



## Bergen Tutoring is Tops ... Again!

The Association for the Coaching and Tutoring Profession (ACTP) has selected the Cerullo Learning Assistance Center to receive the "Learning Center of Excellence Award" for two-year institutions, recognizing it as the nation's best among its peers. ACTP serves as a professional organization for academic coaches, student success professionals, tutors, tutor coordinators and administrators.

"We are deeply honored to receive this recognition and sincerely appreciate the dedication and hard work of our tutors and staff," Cerullo Center Manager Candice Kaup Scioscia said on behalf of her colleagues. "This award once again establishes the Cerullo Center as a preeminent community college learning assistance center offering an array of services unmatched by most community colleges in the United States."

Writing Center Supervisor John Findura and Academic Coaching Supervisor Kelli Hayes traveled to Orlando, Florida to accept the award at the ACTP Annual Conference, where they also provided remarks to those in attendance.

The honor marks the latest major award for the Cerullo Center, which previously received recognition from the National Tutoring Association and the National College Learning Center Association as one of the nation's top tutoring centers.

The Cerullo Center represents an important offering in Bergen's portfolio of support resources that seek

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## Manufacturing Careers Made at Bergen

Thirteen students have completed training that will prepare them for jobs in the manufacturing industry through a New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce grant. Under a \$2 million state workforce initiative, the latest graduates of the tuition-free 260-hour program learned advanced techniques in using CNC machinery while also learning code programming, blueprint reading and 3D modeling. Students received a 10-hour OSHA card as well. Four of the graduates secured employment at a local manufacturing company before completing the program.

Bergen Manager of Business Development Tamara Vaughan oversees the program through the Division of Continuing Education and Workforce Development. The first students

graduated from the program last fall. The College will continue establishing cohorts through June 2025.

The state program to establish education-to-workforce pathways through the state's community colleges and industry employers through the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program, New Jersey Business and Industry Association and New Jersey Council of County Colleges began last year. Manufacturing represents one of New Jersey's major industry clusters, with more than 9,000 manufacturing companies employing approximately 250,000 workers and annually contributing \$50 billion to the economy. More than 20,000 manufacturing jobs exist in Bergen County alone. ■

## BY THE NUMBERS - The Positive Effect of Tutoring at Bergen

### Tutored Students vs. Non-Tutored Students



**+10%** GPA Each Term



**+14%** Retention Rate Year-Over-Year



**+3.4%** Graduation Rate

# Booker Comes Back to Bergen County

U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) hosted a town hall at the College for nearly 1,000 constituents, including President Eric M. Friedman, elected officials and local residents. The event represented a homecoming for the state's senior senator. Booker grew up in Harrington Park and graduated from Northern Valley Regional High School at Old Tappan. During the town hall, Sen. Booker interacted with constituents and fielded a dozen questions before departing for Washington D.C.



U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) with Bergen County Executive James J. Tedesco III (center) and President Eric M. Friedman (right).



PTK students Maria Frometa Lora, Elizabeth Girard and Franzen Angeleen Quicho.

## PTK Students Secure Scholarships

Two students and an alumna have received \$10,000 in scholarships from Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society organization for two-year colleges. Leading the honorees, Elizabeth Girard ('24) has earned the 2025 Hites Transfer Scholarship, PTK's most prestigious and largest scholarship offering at \$7,500. In addition to securing spots on the New Jersey All-State Academic Team, current students and prospective May graduates Maria Formeta Lora and Franzen Angeleen Quicho have received 2025 Coca-Cola Academic Team scholarships of \$1,500 and \$1,000, respectively.

"We are proud that our PTK members have been recognized for their amazing accomplishments through these scholarships," Assistant Director of PTK and Honors Anna Gergen said. "Their academic excellence, hard work and dedication to our chapter projects have made them stand-out members of PTK."

Girard graduated with her associate of science in social work and a Judith K. Winn School of Honors diploma in December 2024. She capped her time at the College as a four-time member of the dean's list, Honors Student Conference participant and peer tutor and academic coach. She has since transferred to Rutgers University-Newark to study social work. Girard hopes to focus on child and family social work with a specialization in trauma and trauma-related mental disorders. In her free time, she participates in theatre and volunteers for organizations such as We've Got Friends and Spectrum for Living. Only 22 students nationwide received the Hites Transfer Scholarship, which recognizes outstanding academic achievement and rigor, engagement in college and community activities, and leadership.

"I'm incredibly grateful to be selected for this scholarship," she said. "I feel seen and recog-

nized for my dedication and passion, and the support of Phi Theta Kappa has once again brought me one step closer to achieving my goal of making a meaningful impact in the lives of others."

Studying general natural science and math, Frometa Lora intends to pursue a career in healthcare. At Bergen, she serves as a leader-in-residence for the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, the student engagement and events coordinator for Bergen for Business, the general vice president and vice president of recruitment for PTK and a student ambassador for the Educational Opportunity Fund.

"I am extremely grateful for the experiences I gained and the mentoring I received during my time at Bergen," she said. "These opportunities played a significant role in my success, and without them, I would not have been named a Coca-Cola Scholar."

Quicho hopes to become a tax attorney and advocate for fair and equitable tax policies. As a peer mentor for the Turning Point Program and the Center for Adult Transition at Bergen, she seeks to support initiatives that encourage diversity inclusivity. As director of recruitment for Bergen's PTK chapter, she helped lead the group's Honors in Action project. Quicho also won numerous awards at the 2024 Beacon Conference.

"I'm beyond ecstatic to be one of the few recipients of the Coca-Cola Academic Team Scholarship in New Jersey," she said. "This incredible honor reflects the hard work, passion, and dedication I've poured into my academics and service throughout my years at Bergen Community College." ■



# Snapshotted



Students Mia Tucker and Alyssa Macias interviewed President Eric M. Friedman for their Radio Production (COM-105) class.



Pulitzer-Prize winning author Dr. Matthew Desmond provided the Keynote at the "Poverty in Our Communities Summit."



Perkins Grant funding supported a bus trip to the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia for criminal justice and legal studies students.



Prospective students and their families explored the main campus during the annual spring Open House.



The College's Women's History Month celebration closed with a brunch.





## Bergen Gets Hacked

STEM Student Research Center students organized the College's first-ever hackathon – a 12-hour event in March with more than 130 participants. Attendees included students from the College, the Applied Technology High School and high school students dual enrolled at Bergen. Sponsored by Amazon Web Services, the hackathon challenged students to work in teams of four to develop solutions to real world challenges in three categories: education, environment and transportation.

STEM student Jordan Rodriguez worked with a group of his peers to develop the event.

"I wanted to involve students in an event that allows them to innovate their ideas and solve real-world issues," Rodriguez said. "I am proud to say that all the students loved the event and I look forward to supporting them in the future."

Student Angela Mae Villaroman agreed.

"A hackathon not only encourages students to pursue their dreams, but it allows them to gain access to fellow individuals that also have the same goals at them, further enhancing their ability to make those dreams into a reality," she said. "Witnessing great minds come together and create something for the betterment of soci-

ety was truly an enlightening and inspiring experience."

Hackathons bring programmers, designers and entrepreneurs together to complete a software or hardware project within a limited timeframe. The Bergen event featured 26 teams and 14 judges selected from Bergen faculty and staff and industry professionals.

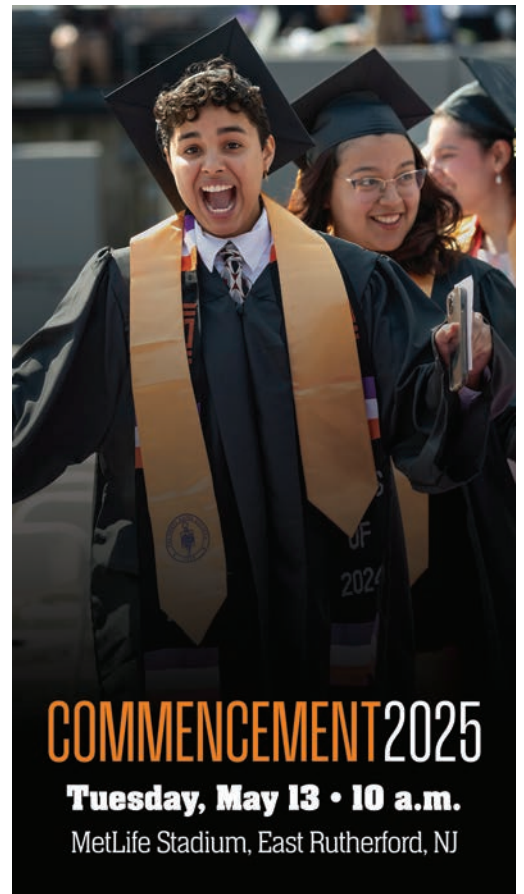
"The hackathon was a truly special event, conceived by students, facilitated by students and accomplished by students," Dean of Mathematics, Science and Technology Emily Vandalovsky said. "This epitomized learning at its best – a team-oriented, outcome-driven, hands-on competition in a supportive and collaborative environment with workshops and mentoring sessions for all attendees."

Students also had access to mentors for guidance and an opportunity to network with industry partners from Amazon Web Services and Microsoft. A panel discussion on industry careers included representatives from Microsoft, UPS, JPMorgan Chase, the Stevens Institute of Technology and Bergen graduates Tyler Zamski ('20) and Caitlin Mooney ('20). ■



## Coming Soon to Gallery Bergen

The Bergen Institute for the Creative Arts, Fashion at Bergen and Gallery Bergen will host an opening reception for the annual Student Art Expo on Thursday, April 24 at 6 p.m. in the gallery (third floor, West Hall.) Work will include fashion design, painting, 2D and 3D design, animation, sculpture and photography. The opening reception will feature hors d'oeuvres prepared by culinary arts program students and live music performances by music department students. ■





Professional tutor and alumnus Samir Parajuli works with current student Ashley Aizaga.

*Tutoring, continued from page 1*  
to ensure students can remain enrolled and on a path toward earning a college degree.

Last year, the Cerullo Center provided no-cost, one-on-one, walk-in and in-class tutoring for more than 5,000 students through 30,000 visits. More than 100 peer and professional tutors assist students in 250 subjects. The center also offers workshops, academic coaching and supplemental instruction as part of its multi-faceted approach. It maintains a

math and science walk-in center, writing center and English language resource center among its support services.

Khairia Fazal, dean of learning support, has led the tutoring center for more than 20 years. A donation from Bergen County residents Henry and Edith Cerullo led to a rededication of the student resource in 2003.

To donate in support of the Cerullo Center, visit [bergen.edu/donate](http://bergen.edu/donate). ■



Retired Associate Dean of Nursing Darlene Zales-Russamano, Professor Joanne Varratos Diamantidis and Associate Dean of Nursing Carmen Cruz-Torres.

## Professor Honored for Career Contributions

Nursing professor Joanne Varratos Diamantidis has earned a top honor from the district chapter of the Daughters of Penelope, an international civic organization for women of Greek descent. The "Salute to Women Award" from the organization's fifth district chapter recognizes an individual who has achieved success in her profession and stands as a role model for others.

"I am deeply honored," Diamantidis said. "This recognition holds a special place in my heart as it reflects the values and mission of the Daughters of Penelope."

Diamantidis has worked at Bergen for 21 years, teaching medical-surgical nursing, mental health, pediatrics and obstetrics. She holds extensive clinical practice experience as a nurse at Bellevue Hospital and Mount Sinai Hospital. She earned her Ed.D. in community college leadership from National American University, a master's degree in nursing of children from the University of Pennsylvania and a bachelor's degree in nursing from Hunter College.

"Joanne Diamantidis has educated more than 10,000 nursing students in her career," Bergen Associate Dean of Nursing Carmen Cruz-Torres said. "She is passionate about her work as an educator and a nurse, but her biggest attribute is caring and advocating for others."

Founded in San Francisco in 1929, the Daughters of Penelope represents the first women's organization of its kind in the United States. The group leads philanthropic, educational and civic activities through community service and volunteerism. The fifth district chapter includes areas of New Jersey and Delaware. ■

## Art Students Honored by UNESCO



Illustration 125 by Bri Schwerzler.

Ten students from visual arts professor Sophia Wang's ART-125 illustration class were recognized by UNESCO, the World Institute of Youth Art, for their original artwork. Celebrated for their demonstration of strong cultural identity

and meaningful artistic communication while reflecting a wide range of creative interpretations and cultural narratives, the students received certificates from the international organization. The students are Maissa Bentalb, Kayla Gauthier, Shannon Gramsch, Mariangel Fermin Hoepelman, TJ Lally, Maja Mladnoska, Toni Reyes, Bri Schwerzler, Matt Sneade and Kelly Valentine.

Professor Wang, who encouraged the students to participate in the global art competition to gain real-world experience, boost confidence, foster motivation and promote artistic and professional development reflected on the importance of the arts.

"Art practice is a meaningful part of a student's growth journey," she said. "I deeply appreciate how the competition values creative self-expression over technical perfection. Even when students are still developing their skills, their thoughtful and imaginative work is given space to shine." ■



# Middle States Matters



The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Peer Review Team concluded its site visit on March 26. At an open meeting with faculty and staff, Team Chair Dr. DeAnna Burt-Nanna delivered an oral exit report without taking questions, according to protocol.

Per MSCHE procedures, the College may not publicize the team's findings or suggest any particular action the Commission might take at this stage. Several steps remain in the Self-Study Evaluation process, which will unfold over the coming weeks and months, concluding in June when MSCHE notifies the College of its reaffirmation of accreditation decision. ■



## Student Spotlight Aneeta Aby

Studying health science to prepare for a career in health administration, student Aneeta Aby will leverage unique skills learned at Bergen to give her a competitive advantage. As one of 10 student interns in Bergen for Business' data analyst program, she said the workforce development initiative has "helped me learn more about handling and analyzing data, which is an important component in the healthcare administration field."

Perhaps more importantly, Aby believes the program also sharpened "her attention to detail, critical thinking and problem solving."

Aby has further refined her leadership skills by getting involved with the Judith K. Winn School of Honors, Phi Theta Kappa and Student Government Association Student Activity Board. She attributes her success to her dedication, curiosity and perseverance.

"It is easy to think about giving up once things get harder but perseverance is important to me," she said.

She expects to graduate this year. ■

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