs Kevin O’Connor.

Veolia Supports STEM Students

“The giving season” began early for members of the Veolia Northern New Jersey Water Operations leadership team who visited the main campus in December to hand-deliver a \$25,000 check for student scholarships. The donation, earmarked for students in the renowned STEM program, represents the latest in the utility’s longstanding support of the institution through the Bergen Community College Foundation.

Veolia New Jersey Utility Operations VP and General Manager Alan Weland said the scholarships not only represent a way for the company to give back to the community, but develop the next generation of utility, energy and sustainability professionals. Veolia, and its preceding water utility identities Suez and United Water, have donated \$180,000 to Bergen in the last 15 years. The donations have helped fund scholarships and special projects at the institution.

“Our company is all about ecological transformation,” Weland said. “We’re looking for opportunities with organizations that are thinking about things we’re thinking about. The work being done here at Bergen Community College is in total alignment with what our company is all about.”

With the nation’s only STEM Student Research Center, multiple awards from the National Science Foundation and projects such as an electric go-kart, Bergen has solidified its standing as one of the top community college STEM programs in the country. More than 2,000 students enroll in the College’s STEM offerings, including cybersecurity, mathematics and engineering science. Dean of Mathematics, Science and Technology Emily Vandalovsky, leads the academic division. ■

Athletes "Play Ball" on Updated Fields

With the College embarking on a comprehensive facilities optimization, upgrade and beautification strategy to inspire belongingness, encourage engagement and create a sense of community, its outdoor athletics facilities have now received major facelifts.

Both the softball and baseball fields have seen their entrances leveled and paved, while the on-field areas have received new fencing, netting, bullpens, bleachers, dugouts, equipment cabinets and storage closets.

The College has also increased seating capacity and improved accessibility for those in wheelchairs. At the soccer field and track, Bergen has installed new bleachers, leveled and paved the surfaces and improved accessibility too.

In total, these efforts continue to convey a commitment to Bergen's built and physical environment, while investing in the student-athlete program. ■

Before



After





High Schoolers Come to Campus

Students from Garfield traded high school hallways for a college campus as part of an experiential learning visit to Bergen. The students toured areas such as the dental hygiene clinic, STEM Student Research Center, where they heard from retired professor Paul Griffo (above), and the Stryker Manufacturing Lab before breaking for lunch and a presentation by the admissions team. ■



Celebrating the Season

Faculty, staff, retirees and invited guests celebrated the spirit of the season as part of the on-campus holiday celebration in December. A top 10 list of reasons to attend set the table for an afternoon that featured recorded well-wishes from colleagues, gift basket giveaways and a highly successful donation drive for the Bergen Cares Center. Pictured, from top, left to right: Alexandra Schafer, Jazmine Gutierrez and Amparo Coddling, Tracy Miceli and Juan Palau. ■



Faculty Focus Professor Peter Dlugos

Teaching courses in philosophy, religion, wellness and exercise science, Professor Peter Dlugos seeks to “make deep thinking accessible.” He strives to help others learn how to live well by focusing on topics such as happiness, mental health and mindfulness.

“I’m so grateful for the opportunity to make a difference in students’ lives and in the life of the College,” he said. “I introduce students to philosophical thinking and the world’s spiritual traditions – to the life of the mind and the heart. I make it my job to open doors to self-exploration and possible paths of purpose, meaning and fulfillment. What could be better?”

Since his arrival at the College in 1996, Dlugos has taught classes, served as the chair of the 2005 Middle States Self-Study, worked as a department chair and vice president and even developed the first for-credit mindfulness class (WEX-133: Mindfulness and Good Health). His writings and research have appeared in the *History of Philosophy Quarterly* and *The Routledge Biographical Dictionary of 20th Century Philosophers*.

“Quite simply, I love teaching: working with students is a source of joy,” he said.

Dlugos holds a bachelor’s degree from Rutgers University and a master’s degree and doctorate from the University of Virginia. ■



InsideBergen is a publication of the Office of Public Relations.
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