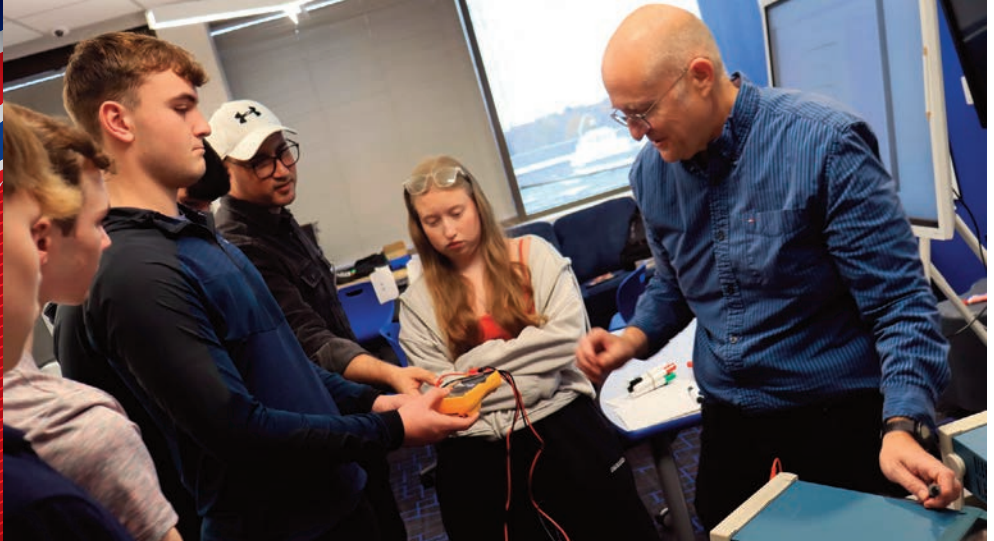


# inside Bergen

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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Professor Joseph Sivo works with exchange program students in the STEM Student Research Center at the College's main campus.

## It's a British Invasion!

Visitors from "across the pond" arrive for cultural learning exchange

The British are coming! (Actually, they were already here).

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 recently hosted students and faculty from Southport College (England) at its main campus in Paramus. The international learning exchange focused on sustainability—an area of excellence at the College. Based on this record of excellence, the ACCT and AoC selected Bergen as a flagship partner for the learning exchange program launched last year with full financial support from the Cyril Taylor Charitable Foundation.

"I am truly honored that Bergen became one of only two U.S. community colleges selected for this prestigious pilot program," President Eric M. Friedman said. "The opportunity to participate in a cross-cultural learning experience has offered our faculty, staff and students access to a unique global initiative that has enriched our campus environment."

Paired with Southport College, members of a Bergen delegation have worked together to collaborate on sustainability-focused projects, with representatives of both colleges visiting the other during the past six months. The most recent November trip to Bergen included site visits to the offices of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 164, PepsiCo, The Hillier College of Architecture and Design at NJIT, and PSE&G to meet with sustainability experts, conduct field work and participate in hands-on experiential learning in the College's STEM Student Research Center.

"This partnership represents the very best of international collaboration in furthering education," Southport Assistant Principal Shaun Hindle said. "For Southport College, it is an opportunity to connect our students with peers across the globe, broadening their perspectives and strengthening our shared commitment to innovation and community impact." ■

*British Invasion* continued on page 2

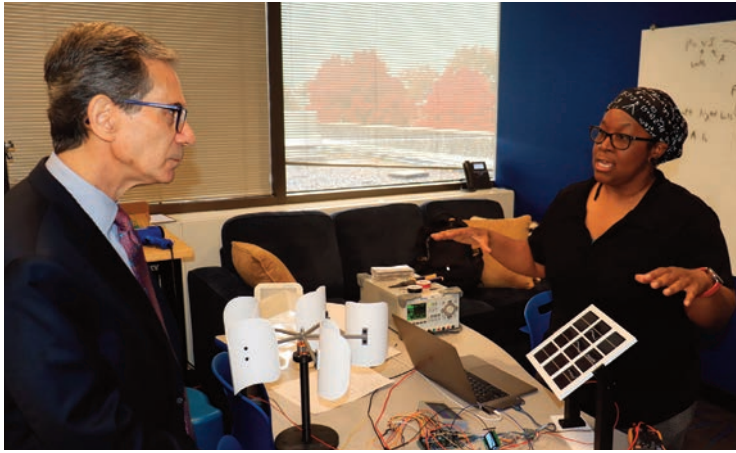


### BY THE NUMBERS - Tale of the Tape: Bergen and Southport

	Bergen	Southport
<b>Opened</b>	1967	1935
<b>Students</b>	11,720	3,800
<b>Faculty/Staff</b>	1,166	340
<b>Nearest Body of Water</b>	Hudson River	Irish Sea
<b>Colors</b>	Violet/Orange/White	Navy/White
<b>Miles from Each Other</b>	Approximately 3,400	



# THE BRITISH ARE COMING!



Project mentor Yolanda Sheppard shows President Eric M. Friedman some of the student projects.



Students learn about workforce opportunities during a site visit to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 164.



Students participate in a learning intensive in the STEM Student Research Center.



Professor Mark Balzarette shows off an electric motorcycle built in the Stryker Manufacturing lab.

### **British Invasion** continued from page 1

At the center of the November visit, Bergen faculty, staff and students worked with their Southport counterparts to collaborate on a culminating project. The capstone organizes the overall cohort into subgroups tasked with a common goal - designing a community impact initiative that addresses real-world challenges such as environmental sustainability or social equity.

The team has focused its project on developing a new, environmentally conscious street design concept for downtown Hackensack to reduce environmental impacts and energy use. The team proposes constructing an electrical microgrid fortified with sustainable technologies such as photovoltaic panels, kinetic paving and SMART efficiencies.

Bergen faculty member Tara Snyder, who partnered with STEM Student Research Center Director Chis Tully to oversee the exchange program, provided the foundational concept for the

project based on New Jersey's sustainability initiatives and current strain on the electrical grid.

"Our STEM project mentors imagined a hypothetical design based on the most recent technology and electrical engineering designs from across the world," she said, "to see, first, the cost, and, second, if this would be feasible on a small scale for a controlled area containing apartments, businesses, brownfields or abandoned areas and regular homes."

The project takes additional inspiration from similar work in Liverpool, England, where sustainable construction has become a cornerstone of Southport's efforts to support the Liverpool City Region's commitment to achieving a "net zero" environmental impact by 2030. To achieve "net zero," the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere must remain equal to the amount removed from the atmosphere. The removal of greenhouse gas-

ses can improve the state of the local, regional and global environment, including air quality.

Bringing concepts learned abroad to develop similarly sustainable initiatives for a U.S. city excited Southport student John "JJ" Nicholson, who learned under College faculty and staff members - and program mentors - Mark Balzarette, Yolanda Sheppard and Joseph Sivo during the November visit.

"This has helped me understand how requirements differ across countries and how we can adapt our approaches to meet those challenges," he said. "It has also shown me how students and staff can work together using creative techniques to solve real-world problems and build lasting international partnerships."

Bergen students will visit Southport College in England in spring 2026 to continue work on the capstone project. ■



THE BRITISH ARE COMING!

# Snapshoted



Bergen County Executive James J. Tedesco, Bergen County Technical Schools Superintendent Howard Lerner and Trustee Chair Dorothy Blakeslee helped send-off the UK partners during a closing banquet.



No visit to the New York metropolitan area is complete without a visit to landmarks such as Times Square ...



Bandit the Bulldog even stopped by to meet our UK friends.



The Empire State Building ...



... and Bergen County shopping malls!

# Ethnographer Terry Williams Visits

Bergen hosted internationally recognized sociologist and ethnographer Dr. Terry Williams for the "Beyond Poverty: Life Under the Surface" discussion this fall. Recognized as one of the world's preeminent ethnographers, Williams has helped to establish qualitative methods at the forefront of social science research. 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. He has taught at the New School for more than 40 years. President Eric M. Friedman is a former student of Dr. Williams.

"I have immense respect for Professor Williams and am proud to call him a mentor," the president said. "Helping to bring him to Bergen represented a full circle moment for me."

Dr. Williams has received honors such as a Russell Sage Foundation Fellowship, a Distinguished University Teaching Award from The New School, a MacArthur Award, the 2024-2025 Eastern Sociological Society Merit Award for his exemplary contributions to the field of sociology and the 2024-2025 New York City Book Award from the New York Society Library for "Life Underground: Encounters with People Below the Streets of New York." ■

*Above, right: Professor Maureen Ellis-Davis, Terry Williams and President Eric M. Friedman. Bottom, right: Students packed a lecture hall to have the opportunity to listen to Terry Williams.*



# Student Spotlight - Marcus Sanchez

Student Marcus Sanchez grew up in Paramus. He drove by the College every day.

"Bergen remained always in my peripheral, but not what I was looking at," he said.

But during his senior year of high school, Sanchez felt flustered by the impending decision of where to attend college.

"I felt as if I was under this giant hourglass, losing time to make the decision that would dictate much of my future," he said. "Choosing to enroll at Bergen allowed me to make time stand still, providing me an extension to make this decision. Bergen provided me with a perfect time period where I could set aside the stresses of everyday life, and instead focus on preparing myself for the next stages of my life and career."

Studying natural sciences to pursue a career in orthopedic medicine, Sanchez said he marvels at the College community.

"I quickly learned to appreciate the distinct perspective that an institution like Bergen Community College offers," he said. "Everyone at Bergen has an amazing story, and hearing these diverse accounts has served as a great reminder of how much of a blessing it is to have the opportunity to pursue higher education."

He, too, has become an active part of the College as an NJ STARS student, an ambassador in the community service Thrive program and as a peer mentor for the Educational Opportunity Fund. Sanchez also tutors peers in the sciences and mathematics as an academic coach and certified supplemental instructor. He participates in both the Judith K. Winn School of Honors and Phi Theta Kappa. Sanchez expects to graduate in 2026.

"Unequivocally, any success I have achieved here at Bergen Community College must be credited to the family I have come to know within this community," he said.



Off campus, Sanchez volunteers for the Ecuadorian Committee of New Jersey and the Paramus Fourth of July Committee. Additionally, he started a monthly blood pressure screening event at his local church and, with his interest in neuroscience, he works as a medical scribe and an associate at a physical rehabilitation center. ■

# London Calling for Adjunct Professor

Bergen adjunct professor of music technology and sound instructor Jonathan Appell (top photo) has led a diverse career as a music producer and audio engineer, working on shows such as "Ed," movies including "Coyote Ugly," and anime cartoons. He even crossed Abbey Road summer.

While in London, Appel delivered a featured presentation at Abbey Road Studios, one of the most iconic and historic recording studios in the world (bottom photo). He joined a select group of internationally recognized audio educators to discuss innovations in remote audio collaboration and instruction, using LISTENTO, a real-time audio streaming platform developed by Audiomovers, a company owned by Abbey Road Studios.

After the London visit, LISTENTO streamed a live performance at Omega Studios in Rockville, Maryland to six acclaimed professors and audio engineers across North and South America -

including Appell. Each educator received the multitrack audio in real time, recorded it locally, created their own stereo mix, and then re-transmitted those mixes to students around the world.

"Students had the opportunity to compare multiple professional mixes of the same session in real time," said Appell. "It was a powerful exercise in developing critical listening, artistic judgment and audio analysis skills."

Appell began teaching at Bergen in 2022.

"I love helping students plot their course in life," he said. "I think students sense my natural enthusiasm for the topic and find my passion for it relatable. When the opportunity to teach at Bergen came up, I eagerly accepted the role. We have a wonderful faculty and I'm proud to be counted among them. The faculty really cares about the students." ■



# Celebrating the First Thanksgiving ... in 2025

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. Sponsored by President Eric Friedman, nearly 100 faculty, staff and students came together to break bread. The photos below capture a small snapshot of the event's excitement. Student Fasih Ur Rehman Abassi, enjoyed the opportunity.

"As an international student, Thanksgiving made me feel genuinely valued," he said. "They even arranged a special halal table for us, which showed respect not just for what I eat, but for my identity and culture. No matter where we come from, we all deserve a seat at the table. Where everyone belongs, innovation and humanity grow side by side." ■



# STARS Students Step Up

NJ STARS students who volunteer under the initiative's "Thrive program" recently visited Eva's Village, a behavioral health and social services nonprofit in Paterson, to support individuals in need. During their half-day visit organized by NJ STARS coordinator Julia Gibson (bottom photo, second from left), the students created care packages and distributed them to the organization's clients. Bergen Board of Trustees member Howard Haughton serves as the CEO of the nonprofit. ■

# Families Remember the Holocaust



A scene from the Bergen performance of "Hidden: A Musical" based on the life of Holocaust survivor Ruth Kapp-Hartz.

The Center for Peace, Justice and Reconciliation (CPJR), led by Professor Sarah Shurts, sponsored two events during the fall semester that helped tell the stories of Holocaust survivors.

The first, "Hidden: A Musical," takes a decidedly artistic approach to telling the story of survivor Ruth Kapp-Hartz. The musical draws upon Kapp-Hartz's memoir, "Your Name is Renee," for the source material. Kapp-Hartz left her home and lived under a false identity during World War II.

Ultimately, she said it took her 30 years to discuss her experience navigating and surviving anti-semitism and fascism during that time. Kapp-Hartz discussed her memoir at the College as the 2025 Literary Arts Series keynote speaker in April organized by Professor Jessica Datema.

"When [the co-writers] approached me that they had read my memoir and were inspired to write a musical, I was very surprised," Kapp-Hartz said. "They were wonderful from day one. They were also excellent musicians, so I was very pleased."

Adapting the memoir into a musical helped co-writers, producers and actors David and Jenny Heitler-Klevans, pay tribute to their own family history as well.

"I have a great-aunt who was hidden during World War II, and I knew some of her story," Jenny Heitler-Klevans said. "But I felt like Ruth's story was so fleshed out and interesting that I thought it would make a good musical."

She wanted the play to not only teach students about the Holocaust's impact and how survivors

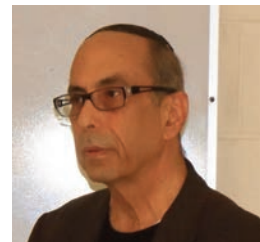
navigated it, but to also connect college students with their emotions.

"I would like students to think about their own feelings," she said. "If they have ever felt like they had to hide who they were, and also to be allies and care for people who are also having to deal with these issues today."

Meanwhile, the CPJR also hosted a discussion with Bergen student Joel Lelonek (pictured, above) on the book "We Fought Like Lions: A Son's Tribute to His Father." His son, Gary, wrote the book that follows his grandfather's (Charles) journey as a Holocaust soldier, Polish People's soldier and Nazi P.O.W.

Professor Ellen Feig attended the event and said family histories give faces to those who perished during the Holocaust.

"Joel Lelonek's family history is important for many reasons," she said. "I hope that this will propel students to tell their own family story; we each have an important and unique narrative." ■



## Veterans Have a Home at Bergen

Together with the nation, Bergen recognized Veterans Day with a commemorative event in the student center followed by a symbolic flag-pole salute. Student veterans Anna Waite and Michael Puca (pictured) recounted their experience in the military, and how Bergen supported their transitions into college. Puca, who served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 2011-2014, said the College's Veterans and Military Affairs Center has become a "big family."

"Being a veteran gives you a completely different perspective on school, life, people, businesses and relationships," he said. "Without being a veteran, I don't even think I would be here today or have the drive to do anything in life."

The weekend before Veterans Day, the 10th annual Hero 5K at the main campus (pictured) raised nearly \$15,000 for the student veteran emergency fund. ■



## Employee Excellence

Bergen rolled out the violet carpet at the annual Employee Anniversary and Retiree Recognition event to honor faculty and staff celebrating milestone anniversaries at the institution. Among the honorees, Professor Paula Williams celebrated her 30-year anniversary (pictured alongside Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost Andrew Tomko, Dean of Library Services David Marks and President Eric M. Friedman). ■



Send your feedback on Inside Bergen Community College to [lhavenka@bergen.edu](mailto:lhavenka@bergen.edu).