

## Student Leader Electrifies Senate Budget Hearing



Providing testimony during the State of New Jersey's Senate budget hearings on March 19 at the New Jersey Institute of Technology in Newark, Bergen Student Government Association President Kaylie Quezada made an impassioned plea on behalf of her peers.

"Investing in New Jersey community college students is vital," she said. "Community college students are beacons that impact the future of New Jersey."

A delegation of New Jersey community college presidents, students and advocates appeared before the panel with the hopes of restoring \$20 million in funding eliminated from Gov. Phil Murphy's 2025 state budget. The hearing opened with testimony from Bergen County Executive James J. Tedesco III, who implored the legislators to reconsider the cut facing community colleges.

"In order to build a prosperous and productive workforce, and prepare our future leaders of tomorrow, we must continue to invest in our community colleges," he said.

The New Jersey Council of County Colleges organized the testimony, which also included remarks from President Eric M. Friedman.

"My students come from every possible background," he said. "I can get all of them to graduation, but it takes extra supports. Cutting our operational funds means cutting a lifeline."

Studying political science at Bergen, Quezada took the opportunity to explain to the legislators how the College has changed her life.

"Attending community college is one of my best life decisions," she said. "But my story is just one among many success stories and Bergen Community College. I truly believe if it weren't for this assistance, I wouldn't be here today."

Before concluding her remarks, Quezada reiterated how restoring \$20 million for community colleges made good sense in the state's \$55.9 billion budget. The appropriation amounts to .04 percent.

She closed her testimony by letting the legislators know "we are worth the investment." ■

## Frontpage News: National Honors in Communication Excellence

For the first time in Bergen history, the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations has recognized the institution's work with a Paragon Award – the highest honor in strategic communication at community colleges. NCMPR, an affiliate of the American Association of Community Colleges, recognizes high-achieving professional staffs from throughout the country as part of the annual Paragon program. This year, communication professionals submitted more than 1,500 entries, with fewer than 10 percent ultimately qualifying for a Paragon. Including Bergen, only two community colleges in New Jersey earned a Paragon this year. Executive Director of Public Relations Larry Hlavenka and Director of Marketing Kristy Italiano accepted the College's Paragon at NCMPR's national conference in Seattle earlier this month.



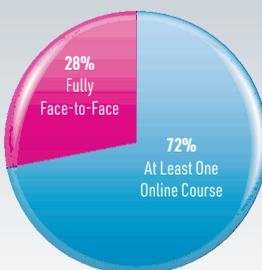
"I am incredibly proud that the College's work has earned recognition as some of the best in the nation," Hlavenka said. "Bergen has built an incredible team in the Office of Public Relations and Marketing that truly remains deserving of such acclaim. The Paragon Award solidifies the department's standing as a national model for excellence in strategic communication."

*Continued on page 6.*

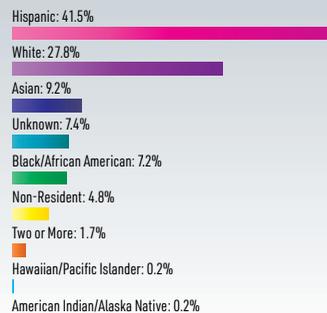
## BY THE NUMBERS - The Evolving Student Profile

As registration for summer and fall classes opens on April 1 (turn to page six for complete details), data on the fall 2023 registration class may surprise you regarding the evolution of the Bergen student profile.

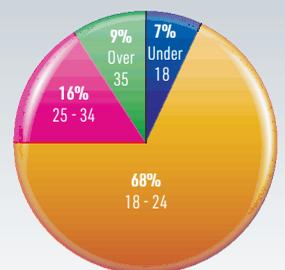
Enrollment by Modality



Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



Enrollment by Age

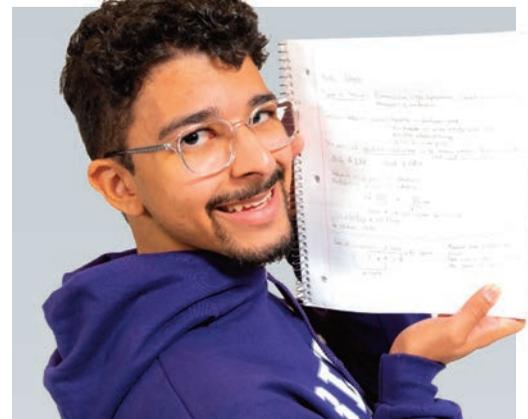


# A Culture of Presentation



In recent years, College leaders have encouraged Bergen faculty and staff to develop a “culture of presentation” at the institution as a way to report out on good work and to raise the level of visibility of projects completed by faculty and staff.

Three Bergen leaders will participate in the New Jersey Council of County Colleges “practitioner scholar series” where recently minted doctoral graduates will discuss their dissertations and the research they have conducted as part of webinar events. Bergen Vice President of Student Affairs AJ Trump, Director of Grants Administration Anjali Thanawala and Assistant Director of Public Relations Jessica Fagnoli will present to their colleagues from across New Jersey as part of this project. ■



## Student Spotlight Alejandro Olarte

STEM student Alejandro Olarte has a passion for robotics. But he’s no robot.

Since enrolling at the College, Olarte has made it his mission to not only get involved with the institution’s vast opportunities in STEM, but to encourage his peers to do the same, conveying tremendous energy and enthusiasm.

*“Bergen is the perfect choice for me,” he said. “Not only does the community feel like a second family to me, but it also provides me with the opportunity to expand my knowledge and transfer to a four-year university, which is crucial for my future.”*

At Bergen, Olarte founded a chapter of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, serves as a student ambassador for the Educational Opportunity Fund, and mentors high school robotics teams – all while studying engineering science to pursue a career in mechanical engineering. He credits the College and his faculty members for providing opportunities for him to succeed.

“My love for STEM has led me to get involved with the STEM Student Union, where I have had the chance to meet different people and learn about various STEM opportunities,” he said. “Through my involvement in robotics competitions in high school, I have experienced firsthand the creativity and excitement that STEM fields offer and I am eager to share this experience with others at Bergen.”

Olarte expects to graduate in 2025. ■

# Middle States Matters

By Gary Porter, Accreditation Liaison Officer

First, we have been in communication with Middle States regarding the visiting Team Chair Selection Process. More news forthcoming soon. Second, I am proud to report that the early drafts of the seven standards chapters are being analytically reviewed by team members and the executive cabinet.



The goal for the second half of the spring semester is to:

1. Identify action plans that the College can implement to ensure full compliance with the criteria found within the seven standards. These plans will offer two benefits: increasing institutional stability at times of administrative change and ensuring that procedures remain high quality by being regularly reviewed, revised and updated.
2. Identify institutional areas of focus where gaps have been identified. In these cases, action plans to bring the College into closer alignment with Middle States expectations are being implemented.

Meanwhile, in late March, the chairs of the seven standard chapters will make formal presentations to the executive cabinet. In the presentations, the chairs will describe how the College has met the criteria, how they have developed an evidence inventory, and how the evidence supports their findings.

The plan is to complete the analysis of the chapters and internal recommendations by May 7.

Additionally, a special meeting of the Board of Trustees Strategic Planning Committee has been called for April. Trustees will review the draft of the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan. ■

The Bergen Institute for the Creative Arts Presents:

# ANDY KRIKUN

## WHERE HAVE I BEEN ALL THESE YEARS?

Thursday, April 18, 2024 at 7:30 p.m.  
Anna Maria Ciccone Theatre  
[tickets.bergen.edu](https://tickets.bergen.edu)

# Snapshotted



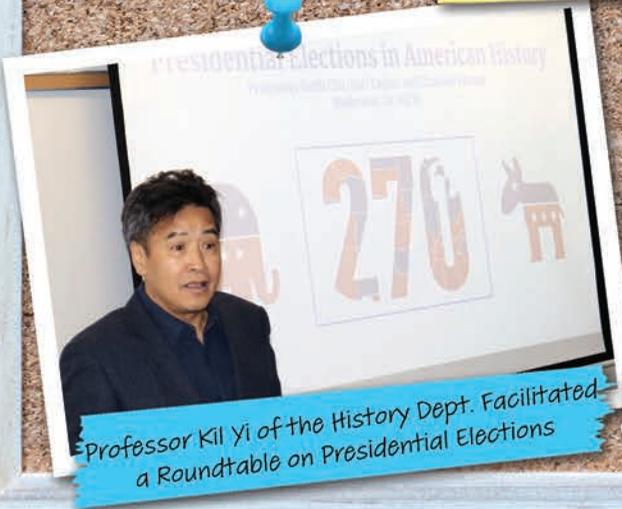
Always a Celebratory Mood at the Black History Month Closing Banquet



Governance in Action: Pizza with the President



Heart Health Month Brought Health Services and Nursing Students Together



Professor Kil Yi of the History Dept. Facilitated a Roundtable on Presidential Elections



Women's History Month Began with Keynote Eileen Kean, Esq.



## Acclaimed South Korean Pianist to Play Bergen Benefit on April 11

World-renowned pianist Edwin Sungpil Kim will bring his unique blend of “magic in atmosphere, individuality and poise” (International Piano Magazine) to the Anna Maria Ciccone Theatre at Bergen for a fundraising performance in April. “Touch the Music: An Evening with Edwin Sungpil Kim” will feature the artist’s signature style, which weaves audience interaction into his concerts. Cellist DoYeon Kim and vocalist Hyun Joon Shin will join Kim on stage as well. Proceeds from the event will support the creation of a “cultural enrichment” endowment through the Bergen Community College Foundation that will support arts programming at Bergen.

The event will take place on Thursday, April 11 at 7:30 p.m. in the Ciccone Theater located on the College’s main campus, at 400 Paramus Road in Paramus. All \$40 general admission tickets – \$10 for students – include a guaranteed seat for the Kim performance and a post-event “afterglow” dessert and coffee reception in the theatre lobby. The College will also offer \$100 tickets that include admission to the performance, afterglow reception and a pre-event cocktail hour at 6:30 p.m. in Gallery Bergen, the institution’s art exhibition space. The Gal-

lery Bergen cocktail hour will include, hors d’oeuvres, beverages and an opportunity for guests to explore the “Arrivals/Departures - East80West” exhibition on immigration currently on display. Visit [tickets.bergen.edu](https://tickets.bergen.edu) to purchase all ticket packages.

Kim has performed as a recitalist, chamber musician and orchestral soloist across North America and in his native South Korea at venues such as the Sydney Opera House, the Seoul Arts Center and Moscow Symphony Orchestra. His repertoire includes timeless masterpieces and new compositions of his own crafting.

He received a Doctor of Musical Arts at the Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University, where he earned his master’s and bachelor’s degrees as well. He also studied at The Juilliard School’s Pre-College Division in New York.

As a fundraiser for the newly established cultural enrichment endowment, the College Foundation has created numerous sponsorship opportunities that include reserved seating, promotional recognition and other special perks. For more information, contact the Foundation Office at [bccfoundation@bergen.edu](mailto:bccfoundation@bergen.edu). ■



Daneiah Nasser



Mana Mehdizadeh

## Two Tutors Named Best in Class

Academic coaches Daneiah Nasser and Mana Mehdizadeh of the Cerullo Learning Assistance Center have each earned the 2024 Association of Coaching and Tutoring Professionals Academic Coach of the Year Award. The honor recognizes the outstanding contributions of professional coaches who fulfill the ACTP’s mission of supporting students.

“During their time as academic coaches, both Daneiah and Mana have demonstrated remarkable adaptability and initiative,” Writing Center Supervisor John Findura and Academic Coaching Supervisor Kelli Hayes said in a co-signed statement. “Their dedication to students and to student success shines through in all of their work both at Bergen and beyond.”

“It means a great deal to me that I have been able to be a driving force in the success of others,” Nasser, who has worked at the Cerullo Learning Assistance since 2014, said.

“I’m deeply grateful for the recognition and the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in students’ lives,” the class of ’23 valedictorian Mehdizadeh, added. ■

**SAVE THE DATE: COMMENCEMENT 2024**  
Tuesday, May 14 | 10 a.m. | [grad.bergen.edu](https://grad.bergen.edu)  
MetLife Stadium | East Rutherford, New Jersey





## PTK Competes in County "Canstruction"

The College's nationally recognized chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the honor society of two-year colleges, recently competed in "Bergen County Canstruction 2024," an initiative of the Bergen County Office of Food Security, in partnership with American Dream. The Bergen County installment of the international charity competition saw four teams build giant structures from full cans of food slated for donation to

local food banks and pantries at the end of the competition. The PTK entry, a beehive dubbed "BeeCC," featured cans of green beans, corn and black beans donated by sponsors Alaimo Engineering Group, Glass Gardens Inc., GOYA Foods, Inserra Supermarkets and Bergen County Commissioner Tracy Zur (pictured far left). The students' creations remained on view for a week at the mall complex. ■



Rose Ward and Ray Parente

## "Grapes" a Timeless Tale

Bergenstages will transport audiences to life during the Great Depression with a production of John Steinbeck's award-winning novel "The Grapes of Wrath" in the Anna Maria Ciccone Theatre at Bergen's main campus in Paramus (400 Paramus Road) in March and April.

Adapted for the stage by Frank Galati and edited by Bergen professor Thomas O'Neill, The Grapes of Wrath finds the poor, but proud, Joad family coping with their loss of their farm. The family

piles their possessions into a truck and heads west for California with the hope to find work and a better life.

Performances take place on:

- Friday, March 29, 7:30 p.m.
- Saturday, March 30, 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
- Thursday, April 4, 7:30 p.m.
- Friday, April 5, 7:30 p.m.
- Saturday, April 6, 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Audiences are invited to attend a special panel discussion immediately following the performance on Thursday, April 4.

President Friedman has attended several BergenStages plays and remarked that "I have laughed, cried, and everything in between. These productions are amazing!"

Tickets are \$15 for general admission, \$10 for seniors (ages 65+) and \$5 for all students. For seats, visit [tickets.bergen.edu](https://tickets.bergen.edu) or call (201) 447-7428. ■



## It's Open House Season at Bergen

Bergen will welcome prospective students and their families to the annual spring Open House on Thursday, April 18 from 3 to 6 p.m. at the institution's main campus at 400 Paramus Road in Paramus.

The Open House provides an opportunity for students to learn about Bergen's degree, certificate and continuing education programs and to meet the faculty who teach the courses. Bergen offers programs in areas as diverse as aviation, business, health professions and culinary arts, with a Center for Online Learning where students can earn a degree entirely online in one of six fields.

Meanwhile, prospective students can also explore Bergen's vibrant campus environment that includes more than 50 student clubs and organizations and holistic student support services. These resources and activities contribute to the institution's highly engaged student body that participate in Phi Theta Kappa, the honor society of two-year colleges, LatinxCEO, an entrepreneurship development organization, and the student government association.

Designed to help ensure students can remain enrolled and succeed in their goals of earning a college education, the open house will offer workshops on financial aid and programs such as the Community College Opportunity Grant that offers a tuition-free Bergen experience for qualified students. Bergen also offers a nationally recognized tutoring center, experiential learning facilities such as the Health Professions Integrated Teaching Center and a one-stop student service center recognized by the federal government as a best practice in supporting student success.

For more information on the open house, or to RSVP, visit [openhouse.bergen.edu](https://openhouse.bergen.edu). ■

# Registration Open for Summer Classes



Bergen will once again offer a full slate of summer classes beginning in May, providing students with an opportunity to take courses between the spring and fall semesters. The summer schedule also includes the Kids and Teens Summer Learning Academy designed for first through twelfth graders that offers enrichment classes in areas such as STEM, SAT prep and the visual and performing arts.

The summer college schedule – ideal for students home from four-year institutions and those seeking to accelerate their graduation – features multiple options and start dates. Sessions range from six-to-twelve weeks, with the first beginning on Monday, May 20. All schedules include many general education courses that transfer to colleges across the

country. Students from other colleges seeking to enroll at Bergen for summer classes should visit [Bergen.edu/visiting](http://Bergen.edu/visiting).

Importantly, Registration has also opened for Bergen's fall classes, which begin in September. With three start dates offered for both in-person and Center for Online Learning classes, students have the flexibility to register for the session that best meets their needs.

Online registration for summer and fall classes will open on Monday, April 1 at [Bergen.edu](http://Bergen.edu). In-person registration will take place at the College's three locations in Paramus (400 Paramus Road), Hackensack (355 Main Street) and Lyndhurst (1280 Wall Street West).

Meanwhile, kids and teens classes begin on Monday, July 1 and continue through Friday, August 9, with all sessions taking place at the College's Paramus campus at 400 Paramus Road. Flexible offerings include single day, full-week, morning- and afternoon-only and full-day sessions on topics such as entrepreneurship, law and avionics. Parents can also enroll their children in optional before- and after-care programs as part of the summer program. Registration remains open at [Bergen.edu/kidsandteens](http://Bergen.edu/kidsandteens). ■

## Summer Schedule:

Summer 1 (6 Weeks) - Monday, May 20  
Summer U (12 Weeks) - Monday, May 20  
Summer 2 (6 Weeks) - Monday, July 1  
Kids and Teens (7 Weeks) - Monday, July 1

## Fall Schedule:

Fall 1 (15 Weeks) - Wednesday, September 4  
Flex 1 (8 Weeks) - Wednesday, September 4  
Fall 2 (12 Weeks) - Wednesday, September 25  
Flex 2 (8 Weeks) - Saturday, October 26

*"Frontpage News", continued from page 1.*

Bergen's Paragon came in the interior signage/display category for a series of student success story profiles that appeared on retractable banners at on-campus open houses and off-campus recruitment events. Developed as a strategic initiative in the College's goals of *enhancing its storytelling and fostering a culture of belongingness*, the banners feature members of Bergen's diverse student population who provided quotes on why they chose the College, their career goals or how the institution supported their learning experience.

Through telling the stories of successful students who found a welcoming environment at the College, the PR/marketing team sought to

convey to prospective students that Bergen can help them reach their goals too – just like their peers featured in the profiles.

Last year, the PR/marketing team earned an institution-record four NCMPR Medallion Awards as part of the organization's regional recognition program. Bergen earned Medallions in four categories, with first-place gold honors in two areas (communication success story campaign and microsite/landing page) and second-place silver in the other pair (newsletter and interior signage/displays). During the last eight years, the hard-working team has garnered 13 Medallions for excellence in categories such as newsletter, video programming and advertising. ■



## Faculty Spotlight Ronda Drakeford

Thirty years ago in her family's seafood restaurant, Professor Ronda Drakeford began her career as a chef. Along the way, she took classes at the College, taught at the Bergen County Academies and developed the first culinary arts program in the Englewood Public School District. Flash-forward to the present day, she plans to finish her career in the kitchen – in Bergen's amazing new culinary arts center slated to open in 2025. When she reflects on her career, she focuses on her passion for the profession.

"I took classes at Bergen and was so pleased with the quality and knowledge of the faculty," she said. "This admiration turned into a goal to spend the next phase of my career as a faculty member at Bergen. Teaching hospitality develops essential skills for all disciplines, inspires creativity, develops leadership aptitudes, and is a future-proof employment sector."

Now teaching hospitality and tourism courses at Bergen, Drakeford has taken leadership roles in key projects such as two federal grants that seek to educate students on sustainability and a partnership with Volvo Cars of North America where culinary students operated the company's corporate hospitality functions.

"Watching students transform within an inclusive learning environment is highly fulfilling," she said.

Drakeford earned her B.S. in business management from Fairleigh Dickinson University and her M.S. in organizational leadership and management from Thomas Edison University. She has entered a doctoral program with a concentration in higher education leadership at Manhattanville College and expects to graduate in summer 2025. ■