

# insideBergen

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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## Earning While Learning Energizes New Jersey's Healthcare Workforce



Healthworks Project Director Andrea Nemeth

Under the steadfast leadership of Bergen Community College, over 2,200 New Jersey residents have received training through the Healthworks Scaling Apprenticeship Program. In the fourth and final year of the U. S. Department of Labor grant cycle, the healthcare apprenticeship program has placed over 1,300 students into apprenticeships and employment. The College serves as the lead agency in a consortium of 90 education and healthcare industry partners that provides education and placement for enrollees – some at no-cost to the student. The grant specifically targets assisting residents in the state’s underserved populations including displaced, unemployed, underemployed and veteran workers.

“The apprenticeship model of ‘learning while earning’ represents a win across the board,” Bergen President Eric M. Friedman said. “With employment shortages in key healthcare fields and New Jersey residents seeking good-paying, family-sustaining careers, apprenticeships fill gaps throughout the state. I am proud of Bergen’s work as the lead agency and grateful for the many partners who have collaborated to make these achievements possible.”

The New Jersey Healthworks Scaling Apprenticeship Program offers enrollees the opportunity to prepare for careers in one of 15 jobs such as certified nursing assistant, massage

therapist and pharmacy technician. Some apprentices can earn an industry credential and enter the workforce in as few as five months. While enrolled, apprentices have access to success coaches, employer resources and peer support programs.

Program partners include 14 community colleges and healthcare leaders such as Hackensack Meridian Health, CareOne, Bergen New Bridge Medical Center and Jewish Home Family. The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development provided \$500,000 toward the program’s operation as well.

With the grant now up for renewal by the federal government, Project Director Andrea Nemeth said at a recent convening of grant partners that she hopes the collaboration can continue.

“More than 400 entered the workforce with new skills and an ability to provide for their families as part of the program,” she said. “Those extraordinary results remain a testament to our partners and the importance of this program, which has become an important pipeline for the state’s healthcare industry.”

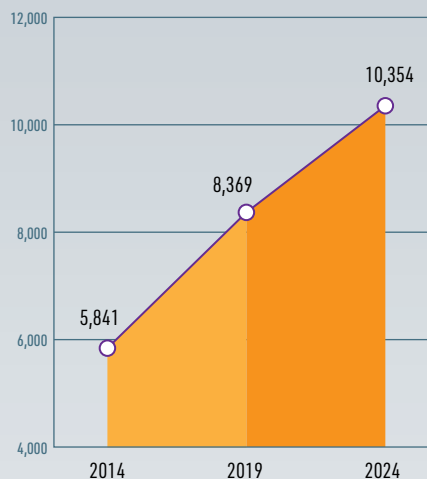
Locally, with six hospitals and more than 70,000 jobs in Bergen County, healthcare stands as the area’s top workforce cluster. Accordingly, College officials have long prioritized the education of health professionals. Currently, more than 1,400 students enroll in health professions degree, certificate and licensure programs at Bergen. ■



Certified Nursing Assistant Students

### BY THE NUMBERS - Apprenticeships

#### Apprentices in New Jersey

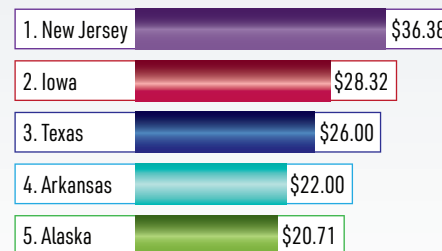


U.S. Department of Labor

#### Apprenticeships/Employment Secured through New Jersey Healthworks Scaling Apprenticeship Program



#### Median Wages for State-Sponsored Healthcare Apprentices, by Rank



U.S. Department of Labor

# Bergen and Thomas Edison Partnership Lights the Way for Graduates



President Eric M. Friedman and Thomas Edison State University President Merodie A. Hancock officially sign the transfer partnership memorandum.

Bergen and Thomas Edison State University (TESU) have established an articulation agreement that makes the pathway to a baccalaureate degree easier for graduates. A memorandum of understanding signed by both college presidents during the fall semester creates transfer pathways that allow students to complete as many as three years or 90 credits at Bergen before transferring to TESU to earn a bachelor's degree.

"As a community college with a significant number of students who plan to continue their education, Bergen has always sought to maintain robust transfer agreements with four-year partners such as Thomas Edison State University," President Eric M. Friedman said. "However, it remains incredibly important to periodically review these agreements and enhance them for the benefit of our students. Providing a streamlined transfer process helps all sides—Bergen, the four-year college and, most importantly, the Bergen graduate."

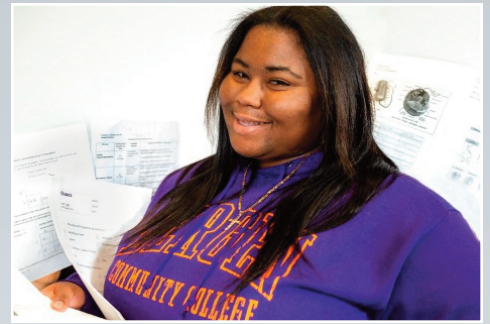
The approach allows students to take advantage of a more economical and affordable pathway to earning a bachelor's degree, according to TESU President Merodie A. Hancock.

"TESU is the state's leader in partnering with community colleges and industry to reduce time to and cost of a degree," she said at the signing ceremony. "We know our students who have successfully completed their degree at a community college have a proven success rate. And with this agreement, Bergen students can stay in their county, keep working in the county and earn a degree to put them on the path to higher earning potential."

Under the terms of the agreement, TESU will accept up to 90 credits from Bergen graduates who completed the institution's A.A.S. in cybersecurity. Students will then transfer into TESU's B.S. in cybersecurity, an entirely online program. The colleges expect to add additional programs to the agreement in the future.

Through a leading "prior learning assessment" program, TESU assists adults with turning work experience into college credits—another advantage of the burgeoning partnership with Bergen. ■

She expects to graduate in 2024. ■



## Student Spotlight Chelsea Antwi

Chelsea Antwi wants to help others as others have helped her.

When the marketing major is not in class, she serves as a church youth counselor where she provides guidance to the congregation's youngest members. She discusses topics such as abusive homes, bullying and body image with them. Through her mentorship efforts she believes she can influence their social and educational development.

Antwi believes Bergen's Educational Opportunity Fund gave her the chance to make this impact in her community.

"As a first-generation African American student with a low income, I consider myself extremely fortunate to be a member of the EOF department family," she said. "I was able to interact more personally with my professors and learn more from their experiences because of the smaller class sizes."

She expects to graduate in 2024. ■



## Winning the "Souper" Bowl

While the Kansas City Chiefs may have lifted the Lombardi Trophy in Las Vegas, Bergen hosted its own "Souper Bowl" to provide hot meals to those in need. The project, organized by Executive Assistant to the Board of Trustees and the President Maria Ferrara, collected more than 1,000 cans of soup for the on-campus Bergen Cares Center. Many of the cans came from the College's nursing department, led by Associate Dean of Nursing Darlene Zales-Russamano and students such as Natalia Pelaez, Michael Murphy and Gengollari Desantila (pictured). The department even sponsored a contest to encourage donations. ■



# Snapshotted



Health Professions Students Collaborated for a Simulation Exercise



Students Crafted Furry Pals at "Stuff-A-Bulldog"



Black History Month Began with an Opening Ceremony on February 1



Opening Reception for "Arrivals/Departures - East&West"



LatinX CEO Students Visited Bergen New Bridge Medical Center





## Custodians Sweep Awards Program

Custodians Rajmonda Bilalaj, William Dekker, Rafael del Rosario 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. Tenant will now review the nominees from throughout the U.S. and select a winner who will receive the \$5,000 first prize. ■

## Staging a Love Story

By Professor Jim Bumgardner,  
Guest Columnist

In September, 2019 Sarah Villarini and John Kroner met for the first time at a rehearsal for the Bergenstages production of “Picnic.” They played the leads who fall in love but, ultimately, romance was not in the cards. He leaves her. However, backstage, romance was in the cards! John and Sarah started dating and love blossomed.

On February 3, John came up with a plan to lure Sarah to the College for a Bergenstages alumni press opportunity celebrating the group’s 50th anniversary. The day before, John and his friends came to the Ender Hall Lab Theatre (he wanted to be where they first met doing “Picnic”) and set the stage for the proposal.

Before Sarah arrived for the “press event,” friends hid, ready to take photos and video. The pair arrived and I brought them into my office, catching up on life. Sarah was totally clueless. She had no idea that this was not a press oppor-



tunity for Bergenstages. John excused himself to go to the restroom; in actuality, he snuck in the back entrance of the Lab Theatre and set himself up under the archway.

A few minutes later, I suggested to Sarah that we go into the theatre and wait for John there. I escorted her in and she looked around, saw John standing there ... she was totally confused for about 30 seconds. Then she saw “Marry Me” illuminated in block letters surrounding John and she realized what was going on. She went to John, he got on one knee and proposed. Such romance! ■



## College, with a Capitol D.C.

President Eric M. Friedman and student Daisy Alvarado met with Bergen County’s federal legislators as part of the Association of Community College Trustees 2024 National Legislative Summit this month. On “the Hill,” the pair had the opportunity to discuss the College, advocate for community college needs and explore the federal funding process. Among the meetings, Alvarado caught the ear of Representative Josh Gottheimer (D-5). Board of Trustees Chair Dorothy Blakeslee, Secretary Ritzy Moralez-Diaz and trustees Ana Marti and Sheetal Ranjan also attended the summit. ■

# President Discusses the "State of the College"

On January 31, President Eric M. Friedman hosted a special edition of his periodic town halls to deliver the "State of the College" address. Under the backdrop of pushing the College to look forward and make progress, the president discussed key topics such as enrollment, assessment and creating a culture of belongingness.



**On Progress:** "The concept of 'progress' resonates for me when I think of our current position at Bergen. We have invested a considerable amount of time over the last couple of years reviewing data ... strategizing ... creating and revising plans. Taking action. It's no easy feat in a community as diverse as ours, to reach consensus. Thank you to everyone who has given their time, talent and energy to all of these and many more projects."

**On Enrollment:** "I am proud to report that we have seen sustained progress in student enrollment. Thanks to the efforts of many, specifically those in our student affairs division and faculty members who promote their programs, we have reversed the downward trend experienced at Bergen, prior to my arrival, for over a decade. **The arrow now points up.**"

**On Working at Bergen:** "I work at Bergen Community College because it's a catalyst for positive change; it is the antidote to numerous social problems. We actually help the world make progress through education. **The difference we make here echoes in the halls of government, in the service of our communities, and in the hearts of those who believe in the power of education to change lives.**"

**On the State of the College:** "At the start of my fourth year, I remain steadfastly committed to leading with an ethic of care and I am still expecting continuous improvement in every department and division. All of this work is hard. But it pays off every single day in lives transformed. **In summary, the state of the College is strong.**"

**Closing Thoughts:** "Our donors believe in us, our legislators believe in us, our trustees believe in us. And they support us as we carry out our special mission. We have to continue to honor that trust by not sitting on our laurels. We all came here to serve others; many of us are idealists. Don't lose that; keep the main thing, the main thing. And, remember to lead with a warm heart."



## Professor's Art Travels Coast-to-Coast

Professor Ethan Greenbaum recently opened "&&&2," a bicoastal three-person exhibition, appearing in New York and Oregon. Curated by Sun You, the exhibition features the work of David Kennedy and Sara Greenberger Rafferty alongside Greenbaum's. A print book – "&&&" – the trio published in 2013 serves as the basis for the bicoastal exhibition in recognition of the 10-year anniversary of its printing. The artists describe the exhibition's works as the result of "a series of meetings to talk about materials and techniques, based on their mutual interest in using photographic imagery to destabilize traditional art categories like painting, printmaking and sculpture." Greenbaum's work has appeared throughout the world, including in Los Angeles, Chicago and Brussels. ■

## Bergen Ready for its Close-Up



After an intense application process, education advocacy organization Complete College America selected Bergen as one of seven institutions 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 earlier this month. CCA will use the photos to create a national photography repository for use in communication and promotional materials by community colleges throughout the country. ■





# Middle States Matters

By Gary Porter, Accreditation Liaison Officer

I am proud to report that the first full drafts of the seven standards chapters are in many cases complete. The process of analytically reading the drafts is in full swing. As accreditation liaison officer, I continue to work with the steering committee co-chairs to read the drafts. A special thanks goes out to all seven chairs of the subcommittees, who also serve on the Self-Study Steering Committee, for critically reviewing their chapter drafts. In addition, these individuals are stepping in and filling gaps in the narrative that have appeared.

The goal for the next two months is to identify three things in the Self-Study chapter narratives:

1. Locate missing evidentiary documentation for the Self-Study. These documents are being loaded and cataloged in the evidence inventory files found on the Self-Study Google Drive.
2. Identify action plans that the College can routinely implement to bring us into full compliance with the criteria found within the seven standards. In many cases, the criteria call for documented procedures being in place to ensure that College processes periodically occur in scheduled fashion. It is expected that documenting more procedures will lead to two benefits. The first will increase institutional stability at times of administrative change. The second will ensure that procedures remain high quality by being regularly reviewed, revised, and updated.
3. Identify institutional areas of concern where it is not possible to quickly bring the College into full compliance. In these cases, action plans to bring the College into closer compliance will need to be implemented. In addition, suggestions that will help chart the College's path to full compliance will need to be written.

There are numerous people working hard on the Self-Study. If I were to individually recognize their contributions, then there would be no room left to provide you all with an update! I will simply say thank you so much and I am proud to call every one of you colleagues.

Lastly, I sincerely appreciate President Eric Friedman's continued support and communication about the process, including through his monthly updates at public Board of Trustees meetings. ■

## Technology Partner Taps Bergen for \$25k Grant in Support of Students

Bergen's technology solutions partner, Ellucian and its charitable foundation, have awarded the institution a \$25,000 block grant to support 50 currently enrolled students' basic needs such as tuition, housing expenses and textbooks. Accepted through the 501(c)(3) Bergen Community College Foundation, Ellucian awarded the Progress, Accomplishment, Thriving, Hope (PATH) Scholarship to 25 college partners throughout the country.

"The partnership we maintain with Ellucian positively impacts Bergen Community College in many ways, including through our overall information technology operation, the Center for Online Learning and on-campus support for students, faculty and staff," Bergen President Eric M. Friedman said. "Our selection as a PATH Scholarship awardee underscores the depth of our relationship and the shared goal of helping students succeed."

Bergen students applied for the scholarship through the institution's nonprofit foundation,

detailing their needs through essays. Ultimately, the foundation selected 50 students to each receive a \$500 scholarship.

Established in 2020 by Ellucian, the PATH Scholarship program has provided more than \$2 million in grants, with more than 2,000 students receiving aid. According to Ellucian President and CEO Laura Ipsen, an independent selection committee reviewed applications from dozens of partners, ultimately selecting 25 for the awards. The company strongly encouraged Minority Serving Institutions, such as Bergen, to apply. Only two New Jersey colleges earned the award.

Ellucian, and previous iterations of the company Datatel and SunGard, have partnered with Bergen to provide on-campus information technology solutions since the 1980s. The company maintains partnerships with nearly 3,000 institutions of higher education throughout the world. ■

## #WellnessWednesday Offers Support

WELLNESS  WEDNESDAY



As part of the College's continued effort to support initiatives that contribute to student, faculty and staff health and wellness, partners such as Be Well Bergen, the Center for Health, Wellness and Personal Counseling and the Bergen Cares Center have come together to offer a series of tips under the banner of "#WellnessWednesday." Members of the College community can expect a new tip every two weeks on social media and through the Bergen Daily. ■