

inside Bergen

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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President Eric M. Friedman, ACCT Vice President for Membership and Educational Services Robin Matross Helms, Linn-Benton Community College President Lisa Avery and Cyril Taylor Charitable Foundation Trustee William L. Gertz.

Global Connections: Sustainability Through Student Exchange

The Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) and U.K. Association of Colleges (AoC) have selected Bergen as an inaugural partner for a collaborative student exchange program focused on sustainability with colleges in the United Kingdom. Officially the "U.S.-U.K. Community College and Technical Education Exchange," the program will pair Bergen with Southport College in England to collaborate on initiatives related to sustainability. ACCT and AoC officials announced program participants at the ACCT's leadership congress event last month in Seattle.

"This new educational exchange partnership with Southport College is groundbreaking for Bergen's students," President Eric M. Friedman said at the leadership congress. "We see tremendous benefits from the cross-cultural learning and foresee the emergence of exciting new workforce pathways."

The ACCT and AoC selected only two U.S. colleges – Bergen and Linn-Benton Community College in Oregon – from those that expressed interest in serving as inaugural partners.

"It is our hope that the first phase will catalyze an expansion to include more colleges throughout the United States and the United Kingdom, given high interest levels on both sides of the Atlantic and the importance of the programs offered," ACCT President and CEO Jee Hang Lee said.

Bergen's application stood out due to its extensive STEM program, which includes the nation's only STEM Student Research Center at its main campus in Paramus, the College's success in the national Community College Innovation Challenge and recent STEM-based grant awards.

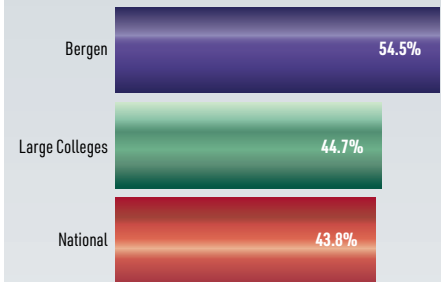
Bergen will now work with its colleagues at Southport to plan the exchange program. College leaders will visit Southport in June to finalize the launch of the student programs later this year.

Students will have access to scholarships that will enable their participation in the first exchange cohort. Support from the Cyril Taylor Charitable Foundation will also help sustain the initiative. ■

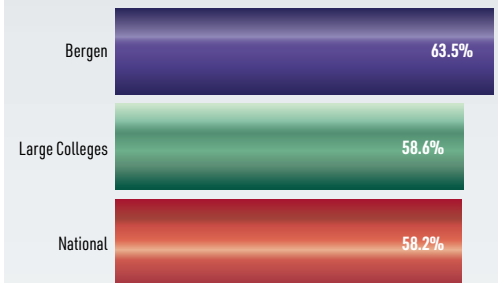
BY THE NUMBERS - Tutoring at Bergen

The College's Cerullo Learning Assistance Center has received numerous awards recognizing it as one of the best tutoring centers in the country. Recent student responses in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, which compares responses from Bergen students with their peers across the country and at similar large community colleges, provide insight into why the center remains a centerpiece in Bergen's student support strategy.

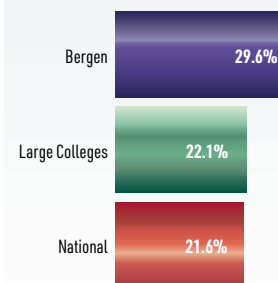
Students Who Believe Tutoring is Very Important



Students Very Satisfied with Tutoring



Students with Two or More Tutoring Visits



Two Selected for NJCCC Scholarship

Students Chennelle Brown and Zhyldyz Makhmutova have received the New Jersey Council of County Colleges (NJCCC) Richard and Ann Wellbrock Chair Scholarship. NJCCC, the statewide advocacy organization for New Jersey's 18 community colleges, offers the scholarship for students attending the college of the council's sitting chair. By virtue of Bergen Board of Trustees member Sheetal Ranjan serving as NJCCC chair since last November, the pair of high-achieving students each received a scholarship.

"Community college students encounter the most significant barriers to earning a college degree among all students enrolled in higher education," Ranjan said. "Financial aid, including scholarships, state-supported initiatives and county investments, remain critical to ensuring access and success for prospective New Jersey college students."



Brown has quickly become an active member of Phi Theta Kappa at Bergen, seeking to make an impact with her peers through leadership positions and service-learning opportunities. While studying nursing, Brown works on campus as part of the Turning Point program for adults

with developmental disabilities and the Cerullo Learning Assistance Center.

Makhmutova emigrated to the United States from Kyrgyzstan in pursuit of expanded opportunities for higher education. Now in her second year at Bergen, Makhmutova has made the dean's list while also working as a part-time nanny. She expects to graduate in 2025 with a computer science degree and transfer to a four-year university.



Governed by the presidents and trustees of the state's 18 community colleges and enshrined in state law, the NJCCC supports more than 230,000 students New Jersey community colleges serve by fostering collaboration and developing solutions that expand access to college, promote equity and student success and create a skilled workforce to drive economic growth. The organization's chair, Bergen's Ranjan, has served as a member of the executive committee since 2019. Ranjan has also served as a national leader as the northeast regional director on the Association of Community College Trustees board of directors. ■

Bergen: There's an App for That

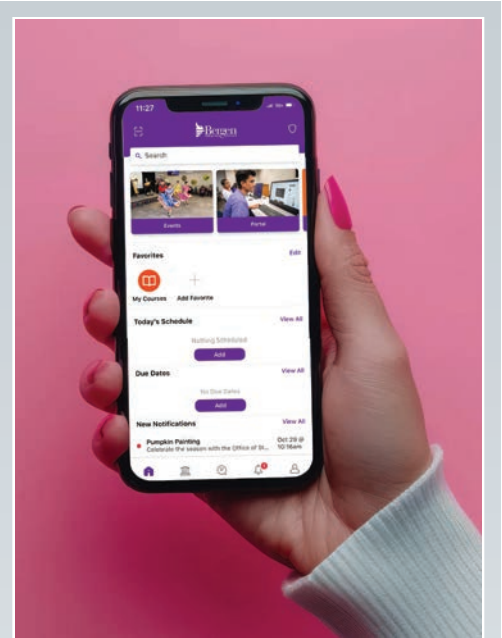
As colleges continue to embrace digital technologies to encourage student engagement, Bergen has taken the next step in its efforts to remain a regional leader in this arena with the launch of the BergenCC app. Spearheaded by the Office of Student Life, the app has operated under a pilot and soft launch for the past year. With the pilot now complete – and comprehensive features fully integrated – the app officially debuted at the beginning of the fall semester.

"The app brings the entire college experience into the palm of your hand," Greg Fenkart, director of student life, said.

Among the features, the app connects users with campus resources, student services and the student portal. The events calendar represents one of the most popular features where users can plan to attend campus events and get involved with campus clubs and organizations.

Data show that the app has found an audience. Since the start of the soft launch in summer 2023, more than 5,000 users have downloaded the app, with 1,500 visiting the app each day. Users have sent 27,000 messages to each other on the platform.

"Whether you're on- or off-campus, we're making student life more accessible, convenient, and engaging," Coordinator of Student Leadership and Technology Jared Farra said. ■



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Snapshotted



The Paramus Fire Department brought a special visitor to the Child Development Center to discuss fire safety.



As part of Hispanic Heritage Month, Hispanic alumni returned to campus for a panel discussion.



President Friedman joined County Executive Tedesco and Commissioners Marte, Ortiz and Amoroso at the county job fair.



Students celebrated the "spooky season" with numerous events on campus.



Student veteran Ryan Milnes spoke at the Veterans Day Remembrance Ceremony.



Bergen Assistant Director of Continuing Education and Workforce Development Jhonatan Garcia and construction management program certificate earner IyaSokoya Karade.

Creating a Workforce Pipeline with NJBUILD

Bergen recently recognized 20 certificate program graduates enrolled under a \$4 million state grant program that seeks to prepare women and minority candidates for jobs in construction management. Via the New Jersey Builders Utilization Initiative for Labor Diversity (NJBUILD) Women and Minorities in Construction Trades grant, Bergen received \$300,000 to offer students tuition-free enrollment in its construction management certificate program. The grant also provided other financial incentives that removed common barriers to certificate completion, according to Vice President of Continuing Education and Workforce Development Cinzia D'Iorio.

"NJBUILD is meant to empower underrepresented communities by providing comprehensive training and support," she said.

State officials launched NJBUILD as a workforce development initiative to increase the small number of women and minorities who seek jobs in the construction industry. With 151,600 construction employees in the state, women (9.2 percent) and minorities (Black, 4.8 percent and Asian 2.7 percent) account for disproportionately low numbers compared with their overall population, according to the state's Department of Labor and Workforce Development and Office of Research and Development.

NJBUILD covered more than \$3,000 in tuition, books and associated costs for each student in the 135-hour program, while also providing access to transportation, childcare and career placement assistance. Students completed courses in areas such as blueprint reading and project management before earning a certificate in construction management. Jhonatan Garcia, assistant director of continuing education and workforce development, said the program gives students the opportunity to increase their social and economic mobility by eliminating many of the barriers that prevent them from pursuing higher education. He also said the program has changed perceptions about the type of construction jobs available in the Garden State.

"A lot of people, when they think about construction, they think about manual labor," he said. "But our program is geared more toward the management or administrative capacity of the construction field."

The College recognized the program's graduates as part of an evening celebration in October, where guests included Chris Schubert, a talent manager at J. Fletcher Creamer & Son, Inc., a construction firm, who discussed employment opportunities. Graduates also took professional headshots for their portfolios as they begin to pursue employment. ■



PHI THETA KAPPA
HONOR SOCIETY

PTK Receives Grant to Produce Documentary

Bergen's Alpha Epsilon Phi chapter of Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) has secured a grant from the Mellon Foundation for a fourth consecutive year. Bergen will receive \$1,000 from the organization to produce a documentary investigating agricultural innovations happening in New Jersey – the nation's "Garden State." Founded in 1969, the Mellon Foundation creates and distributes grants to diverse communities and higher education institutions to actively support large ideas in the arts and humanities. Student Maria Frometa Lora, PTK's general vice president and vice president of recruitment, wrote the grant application.

"We are incredibly proud of Maria for taking on this additional responsibility and going above and beyond to secure critical funds for our chapter project," Anna Gergen, associate director of PTK and Honors, said.

PTK decided on the agriculture-focused premise for the documentary after visiting the Ender Hall greenhouse and learning about the many offerings Bergen maintains in the discipline, including an academic horticulture program, a 4-H Club, and a community garden. In writing the grant, Frometa Lora conducted research into New Jersey's agricultural community and curated articles that best made the case for this documentary and grant support.

"While I do have some experience with research, I've never written a research grant before," she said. "This experience was great practice for any research that I plan on executing in the future."

PTK student Zainab Kahloon will direct the documentary. He follows in the footsteps of his brother, Umar Sultan Kahloon ('22), who directed a past PTK project.

"I felt like I was continuing the legacy by taking on the role of director for this documentary," he said.

The documentary will premiere at the end of the fall semester. ■

Student Named a HACU Ambassador

Student Maria Frometa Lora has earned one of 50 spots in the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) Leader-in-Residence Program for the 2024-25 academic year. Frometa Lora will serve as a HACU ambassador on the Bergen campus while also receiving a full sponsorship to participate in HACU's "¡Adelante! Leadership Institute," the student track at the group's annual conference this month in Colorado.



Her work with HACU complements a full portfolio of activities: Frometa Lora serves as the general vice president and vice president of recruitment in the Alpha Epsilon Phi chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the community college honor society, and participates in the Judith K. Winn School of Honors, the NJ STARS program and the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF). She has also completed more than 350 community service hours as she studies natural sciences to pursue a career in health administration.

"The people at Bergen want to see you succeed," she said. "What matters is that you put yourself out there, do not hesitate to ask questions, and utilize any resources or opportunities given to you." ■

"I feel tremendously blessed to be chosen for such a selective program," Frometa Lora said. "I would not have made it this far without the constant encouragement and guidance from my advisers on campus."

As a HACU Leader-in-Residence, Frometa Lora will serve as a point of contact for peers on campus curious about HACU and as a champion for the organization's mission and values by leading information sessions at the College.

"Bergen is a stepping-stone for those seeking higher education," Frometa Lora said. "I hope to serve as a leader in my sector and encourage other Latino students to excel in healthcare."



Board Adds Alumna

Class of 2024 graduate Kaylie Quezada has joined the Board of Trustees as alumni representative. Quezada, Bergen's former program Student Government Association president, took the oath of office at the board's October 8 meeting. She will serve a one-year term through June 30, 2025.

"Kaylie distinguished herself at Bergen as an active, thoughtful member of student government," Bergen Board Chair Dorothy Blakeslee said. "I am certain she will bring the same energy, enthusiasm and pragmatism to the Board of Trustees as alumni representative."

Quezada studied political science at Bergen before graduating this year. In addition to her work on student government, Quezada served as the student representative on the faculty senate and as a member of Phi Theta Kappa, while also competing as a track and field student-athlete. Her testimony before the State of New Jersey's Senate budget hearings helped compel state officials to restore \$20 million in aid to community colleges eliminated from this year's budget. She previously worked as an intern for U.S. Representative Josh Gottheimer (NJ-5) and spoke on behalf of Hispanic-Serving Institutions such as Bergen during congressional meetings.

The College's 12-person governing body features nine individuals appointed by the county, two by the governor and an alumni representative. Bergen's president serves as an ex-officio member of the board. ■



Celebrating Faculty and Staff

Bergen rolled out the red carpet to recognize faculty and staff celebrating milestone anniversaries at the College. The annual event brought generations of faculty and staff together, including employees who recently retired. ■



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A Community that Cares

As one of Bergen's seven core values, the ethic of care remains a goal rooted in understanding, inclusivity and responsiveness. Every day the College's events, initiatives and projects support this guiding principle.

Events such as the Hero 5K (1), which took place on November 3, once again showed how much Bergen cares for its student veterans. The annual event raised approximately \$16,000 for the veterans emergency fund to ensure they have access to the resources they need.

Meanwhile, members of Bergen PRIDE, the theatre club, and the dental hygiene department showed up in support of mental health at the "Out of the Darkness" suicide prevention walk in Saddle Brook on October 13. (2,3,4)

Bergen also demonstrated its commitment to celebrating cultural diversity at events such as its Diwali celebration (5) and "Six Million Voices" virtual tour of the Auschwitz concentration camp (6) that all took place at the main campus. ■

Middle States Matters

By: Gary Porter, Accreditation Liaison Officer

In preparation for the team of peer reviewers that will visit the College from March 23 - 25, 2025, team chair DeAnna Burt-Nanna, president of Monroe Community College, visited Bergen in October.

While on campus, she met with multiple constituencies, including members of the Board of Trustees, executive cabinet, Self-Study Steering Committee, Faculty Senate officers and collective bargaining unit leaders. Burt-Nanna outlined her expectations for the team's visit and provided initial feedback on the Self-Study, which she provided in a post-visit report.

Members of the Self-Study writing team are now working with faculty and staff to further refine the self study document and incorporate Burt-Nanna's recommendations. Once completed, the College will publish the Self-Study draft for review by the entire community. The final step will see the College submit the Self-Study to the Middle States visiting team by February 7, 2025. ■



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