

# inside Bergen

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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**To Your Health!** Joining communities across the country, the College recognized National Public Health Week in early April. Working to raise awareness and highlight the topics that can improve health and happiness, this issue shines a light on all things wellness!

## Nursing: It's Family Business

Twin sisters. Twin degrees. Twin careers. Fraternal twin sisters Diana and Joana Constantino have made Bergen a family affair for more than two decades, with both earning nursing degrees from the institution in 2006 before returning to teach in 2015 (Diana) and 2019 (Joana).

The twins' journey to Bergen began in Manila where they lived for five years until the family moved to Paramus in the shadow of the College's main campus. While in Paramus, the twins aspired to attend the College and began making plans to enroll once they graduated high school. Those plans included taking advantage of opportunities such as the NJ STARS program, the state's tuition-free college initiative for high-achieving students that

launched in 2004. The Constantinos became the first students to enroll under the program at Bergen and even had the opportunity to meet then-Gov. Jim McGreevey and appear on Telemundo. After graduating from Bergen, both earned bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing. With Bergen's influence on their lives, the sisters always felt compelled to return.

"Bergen has been a stepping stone that molded the trajectory of our success and opened doors for a myriad of opportunities," Joana said. "I decided to work at Bergen because I have seen the impact Bergen has on the students, faculty and community."

"I want to give back and continue the journey



Diana and Joana Constantino

that I have started," Diana said. "When I work at Bergen, it does not feel like a job rather but an enjoyable hobby that you look forward to every day."

*Nursing: It's Family Business - continued on page 2.*

## BY THE NUMBERS - Health Professions at Bergen Community College



**1,149** Bergen Students Enrolled in Health Professions Programs



**1** Community College Students in the Nation to Intern at Memorial Sloan Kettering (Bergen's Danbee Chae)



**100%** National Registry Pass Rate for Bergen Paramedic Science Grads



## High School Students on the "Case" at Bergen

Students from Ridgewood High School's Academy for the Health Professions visited the College for an immersive case study experience developed with Bergen faculty last month. The students tracked the case of "Cindy," an 18-year-old who vapes. Following their "patient" through the Health Professions Integrated Teaching Center, the high schoolers worked hands-on with College faculty and students in multiple academic laboratories. Ultimately, and despite their best efforts, "Cindy" succumbed to the injuries ravaging her body from vaping. ■

# To Your Health!

With more than 1,100 students enrolled in Bergen's health professions programs and College officials focusing on health and wellness as strategic priorities for employees, there is a medical textbook-worth of fascinating facts on healthcare at the College. Here's an observation window into some of the latest stories.



Members of the Office of Specialized Services organized a simulation for medical office assistant and paramedic science students to work with adults with intellectual disabilities in an exercise designed to help increase their understanding of neurodiversity.



During National Public Health Week, numerous activities encouraged wellness and preventative care. Among them, dental hygiene students performed complimentary oral cancer screenings.



The Be Well Bergen employee wellness program sponsored a resources fair that provided massages, nutrition consultations and even acupuncture!

Finally, student Mobolaji Ojolo earned recognition from Phi Theta Kappa as a Hurst Review National Council Licensure Examination Scholar, receiving a passcode for use of the Hurst Review study materials for the registered nurse exam – a \$300 value – and a \$250 scholarship award to pay for the NCLEX exam fees. ■



Joana Constantino



Diana Constantino

## **Nursing: It's Family Business** – continued from page 1

The dynamic duo shares in many activities and recognitions too. Among them, they serve as advisors for the Student Nurse Club, the Pasalubong Club and the Nursing Honor Society at Bergen. They even earned a feature in the American Nurses Association's "Year of the Nurse" project and a News12 story during the pandemic.

"Working with my sister has been a blessing and we share our successes together," Joana said.

About the only thing they do not have in common – professionally, anyway – Diana works as a nurse practitioner at a private medical office in Paramus and as a registered staff nurse at the Valley Hospital. Joana works at a subacute rehabilitation center and long-term care facility.

Believe it or not, they are not the only siblings in the College's nursing program: students Brandon Amador-Reyes and Jennifer Amador-Reyes currently study nursing at the College. The Constantinos have an explanation. "Two is better than one," Joana said. ■

## It's "Community College Month" Join our Bergen Community!

As the nation celebrates Community College Month, it's the perfect time to learn all about everything Bergen has to offer.

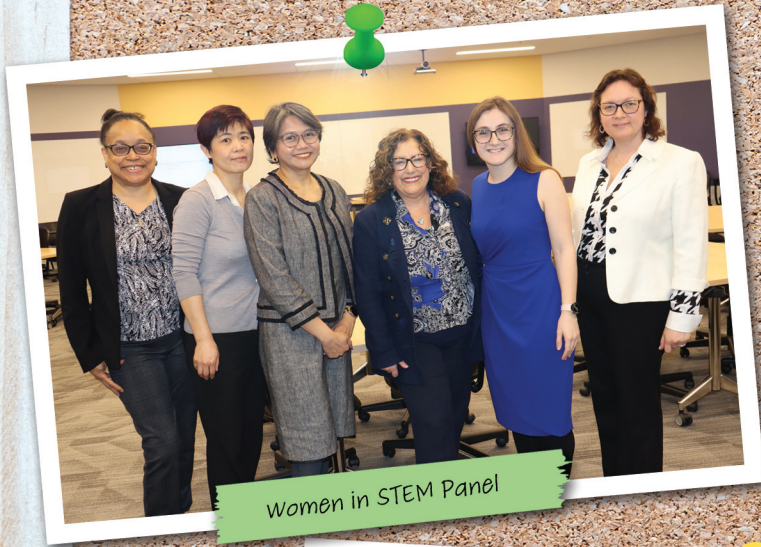
**Open House**  
**Wednesday, May 3**  
**3:30–6:30 p.m.**

400 Paramus Road  
Paramus, New Jersey

[openhouse.bergen.edu](http://openhouse.bergen.edu)  
#CCMonth



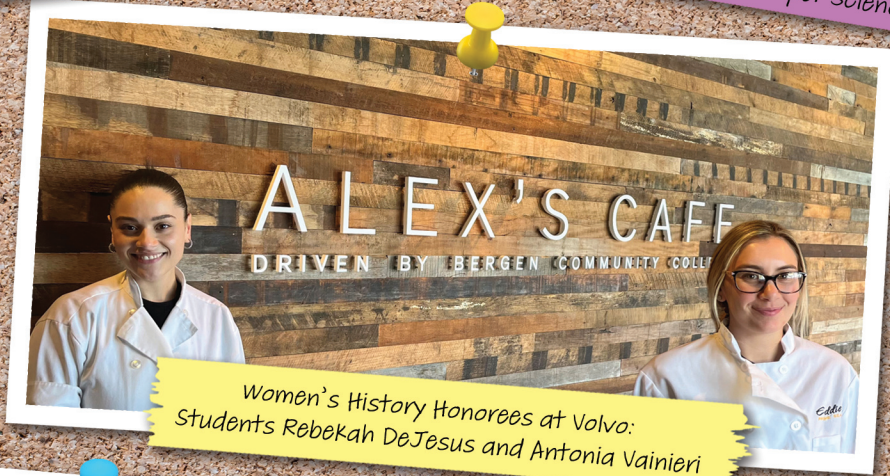
# Snapshotted



Women in STEM Panel



Bergen STEM students represent at Ridgewood High's Super Science Saturday



Women's History Honorees at Volvo: Students Rebekah DeJesus and Antonia Vainieri



Literary Arts Series Author Min Jin Lee (Pachinka)



Professor Dr. Sarah Shurts, Dean Adam Goodell and President Eric M. Friedman at the NJCC-NJCH event - "Bringing Community Back to Community Colleges"

# Professors Honored by NISOD

Professors Mariella Spagnolo and Dr. Anthony Yankowski have earned the institution's 2022-23 National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) Excellence Award. The NISOD Excellence Award recognizes one full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty member (Yankowski) and one adjunct faculty member or lecturer (Spagnolo) who have made significant contributions to the betterment of student success at Bergen. They will accept their awards in Austin, Texas during NISOD's annual international conference in May.

"We are delighted to celebrate the classroom efforts of Anthony Yankowski, who has been instrumental in developing our new Center for Online Learning, and Mariella Spagnolo, a student favorite who has helped set a course for our culinary program," Bergen Vice President of Academic Affairs Brock Fisher, Ph.D., said. "Both professors exemplify the professionalism and disciplinary curiosity that define the Bergen faculty."



Spagnolo, a first-generation Italian-American, has instructed event planning and management for five years at Bergen. Each semester, her classes produce themed events that include fundraisers with in-kind donations and giveaways in the Bergen Room, and a working bistro where students learn to provide high-quality food service. The themed events have raised hundreds of dollars for various 501 (c) (3) organizations including the Bergen Community College Foundation. Spagnolo has spent more than 20 years working at corporations, nonprofits and her own event planning business. She holds a bachelor of science in business management from Ramapo College of New Jersey and a master's of busi-

ness administration in human resource management from Fairleigh Dickinson University.

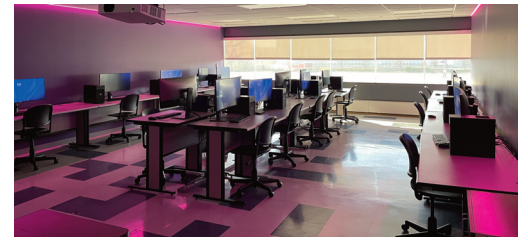
"I will reflect on this achievement for the confidence and motivation to continue to share best practices, stimulate and inspire our next generation of professionals," Spagnolo said. "It is not about me; it is about the students."

Yankowski has taught at Bergen for 15 years as a psychology professor. Since 2012, he has served as a faculty adviser to Psi Beta National Honor Society, which recognizes high-achieving psychology students. Yankowski has become a field standout, contributing three chapters to the e-book "Connect Master" for McGraw Hill, while authoring a relevancy module, "Beyond the Binary," for the company as well. Yankowski earned a bachelor of arts in psychology from Rutgers University, a master of arts in educational psychology from Montclair University, a master of arts in clinical psychology and a doctorate of clinical psychology from the Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology at Yeshiva University.



"It is gratifying to be nominated by my peers and recognized for the contributions to the College and community," he said. "I also acknowledge that many people share in this achievement – the mentors, colleagues and support staff who have nurtured me along the way – who made me a better instructor, researcher and clinician."

NISOD, a consortium of community and technical colleges committed to promoting and celebrating excellence in teaching, learning and leadership, established the Excellence Awards in 1991. ■



## An Innovative Idea

Work has begun in earnest at Bergen Community College at the Meadowlands in Lyndhurst, which will become the institution's premier destination for technology and business programs. The innovation center concept will transform the facility with a Bloomberg lab, innovations lounge and gaming center. A large "Innovation Center" sign now appears on the façade, while classrooms have received equipment and technology upgrades. ■



## Student Spotlight Jaykson Metaute

"What has made me successful at Bergen are the people I've met who are very helpful and attentive," he said. "I chose Bergen because of how well kept the campus looks, the fact that it has a soccer team and that it is not so far from home."

Seeking to eventually turn an on-field interest into an off-field career, soccer player Jaykson Metaute aspires to become a strength and conditioning coach or physical therapist. He expects to graduate next month. ■

## A Fresh Canvas

Bergen's academic master plan identified online education as a priority area for the College as students appreciate the flexibility of remote learning. In response, Bergen will soon complete the migration of its learning management system to Canvas – the industry's leading online learning platform. The software already supports the Center for Online Learning, which launched earlier this year. Students can expect Canvas to provide intuitive, streamlined and user-friendly interfaces, while faculty will appreciate the new content delivery applications and tools the software provides. ■



# The Complete College Cabinet



(From left): Vice President of Facilities Nat Saviet, Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Brock Fisher, Dean of Research and Institutional Effectiveness Dr. Tonia McKay, Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. AJ Trump, Vice President of External Affairs Suzanne Wetzel, President Dr. Eric Friedman, Vice President of Human Resources and Organizational Development Meredith Gatzke, Chief Financial Officer Wilton Thomas-Hooke, Executive Director of Continuing Education and Workforce Development Cinzia D'Iorio and Chief Information Officer Ron Spaide.

With leadership from the executive cabinet (pictured) and Dr. Gary Porter, Accreditation Liason Officer, the College has launched the 2024-29 strategic planning cycle. With new mission, vision, values and goals in place, the leaders will now begin to shape a steering committee, promote the strategic planning process and perform an audit of relevant documents, and existing, plans, including the recently completed academic plan and enrollment management plan. As the College prepares for its accreditation evaluation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, this work reflects a commitment to continuous improvement and institutional health.



In other news related to assessment, accreditation and strategic planning, Self-Study work groups will report on their preliminary findings later this month. The reports will provide an opportunity to assess criteria and identify gaps in the data and evidence being collected. ■



## Earthquake Relief Efforts Continue

In response to the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that took the lives of more than 57,000 people in Turkey and Syria, the countries' many expats at Bergen have quickly mobilized relief efforts. In all, students raised \$5,100 and dozens of boxes of clothing, hygiene and basic needs from the College community, including nursing students who greatly contributed to the cause. Turkish student Han Duman (pictured above), who helped organize the campaign, said the work must continue in light of the unfathomable devastation.

"This is not a sprint," he said. "This is going to be a marathon." ■



## Valuable Experience with "Poor Fellas"

Led by three student directors, the members of Bergen's Theatre Production Workshop class will present Marc Palmieri's "Poor Fellas" this month in the Ender Hall Lab Theatre at the main campus in Paramus. Students Mike Rovito, Joey Liberti and Hector Hidalgo-Ramon have overseen all aspects of producing the six one-act plays that comprise the ensemble performance. The student directors, cast and stagehands not only created their own company as part of the project, but selected the show, built scenery and assembled costumes and props. Performances will take place on Thursday, April 27, Friday, April 28, and Saturday, April 29 at 7:30 p.m. Admission is free, but reservations are requested at [tickets.bergen.edu](https://tickets.bergen.edu). ■



The Ringgold Project has also featured a children's reading room/makerspace where teachers and parents could accompany their children to hear stories from Ringgold's 17 books and create artwork inspired by what they have seen and heard. Students from Hackensack visited campus to experience the exhibit and makerspace.

## College Glitters with Ringgold

The College will close its monthslong celebration of Englewood artist and activist Faith Ringgold with a musical and stage performance on Thursday, April 27 at 7:30 p.m. in the Anna Maria Ciccone Theatre at the main campus. Guests can visit [tickets.bergen.edu](https://tickets.bergen.edu) to purchase their seats; general admission is \$25, with discounts offered to senior citizens, students and College staff.



The event, "Coming to Jones Road Suite," will feature two newly commissioned creative works developed specifically for the Ringgold exhibition. Grammy-nominated composer Rufus Reid, who has recorded on more than 500 albums and received a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, will perform a jazz suite that will provide the evening's soundtrack. Meanwhile, a verbatim theatre performance developed by College faculty and read by students, will offer a window into the origin stories of ancestor journeys to Bergen County alongside Reid's jazz. Compiled

by professors Drs. Christine Eubank and Leigh Jonaitis, the oral histories provide verbatim stories from members of the community who worked with the professors to include their narratives.



After the performance, guests can visit the "Coming to Jones Road" exhibition currently on view in Gallery Bergen and enjoy refreshments prepared by the College's culinary students. Ringgold's "Coming to Jones Road" series of artwork, inspired by her family's 1992 move to Englewood that subjected them to racism and hostility, chronicles her own story of survival while celebrating her ancestors and their journeys along the Underground Railroad into Harlem. The exhibition opened in January.

The College secured \$22,500 in grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Puffin Foundation and the Bergen County Division of Cultural and Historic Affairs to develop the comprehensive celebration of Ringgold's work and activism. Gallery Bergen Director Tim Blunk led the initiative. ■



Board of Trustees Secretary Joe Baretto, President Eric M. Friedman, Ph.D. and student Lisa Nam.

## STEM Student Success

Student Lisa Nam has earned the 2022-23 Terry O'Banion Student Technology Award and Student Developer Champion Award from the League for Innovation in the Community College. Nam will receive \$1,000 for educational expenses and a plaque commemorating her achievement. The international nonprofit organization seeks to inspire progress and innovation at community colleges.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Nam now studies game programming and computer science at Bergen, concurrently enrolling in two associate degree programs. Among her activities and accolades, Nam has become a STEM Student Scholar, a 3SP Scholar, a member of Phi Theta Kappa, a member of the Judith K. Winn School of Honors and a member of the dean's list. She also works as a math and science peer tutor for computer science classes and as a computer lab assistant.

"I am tremendously honored to receive this award and I am proud of my achievements," Nam said. "This award wouldn't have been possible without the 3SP program."

Nam expects to graduate with two degrees this May in game programming and computer science. She has cherished her Bergen experience.

"I was constantly surrounded by dedicated students, supportive professors, and friendly staff members at Bergen," Nam said. "They ran the extra mile to help me achieve my full potential." ■



## Commencement 2023

Tuesday, May 16 • 10 a.m.

MetLife Stadium, East Rutherford, NJ  
[grad.bergen.edu](https://grad.bergen.edu)