

# OCEAN VIEWS

A Newsletter for Ocean County College Alumni, Our College Family, and the Community  
Summer - Fall 2020 • Vol. XIV: No. 2



**Dr. William Rickert**  
**Turning Negative into Positive**  
p.16 - p.17

**Veteran & Military Resource Center**  
**Opens to Student Community** p.08 - p.09

**OCC Alumnus Evan Hage**  
**Winter Is Coming** p.10 - p.11

**A New Chair has FOUND a**  
**Moment with Michael** p.22 - p.23

“ Dr. Rickert is the ideal college professor – a great teacher, a complete professional, a gentleman, and a man who always puts students first. – Dr. Jon H. Larson, Ocean County College President ”

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## DISTINGUISHED



## OCC Voted “Best for Vets” *By Military Times*

For the past decade, *Military Times* has conducted an extensive, editorially independent, objective study evaluating the many factors that help make colleges and universities a good fit for service members, military veterans and their families, including new and innovative approaches to supporting student veterans. OCC is proud to announce that *Military Times’* Best for Vets: Colleges 2020 rankings included OCC.

“We are thrilled and encouraged to be recognized for our efforts to facilitate the best education possible for veterans and members of the military right here at OCC,” said OCC President Dr. Jon H. Larson.

To compile this year’s list, *Military Times* surveyed hundreds of colleges and universities from across the country on policies related to military and veteran students, academic outcomes, military-supportive cultures and other factors.

In 2018, OCC’s total student population of 8,176 included 329 veterans or service members. All military and veteran students are assisted through the College’s Veterans and Military Resource Center, which provides social, educational, recreational, academic and advocacy support services; mentoring and leadership opportunities; and transition workshops and coaching — all designed to ensure the well-being, success, retention and graduation of veterans, service members and their families.



“

*A veterans center is a beacon of resources, advocacy and mentorship*

”

Ryan Luurtsema • OCC Veterans & Military Services Coordinator

## OCC Offers Courses at Lakewood High School

To provide residents of Lakewood Township increased access to OCC's high-quality associate degree and certificate programs, the College and Lakewood School District (LSD) began a partnership last fall to offer OCC courses at Lakewood High School.

This exciting development, combined with the state's new free-tuition program for New Jersey residents with income under \$65,000 per year, the Community College Opportunity Grant, ensures that anyone in the Lakewood area who



## College Makes Changes to Tuition/Fees Payment

Ocean County College has recently made some significant changes to the way students pay for tuition, fees and books. Beginning in the fall 2020, OCC will bundle books and electronic course material, as well as college and student fees, into the total cost of tuition. Students will no longer pay a Student Fee, Tech Fee, IMAT or Registration Fee.

This new tuition structure will save students a significant amount of time, money and energy. In the fall 2019 semester, the average full-time OCC student paid over \$550 for books and electronic course material. Students will save more than 50% under the new model.

Bundling books with tuition can further reduce out-of-pocket costs for students;

## OCC, NJIT Establish Academic Programs Partnership

An academic programs partnership agreement signed this spring by Ocean County College and the New Jersey Institute of Technology will enable students to complete an associate degree at OCC and transfer to a variety of four-year programs at NJIT. The agreement will allow students to plan

## WHAT WE'RE PROUD OF

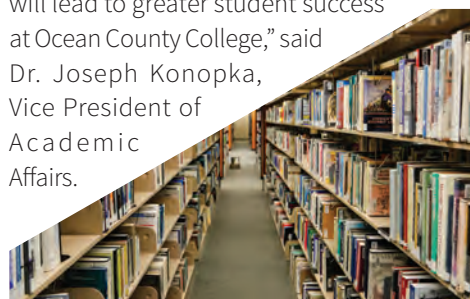
wants to go to college will be able to do so with minimal travel and expense.

The College worked with LSD to develop course scheduling that allows students to earn credits toward a degree from OCC or other higher education institutions. Courses were scheduled at 3 p.m. or later on weekdays in classrooms at Lakewood High School. In addition, both OCC and LSD designated a Relationship Coordinator position primarily responsible for the relationship and communication between the partners.

some forms of aid and scholarships cover the cost of tuition but not fees, and because books are built into tuition, students may receive more aid.

Barnes & Noble will work closely with OCC to provide a low-cost version of the book for each course well in advance of the start of that course. For some classes, that will mean book rentals, and for others, e-books.

"The First Day model from Barnes & Noble will lead to greater student success at Ocean County College," said Dr. Joseph Konopka, Vice President of Academic Affairs.



their complete baccalaureate experience at the beginning of their college education, eliminate duplicate coursework and facilitate the dual recruitment of students.

"Ocean County College is excited to expand its relationship with NJIT for the benefit of our students," said OCC President Dr. Jon H. Larson. "This agreement enables a seamless transfer to a nationally recognized, top 10-ranked polytechnic research



## OCC, NJCU Sign Agreement for Connected Degree Program

Ocean County College and New Jersey City University signed an academic programs partnership agreement in early March to seamlessly connect students pursuing associate degrees at OCC to a variety of bachelor's and master's degree programs at NJCU. The agreement enables students to complete their AS or AA degrees at OCC and then transfer up to 90 credits to a variety of undergraduate or graduate programs at NJCU towards completion of its BS/BA or MS/MA degrees.

After two years at OCC, students could begin studies at NJCU, which prepares its graduates to either pursue graduate studies or enter professions in a number of areas — from Management and Marketing to Data Science Analytics and Information Technology.

NJCU President Sue Henderson noted, "Our partnership with OCC advances the University's commitment to create transformational impact for students through targeted degree programs. We are thrilled to provide opportunities and tools to optimize the skills and education that students receive to help them navigate today's job market. Our faculty are experts in their disciplines and leaders in industry, and take an individualized approach to teaching, which makes our educational programs particularly well aligned with OCC's student-driven mission."

institution for OCC graduates who complete required courses."

Graduates of OCC will finish their B.S./B.A. degree requirements within two and a half years of full-time study at NJIT, assuming successful completion of each of the OCC transfer courses and the courses listed in the NJIT undergraduate degree catalog for the corresponding major.





# OCC WELCOMES PERFORMING ARTS ACADEMY TO CAMPUS

**In late January,**

a 50,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art building opened on OCC's main campus. This new home of the Ocean County Vocational Technical School Performing Arts Academy was bustling with students and staff prior to the move to remote learning in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

## The Performing Arts Academy, established by OCVTS in 2001,

is a four-year public high school designed to provide an education for creatively gifted students, with curricula focused on theater, vocal, dance and audio engineering, along with a rigorous four-year academic program.

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As stated on the OCVTS website, **“Our challenging coursework empowers graduates with the experience, knowledge, and 21st Century skills necessary to succeed in the academia and arts industry.”** **“Our students will develop critical thinking skills to propel them into the global landscape of interconnectivity. The Performing Arts Academy exists to provide a unique, nurturing and challenging learning environment for students gifted in the performing arts.”**

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An opportunity may be available for students to register for OCC-embedded classes for dual credit, opening up the pathway to earn a dual degree. If OCVTS students complete the Early College Program curriculum, they will be awarded an OCC associate degree; thus, they will be halfway to a bachelor's degree, all for a fraction of the tuition cost of a university degree.



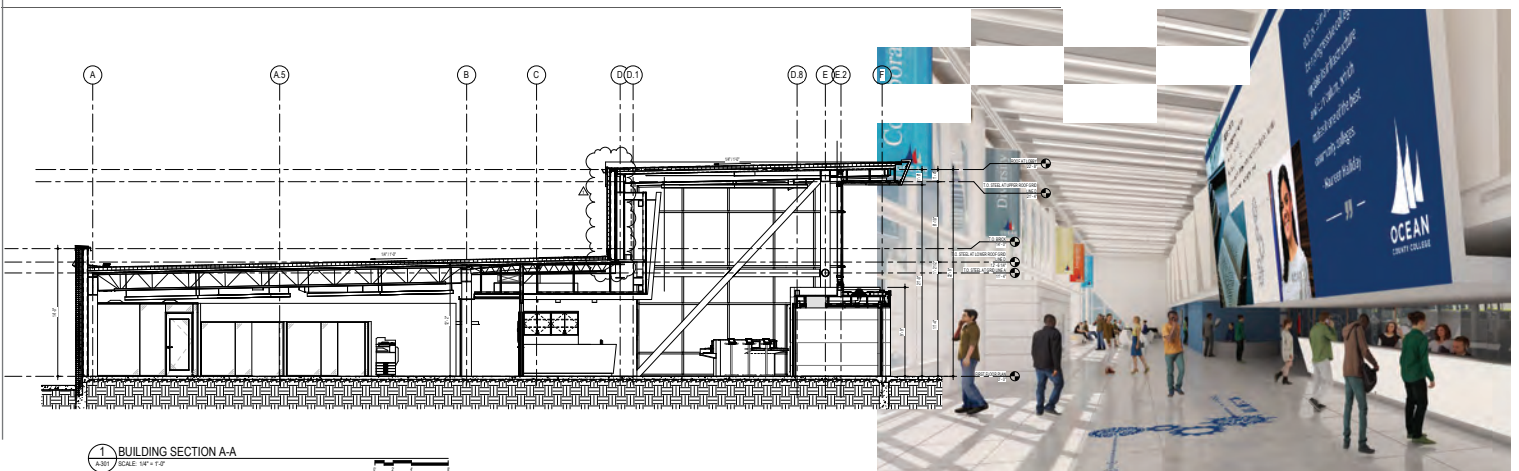


OCC's campus continues to evolve and expand. Among the various planned projects is the new Student Enrollment Building, to be built on the site of the former College Center.

This new structure will feature a large atrium to house HUB services, with enrollment technology software and self-service computers for student enrollment and related activities. The space will be organized for fast and efficient enrollment in one central location.

In addition, the building will include space for Advising, Admissions, Registration & Records, and Financial Aid — all designed to optimize the student experience.

# NEW STUDENT ENROLLMENT BUILDING ON THE HORIZON



1 BUILDING SECTION A-A  
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



# As OCC Responds to Coronavirus, Instruction, Commencement Go Online

**On Monday, March 16**, with the COVID-19 crisis a clear reality, OCC shifted to virtual instruction and remote business practices in an effort to protect students and employees. Administration and staff quickly got to work setting up online classes, the College donated all its remaining perishable foods to The B.E.A.T. Center of Ocean County (The B.E.A.T. Center stands for Bringing Everyone All Together, and is a hub for community services that end the cycle of food insecurity).

OCC soon announced it would remain remote for the duration of the spring and summer semesters, and a Virtual Commencement Ceremony was planned for June, “as a way for our campus community to safely celebrate and reflect on the end of the 2019-20 academic year, even as we continue to live, work, teach and learn in accordance with social distancing guidelines,” OCC President Dr. Jon H. Larson said.

As Commencement approached, graduates ordered caps and gowns, which were delivered to their homes at no cost, and students were encouraged to take photos wearing the regalia for inclusion in the virtual ceremony. A video was created that included pre-recorded speeches broadcast in accessible formats; photos and text announcements of each graduate’s name, degree and honors; and customized slides featuring personal recognition, photos and messages from the Class of 2020.

Looking beyond Commencement, Larson noted, “Ocean County College is providing high-quality, affordable, remote instruction in all classes during the mandated campus closure and will continue for as long as necessary. All classes will be delivered remotely through August 31, 2020. Thereafter, OCC is prepared to offer, in the fall semester, both remote instruction and limited, select courses on campus that require laboratory experiences, including Nursing and STEM disciplines.”

As positive COVID-19 test numbers increased in New Jersey and elsewhere, first responders in the Ocean County community stood ready on the front lines, including members of the OCC student body, faculty and staff and alumni. Meanwhile, countless others performed acts of kindness to aid and bolster their fellow residents.

In recognition of National Community College Month, the state introduced a New Jersey Community College Heroes Campaign, posting stories on social media — marked with #NJCCHeroes — that highlighted the work of many of these men and women.

In addition, the College launched its own project to spotlight individuals from the OCC community as they helped on the frontline and otherwise, and denoted these posts with #OCCCommunity.

Fully remote learning was a challenge that OCC faculty and students met head on.

Math Professor Dr. William Rickert called a number of students planning to drop his Algebra course once it was online and convinced almost all of them to stick it out. They were glad they did, he emphasized.

College Lecturer II, Dance, Catherine Mancuso created a studio in her garage; Adjunct Assistant Professor Mildred Kobrinski used her home kiln to demonstrate ceramics to her students; and Music Instructor Karin Gargone filmed videos for classes in her kitchen and used her dining room as a studio where she narrated PowerPoint presentations and recorded music.

“Once I was informed we would be conducting classes remotely for the remainder of the spring semester, my husband and I decided to clean out the garage to create a dance studio space for me to broadcast my classes,” said Mancuso. “The space was painted, I set up a recording space, added extra lighting and had yoga mats close by. We were planning to convert this space into a fitness room anyway so we made that happen a bit sooner!”

Instructor Gargone said, “My six classes had been face-to-face, and my students expressed clear concerns about the switch to remote teaching. Many were scared; they had never taken an online course and were worried they would not adapt. Many students also took on additional work hours. Others expressed just general worry.

“I had never taught online before, so I decided my primary goal was to keep the technology part of the course as basic as possible,” she added. “I taught on video just as if the students were in front of me. They were used to me playing the piano, giving board demos, playing recorded music, using my props, delivering bad jokes and moving around. That did not change.”

“

I’m sure other faculty members will tell you of the many changes they had to make to be able to continue teaching with the passion they have for their subject. This only speaks to the caring and heart found at OCC.

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- Adjunct Assistant Professor Kobrinski



## Veterans and Military Resource Center Opens Its Doors

This year marked the launch of the new Veterans and Military Resource Center or VMRC. The center provides social, educational, recreational, academic and advocacy support services for our veterans and service members and their families. They also receive mentoring and leadership opportunities, transition workshops and coaching.

OCC Veterans & Military Services Coordinator Ryan Luurtsema describes the VMRC, located in the Student Center, as a place “for our military-affiliated students to lounge; seek academic and personal guidance; access an entertainment area to relax and unwind; utilize laptops and computers in the lab; and congregate to coach, motivate or develop friendships.”

A grand opening ceremony — held in February and organized by Luurtsema, with help from student veterans and spouses — featured speeches and the presentation of a POW/MIA Chair dedicated to soldiers who died, were held as prisoners of

war, or are listed as missing in action. “The POW/MIA Chair, and the creation of the VMRC, is in direct partnership with the Ocean County community members of the American Legion Post 129, Post 329, and the Rolling Thunder Chapter 2 of Toms River,” said Luurtsema, who served in the U.S. Army from 2008-2016, retiring with the rank of Sergeant. “From the donated art and items to the ceremonial flags provided by the American Legion, it truly took a community to develop the center.”

Luurtsema explained that a veteran coordinator and a veterans’ resource center are “beacons of resources, advocacy and mentorship for all military-affiliated students — veterans, active military service members, National Guard members or reservists, and military dependents and beneficiaries. He added that his role is to help ensure academic and personal success for the institution’s military-affiliated students.

“I am a firm believer in what the center is doing, what it has done for

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From the art and items donated to the center, to the ceremonial flags provided by the American Legion, it truly took a community to develop the center. - Veterans & Military Services Coordinator Ryan Luurtsema

”







other students in the past and what it can do in the future,” said student and Navy veteran Pablo Lopez, 43, of Manchester. He started out in the Navy as a torpedoman-mate and finished as a gunner-mate. “I have seen how the center has brought together other people in the military; it allows us to unwind and relieve the pressures of school. Being able to talk to other people who have experienced lives in the military gives us a great sense of connection and camaraderie that most civilians do not understand.

“OCC as a whole has been a great supporter of our Veteran students,” he added.

“Being a part of the VMRC team is one of the greatest blessings,” said Leah-Marie Williams of Barnegat whose husband served in the Army, “I not only have gained a mentor — Mr. Ryan Luurtsema — but he, and the team I have had the privilege to work with, have been there for me through some tough times.”

“The center has become a second home for me, as well as all the military students and their families — a place to get away from the noise and stress at school, and to have a vast amount

of resources in reach. The workers, and especially Ryan, go above and beyond to help any military student and their family. I’m proud to be a part of the VMRC team.”

Williams and Lopez — both of whom have completed their degrees at OCC — helped organize the grand opening.

“The grand opening was a great event,” said Lopez. “We were only expecting about 50 people to show up and we had over 100 faculty and staff members present and supporting us.”

Williams added, “The success of this event was due to the enthusiasm of the workers as well as Ryan’s leadership skills. Our team loves helping military students and their families along their path to success, so anything aiding with building the center is a great moment. We were finally able to get the word out that we are here; there is support, and guidance.”

“I honestly could not imagine what my life would be like if I didn’t have the VMRC,” Williams added. “When I joined the team, I didn’t know I would become part of a family. I am truly grateful for the VMRC.”



“

I have seen how the center has brought together other people in the military ... OCC as a whole has been a great supporter of our veteran students. - Student and Navy Veteran Pablo Lopez

”



# Evan Hage '08

## Emmy Award Winner



### ***Game of Thrones*, Adam Sandler, and *The Deep End*: Evan Hage, Reflects on Making His Way in LA**

OCC's A.A. degree in Digital Mass Media, which features Broadcast and Journalism options, offers students courses and fieldwork to prepare for transfer into a baccalaureate program or to seek immediate employment in a variety of production or writing positions. The curriculum includes hands-on writing, production and programming experience at the College radio and television stations, and at the video editing/post production lab, the school's literary magazine, and the print and online versions of the college newspaper. Students also gain experience in blogs, podcasts and other new media used by both professional and citizen journalists.

Lacey Township native and 2008 graduate Evan Hage, 31, discovered a passion for TV and film while a student at OCC, and the College's media program laid the groundwork for Hage's future. After

earning his bachelor's degree at Rowan University, Hage edited for the television network TLC and created graphics and visual effects at a news station in Asbury Park. Soon though, he traded the East Coast for the West — specifically, the City of Angels — where he held editing jobs in reality television and for Mattel before landing a position on the production of the hit HBO show *Game of Thrones*. Hage, who was a production assistant/in-house compositor — “someone who does quick, but important, visual effects work” — on season seven, and as an assistant coordinator/in-house compositor for season eight, is an Emmy Award-winner for his visual effects work on the show. He recently finished an Adam Sandler movie, and currently has an “iron in the fire for a few other possible shows,” as he said this spring from his home in LA.

## Opening Credits

"I enrolled at OCC for two reasons that tend to coincide with one another. One, because four-year schools are crazy expensive. And two, because I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do with my life. I figured it would be a good idea to dip my toe in first and learn what I wanted to do while saving money at the same time. Oh, and because all of my high school friends went there too. Who wouldn't want to keep hanging out with their friends?!"

## On Location

"I am very happy I chose to go to OCC. I have recommended it to many people over the years who were either worried about being too far from home, or just didn't know what they wanted to do with their lives yet. I used to have a lot of anxiety in a classroom full of people I didn't know, so I tended to shine more in creative areas when I was with friends and other like minds. I signed up for Studio Theater, was a DJ on OCC Radio, and took music and television classes for all of my electives. In between classes my friends and I would study, just hang out or drive to a music shop — Coconuts, which has been closed for a while now — buy used CDs, then go to the OCC radio station and listen to them on their badass sound system."

## A Mentor and ... a Neighbor?!

"I've known Ralph Bertini for a very long time now. I met him when I was a sophomore in high school and took my first telecommunications class. He was the ultimate tech master, keeping the studio up and running while we crazy kids were basically breaking everything because we had no clue what we were doing. He taught me how a control room works and how to use a camera."

When I went to OCC I was so happy to have him as my professor, even though I did a lot of things wrong in class. ... How were we supposed to know a realistic news story couldn't be about a reporter finding a den of aliens in a random abandoned garage? We sure didn't. He did not like what we did, but he would teach us what we did wrong and send us to fix it and make it better. I learned how to make a good edit from him, how to shoot a good camera angle and how to capture great audio — one of the most important and most often overlooked details."



"I also found out during my time at OCC that Ralph had been living on my street my entire life. Crazy!"

## Narrowing the Focus on TV and Film

"I chose Rowan for some of the same reasons I chose OCC, only this time I knew that I wanted to do TV and film. OCC prepared me for the kind of work and attention to detail that was expected of me in a college setting. To be real, I coasted through high school, running on anxiety and a lack of caring about almost any and all classes I took. I wasn't a bad student; I just didn't like to do work or learn things that weren't immediately interesting to me. If I couldn't learn to care more there, there was no way I was making it at an actual university. I settled in, did my work, did much better than I expected I could, and felt ready to further my education."

## VFX

Everything in production is related in some way. Visual effects sort of has its hands in everything, especially on a show as big as *Game of Thrones*. One of the most important things is learning how a camera works. OCC got me started in that direction. When doing visual effects, you're tricking the viewer's eye into believing this thing on screen was actually filmed, so you need to know how a camera sees and works, so you can make it look like, in our case, a dragon is actually on screen."

## Monologue

"If you feel like you might need more time deciding what you want to do, or maybe you just feel like you aren't ready for a four year university, like me, there's no harm in taking your time. No need to rush through life. Enjoy it, learn at your pace and do your best!"

“

OCC prepared me for the kind of work and attention to detail that was to be expected of me in a college setting.

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# JENNIFER HUBERT AND AMANDA CARTE

**G**raduates Jennifer Hubert, who graduated last December, and Amanda Carte, a spring 2020 graduate, both earned positions with Congressman Andy Kim (D), of New Jersey's 3rd District, during their time at OCC. Carte was chosen for a fellowship in Kim's Washington, D.C. office last fall, and is now working for him full-time, while Hubert interned in the representative's local office and is currently an intern on his campaign.

## Jennifer Hubert,

20, a Southern Regional High School graduate, who completed her OCC degree in just three semesters, concurs. "I decided to go to OCC as a way to get my associate degree at a lower cost than if I had gone directly to a four-year school," she explained. "This was an easy decision, and I am grateful I was able to take advantage of the NJ STARS scholarship."

## Getting Involved

In addition to her participation in the NJ STARS Club, "and the community that formed" because of that club, Hubert also entered public speaking competitions, which were, she said, "a great way to hone my public speaking skills."

She said, **"One of my favorite aspects of OCC is the Southern Education Center in Manahawkin. It is close to home, has responsive and caring staff and offered a wide variety of classes."**

Hubert was "impressed with the effort professors put into their classes" at OCC, and said her all-time favorite course was International Relations with College Lecturer Jason Ghibesi. "I found the topic fascinating," she noted, "and the class to be very engaging. I took it during the 2019 spring semester and took part in OCC's trip to the United Nations, which was a fantastic way to make real-life connections to the material."

## Interning

Now a junior Political Science major at Stockton University, Hubert interned in Kim's Toms River office last fall. She assisted with casework and also helped at Town Hall events, including a Veteran's Day Town Hall held on November 11, 2019.

"I enjoyed my time greatly," Hubert said of her experience. "It was fantastic to intern for a congressman who truly cares about his constituents and values their input."

She added, "While I am no longer interning for the congressman's office, I am now interning on his campaign! I am really grateful for the opportunity and excited to continue on this election cycle."

Hubert said, "Overall, I am very happy that I chose to attend OCC, and would definitely recommend it to anyone pursuing a college degree. I enjoyed the classes I took and the professors who were focused on their students' success."

## Favorite Campus Spot

The second floor of the Library. "It was always very quiet and I got a lot of work done there," she said. "A close second would be the reading towers, also inside the Library!"



# WORK ALONGSIDE CONGRESSMAN KIM

## Amanda Carte

Bayville resident Carte, 29, first enrolled at OCC after graduating from Central Regional High School in 2009. She attended for a year before moving away with her then-boyfriend, now-husband, John, for his position in the Marine Corps. The couple spent time in Florida, Virginia and California, and had their daughter Emma — now almost 7 — while on the West Coast.

While still in California, Carte was diagnosed with cancer and had a thyroidectomy. Her husband then broke his spine. She is currently in remission and he is medically retired and getting a second opinion on a potential surgery. As Carte pointed out, “It was a lot, and a fight, to get back to school. But she did get back. The family returned to New Jersey in 2018, and Carte re-enrolled at OCC in 2018.

This time, as an older student, she was even more engaged. And, she pointed out, **“OCC has some fantastic professors,”** including Accounting College Lecturer Stephanie Kroeger. “I loved the class,” said Carte.

## Business Law

She had considered accounting as a career, similar to her mother, but was also enthralled by a Business Law class taught by former College Lecturer II, Business Law, Adam Bisaccia. Bisaccia, meanwhile, had heard about a fellowship opportunity with Representative Kim, and thought Carte would be a great fit. “To have a professor who saw something in me and believed in me really meant a lot,” she remarked.

Bisaccia, along with Christopher Carbone, Career Services Coordinator, helped Carte secure an interview, and she landed the fellowship. “They pushed so hard for me, to make sure this was a fantastic experience, and that I had everything I needed,” she noted.

## Work Begins

Carte worked at Kim’s D.C. office from September through November 2019. She attended meetings on behalf of the representative, worked with the military liaison on a bill and met with veteran organizations and United Service Organizations to go over the bill text. She even got to name the bill: The Vets Act.

## Opportunity

When she came home right before Thanksgiving, Carte was alerted to an open case worker/field representative position in Kim’s Toms River office. She applied, got the nod, and started early this spring.

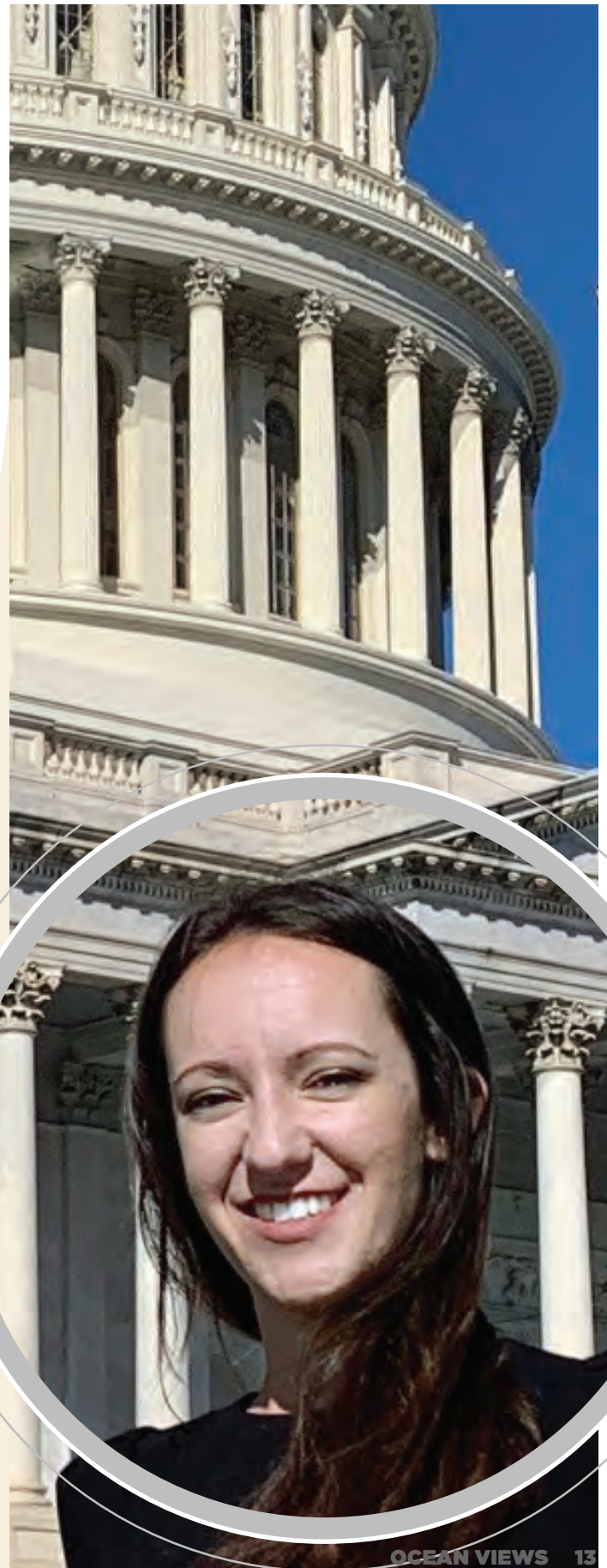
“It’s a really fulfilling job,” said Carte, who helps veterans and others while working on cases related to the IRS, VA, unemployment, immigration and more.

Carte, who hopes to attend a four-year school soon, reflected on the professors and staff at the College who pushed her to achieve, helping guide her to these opportunities with Congressman Kim.

**“I really think it’s such a smart decision to attend OCC,”** she emphasized.

## Favorite Campus Spot

The Starbucks in the Student Center!



# OCC x THREE

## meet the Salas triplets

### DECISIONS DECISIONS

How did you decide on OCC, and had you always planned to attend college with your siblings?

**Spencer:** I thought it was the best value for me. I was unsure what career I wanted to pursue and I had heard OCC was a great choice, so it was a no-brainer. I had not planned to go to college with my siblings and at the time of applying, I preferred not to.

**Hayley:** At first, I was planning on going to a university out of state but decided that it would be smarter financially to attend OCC and work while I'm in school.

**Isabella:** I decided on OCC because it is very close to home and I would be able to work and go to school at the same time. I had not always planned on attending college with my siblings. Originally, I was going to attend school at Wilkes University, in Pennsylvania, but decided it was too expensive for me and that OCC was the right choice.

### FoCAL POINT

What was the focus of your studies?

**Spencer:** The focus of my studies is Social Science, and I plan on moving on to major in Social Work.

**Hayley:** I am graduating with an associate degree in Liberal Art, with a concentration in Psychology.

**Isabella:** I am finishing my Liberal Arts degree and hope to get my bachelor's in Communications.

### WELL SURPRISE SURPRISE

What would you say you have liked most about OCC or found most surprising, interesting or challenging?

**Spencer:** My favorite part about OCC is definitely the availability of resources. If I ever needed anything, someone was available to help. In my two years, I utilized the library, career services, and the advising office often. OCC is only a five-minute drive from our house so that helps too!

**Hayley:** One thing I liked the most about OCC was the library; I found myself studying and working on homework there very often.

**Isabella:** What I liked most about OCC was the sense of community with my classmates and how everyone was willing to help each other out.

### GETTING INVOLVED

Were you involved in any other clubs, events, sport, or jobs at OCC in addition to the Psychology Club and the Helping Hands Food Pantry?

**Spencer:** I also was a member of the Social Work Club.

**Hayley:** I was the treasurer of the Psychology/Psi Beta Club and a member of the History Club. I enjoyed going on trips to New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.

**Isabella:** I was in the Concert Band and I was working on establishing a Bowling Club at OCC. I was also a newer member of the Student Government Association.

### PROS n' CONS

Has it been a positive experience attending college with your siblings? What's the best part of going through college with family members? Any negatives?

**Spencer:** It was definitely a positive experience. The best part was being able to carpool and always have someone to meet up with at the library or cafeteria. There really weren't any negatives.

**Hayley:** It definitely was a positive experience. It was nice to see each other on campus and take classes together. The best part would be if I forgot something at home, I could text one of my siblings and they would bring it. Also, we could share books from past classes and save money. The only negative I found was one semester my brother and I took a class together and I would always run late, so we would end up taking two cars.

**Isabella:** I'd say it's been a positive experience for sure. I think the best part of going through college with family members is being able to swap books for classes along with carpooling when we can. I don't think there are any negatives.

### IT'S PANDEMIC TIME

How have you fared, school-wise and otherwise, during the pandemic?

**Spencer:** Unlike many people I have been doing very well during the pandemic. I have had more time to study and do a good job on all my work. I have also had extra time to enjoy my hobbies and spend time with my girlfriend.

**Hayley:** I definitely had more time on my hands, which was nice for assignments, but wasn't the best for *me*. I normally have a super busy schedule and it was hard at first to stop my day-to-day routine. To keep myself busy, I worked out at home, walked my dog, painted and worked on starting my online thrift store.

**Isabella:** In the beginning I found it very difficult to keep up with the assignments and emails that were being posted constantly between my five classes, but after two or three weeks I established a routine to work on my schoolwork and make time to study. I am glad OCC kept the Counseling Center

open because I appreciated the opportunity to take advantage of their services when needed, and I am thankful for everyone there.

### YOUR FUTURE AWAITS

What do you plan to do after OCC?

**Spencer:** I plan on attending Stockton University, to study social work. After my BSW I plan on getting my MSW there as well. I plan on being a social worker and helping veterans.

**Hayley:** I plan on transferring to Stockton, majoring in Psychology and continuing on for a master's degree in Counseling.

**Isabella:** I am planning to transfer to the Ramapo College of New Jersey in the fall to enroll in their communications program in media, film and culture.

### INTERESTING, VERY INTERESTING

What do you like to do in your free time (interests, hobbies, family, community)?

**Spencer:** I enjoy any outside activity. I love to fish, kayak, hike, ride my bike, go for a run, play lacrosse and spend time with my friends. In the winter, I always enjoy a good movie or book.

**Hayley:** If I'm not working or in class, you can find me spending time with my friends or my boyfriend, or working on my online thrift store — Nice To Meet You Thrifts — either gathering inventory, shipping out packages or promoting the store.

**Isabella:** I like to take hikes with my dog Peanut, listen to music, write poems, ride our horses, play video games, read books, play my flute, ride my bike and spend time with my friends. I'm also learning how to crochet and play the guitar and ukulele.



## Spencer Salas

“My most memorable professor has been for sure Dr. (Margaret) Maghan from the Psych Department. She is also the advisor for Psychology Club, has had a profound impact on my college experience and has been an outstanding mentor. My favorites were Biology 1 and 2, A&P 1, and Abnormal Psych. I love learning how the body works, especially the brain.”

## Hayley Salas

“I took three Psychology courses with Dr. Maghan, and I enjoyed her classes the most. She is a very knowledgeable person. Her teaching style worked very well for me and I learned so much from her classes.”



## Isabella Salas

“I’ve had a couple memorable classes and professors who have really enhanced my experience here. Some of my favorites are Associate Professor (Neil) Schiller, Associate Professor (Joaquin) Rolon, Adjunct Assistant Professor (Anthony) Tafrow, College Lecturer II, English (Jason) Molloy, Adjunct Assistant Professor (Tiffany) Berryman and Dr. Maghan.”



# Dr. William Rickert

## A career of numbers since the SUMmer of '67

In 1967, Mathematics Professor Dr. William Rickert, then 24 years old, made the first of many trips — sometimes by bicycle, sometimes by car — along the four miles from his home to the OCC campus.

Rickert, now 77, is the last of the first group of faculty hired by the College when it was in its infancy. He's seen the campus grow from five buildings to two dozen, with new roads, new technology and environmental improvements. He's seen the student body increase many times over. He's witnessed a mounting interest in STEM, especially among female students. And all along, he's taught math, to those who like it and, perhaps more commonly, to those who don't.

Even for Rickert, math was not fondness at first sight.

My interest in mathematics really began in February of 1957, he explained. "All through elementary school I was generally a poor student, especially in mathematics, which was essentially arithmetic. I entered high school in January 1957 — back then you entered school in September or January — and the guidance counselor recommended I not take algebra since I was so weak in mathematics, but my parents, who never attended high school, thought mathematics was important and insisted I take algebra.

"My instructor, Mr. Corbett, told the class that if you needed to find or work with unknown numbers you could represent them by variables," he continued. "For me that was an epiphany. Within a month or two I went from being at the bottom in mathematics to being one of the top students. Other students began to come to me for help and were puzzled how I understood algebra so easily, since they knew I was a weak student in elementary school.

"I greatly enjoyed helping others in mathematics and all of my other subjects improved as well. So I went from the bottom of my eighth grade class to salutatorian of the high school class. I have to admit I felt a strong sense of divine intervention in all of this, that my destiny was to help others learn and appreciate the beauty of mathematics."

And he has, teaching various math courses at OCC, as well as delivering annual presentations on "Math Anxiety" and "Gosh Numbers," which is about "all sorts of amazing things about numbers."

**Over the years,** faculty and staff have praised his student-oriented teaching. Dr. Jon H. Larson, OCC President, has called him "the ideal college professor — a great teacher, a complete professional, a gentleman and a man who always puts students first." In 1987, at the annual awards ceremony, Professor Rickert received the first **Outstanding Teacher Award**. Every year since then, the award has been presented to a very deserving faculty member.





“

Most people have a negative attitude about math, and I love changing that.

”



**Rickert** has also been the advisor for **OCC's Tau Iota Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa**, the international honor society for two-year colleges, since 1976. Approximately 1,400 chapters exist around the world; OCC's Tau Iota chapter started in 1968. PTK — which stands for wisdom, aspiration and purity — is an organization focused on scholarship, leadership, service and fellowship.

“It's great working with students of this quality. They're so exciting,” said Rickert, who has won numerous advisor awards. “Every year they come in and they're so enthusiastic. I try to let them set the tone, and lead the way with the organization's fundraising projects.

Rickert likes to tell this PTK-related story as well: “At a Phi Theta Kappa Induction around 1995, I actually met a family by the name of Corbett. It turned out that my algebra teacher, Mr. Corbett, who passed away in January 1958, was the grandfather of the OCC student who was being inducted into Phi Theta Kappa. Wow!

Outside of OCC, Rickert and his wife of 55 years, Lois — an OCC graduate, PTK advisor and retired special education teacher — have raised three children, all of whom attended the College.

At home with Lois this spring, Professor Rickert spoke about the challenges of teaching during a pandemic, as well as the upside, which is the ability to spend

more time with his wife, and more time in the garden. He also likes to read and to see the kids and grandkids when possible. In past years, he and Lois traveled the country, camping in their pop-up camper, and took river cruises. He's planned to retire at least three times. But he hasn't yet, and so part of his free time these days is also spent, happily looking for math puzzles to share with his students.





Kate Tesch



Nyle DiMarco



Danielle DiSessa



Many students pursue a four-year degree after graduating from the Interpreter Training Program. Several OCC ITP alumni have been accepted to Gallaudet University, in Washington, D.C., the only deaf liberal arts university in the world. Gallaudet only accepts a small percentage of hearing students, which makes this quite special.

Kathleen Basilotto



Graduates are employed in a variety of areas, including K-12 education, medical, freelancing, job coaching, interpreter referral agencies, government agencies and theater.



Two graduates, on separate occasions, interpreted for President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama. One graduate interpreted for Governor Chris Christie.

Kathleen Basilotto



All students in the College's ITP are part of the Sign Language Society if they wish to join, she said. The society promotes interest and awareness in deaf culture and society through the use of ASL, and provides greater opportunities for ITP students to network and improve signing skills.

# ITP, Sign Language Society Vital Part of Campus and Community

**As OCC moved to remote learning, in March,** the switch went quite smoothly for the Interpreter Training Program. “The students in the ITP are resilient!” said Assistant Professor of Humanities Kathleen Basilotto, who has been the ITP advisor since its inception in 2002. As Basilotto explained, students in the ITP “work towards the goal of ascertaining competent interpreting skills in order to graduate and work as an interpreter. The skills involve cognitive processing; analysis of language for which they are interpreting; cognition, concentration, attention, reaction time and function of accessing short- and long-term memory. These processes are highly complicated and require students to navigate between English and American Sign Language (ASL) using their inter-lingual skills.”

When the College commenced virtual learning, said Basilotto, “The transition was seamless due to the fact that students are required to upload homework assignments through GoReact, a tool for teaching performance-based skills online,” including videos of themselves signing in ASL or interpreting to a video with deaf and hearing individuals. “Since this is already part of the course, transitioning remotely was not too disruptive. Even though face-to-face instruction is optimum when it comes to American Sign Language — since it is a visual, 3D language — these tools made the transition manageable.

“Likewise, on the instructor end of the continuum, adjunct faculty Danielle Nellenbach and Becky Selden-Kelly, as well as full-time instructor Saundra Piscitelli, all alumni of the ITP, and I were able to create and upload video lessons for students to access in order to learn new material,” she said. “All in all, I could not be happier with the way students and faculty handled the transition.”

OCC’s A.A.S. in American Sign Language-English Interpreting program prepares students to interpret English into ASL and ASL into English. The program promotes American Sign Language skills, an understanding of deaf culture, knowledge of the interpreter’s role and responsibility, theoretical skills in interpreting and practical experience in interactive settings. Various settings in which the interpreter works are examined in addition to ethical decision-making in relation to the role of the interpreter.

“Throughout the year, students in the program participate, on a voluntary basis, in our ASL Rock and Roll Show fundraiser,” Basilotto explained. “When I developed the program, I knew there needed to be an aspect of entertainment for the deaf community provided by students in the program. During the show, a DJ plays songs selected by faculty and students, loud enough for the deaf audience members to feel the vibrations and so that non-deaf audience members can hear the songs. Students, faculty and I perform the songs in American Sign Language. We also make our own stage props.”

Proceeds from the shows benefit charities as well as the annual Deaf Awareness Expo on campus and a yearly trip for sophomores to Gallaudet University.

“Additionally, we hire deaf storytellers, deaf comedians and deaf-blind artists to come to campus to perform,” said Basilotto. “These outstanding events are enjoyed by students and the deaf and hearing communities alike. We also provide workshops for program students in order to enhance skills.”

Last December, Nyle DiMarco performed at the Jay and Linda Grunin Center for the Arts as part of the Blauvelt Speaker Series, presented by the OCC Foundation. DiMarco, who was born into a multi-generational deaf family, is known for his appearances on *America’s Next Top Model* and *Dancing with the Stars*, as well as his work as an ambassador for the deaf community.

“It took three years to book Nyle DiMarco — and it was worth the wait,” Basilotto said. “Throughout Nyle’s show, ‘Living Out Loud,’ he discussed growing up as a deaf person in a hearing world to a sold-out theater.

“The feedback was so positive. The ITP students were humbled by his openness as well as his willingness to stay and take pictures and to converse with everyone for over two hours after his performance,” she said. “The deaf audience members enjoyed his honesty, humility and positive outlook.”

“Two of my six deaf siblings attended the show,” added Basilotto, who has nine siblings, six of whom were born profoundly deaf.

In his presentation, DiMarco shared his conviction that his deafness is an asset rather than a limitation, and that with a sense of community, commitment and faith in oneself, anything is possible.

Similarly, Basilotto spoke about the “prominent role the deaf community has in regard to the program. Members of the deaf community open their arms to program students and welcome them into their deaf clubs as well as into their lives. The deaf community members avail themselves to our students, provide cultural insight and guide them on their journey throughout the program. Many become lifelong friends. The role that the deaf community has played over the years, and continues to play, has been vital to the program, and more importantly, to the students within the program.”

“Conversely, it is the responsibility of the program to bring awareness regarding deaf culture and American Sign Language to campus and the community at large,” she continued. “In doing so, we offer opportunities for the hearing community to learn about deaf culture and American Sign in a variety of ways. Equally, the program provides opportunities for the deaf community to attend events on campus, which are provided in their native language — American Sign Language.”

## EVIDENCE

Michael York graduated from Toms River High School South in 1990 before attending Lehigh University, where he received his bachelor's degree in 1994. At Lehigh, he served on the senatorial staff, and then the political action committee, of Senator Bill Bradley, which led to a position on the campaign trail in California. In 1995, York returned to the East Coast and worked as a page at NBC, assisting in the production of *Late Night with Conan O'Brien* and *Saturday Night Live*, then became an agent at both The William Morris Agency and IMG, where he negotiated multi-million-dollar contracts and managed business decisions for various professional athletes and actors.

## ADMISSIBLE

After deciding to pursue a law degree, York enrolled at Fordham University School of Law, in New York City, earning a position on the Journal of Corporate and Financial Law and an internship at the Office of the Corporation Counsel for the City of New York under Mayor Rudy Giuliani. He was an associate with the white-collar criminal defense firm Morvillo, Abramowitz, Grand, Iasson & Silberberg, in Manhattan, which has represented many high-profile clients, most notably Martha Stewart. Then, after graduation in 2002, he joined the firm of Martin, Clearwater & Bell, specializing in the defense of health care institutions, manufacturers and other professionals. Since 2005, York has been a partner with Novins, York & Jacobus. His practice covers a wide array of areas, including real estate, land use and planning, banking and corporate matters and all areas of civil litigation.

## TRANSCRIPT

Within the Ocean County community, York serves as a member or board member for several local and regional chambers of commerce, professional associations and local organizations. He serves as the board president of 21Plus and Ocean Mental Health Services. He and his wife, Lori, reside in New York City with their son and daughter.

## PRECEDENT

York noted that his father, Harvey L. York, Esq., also a current Foundation trustee, "has been with the Foundation for over 35 years. Education has always been really important to my family." He followed in his dad's footsteps in joining the Foundation board, he said, because, "I value what we do, and I find what we do so important for traditional and non-traditional students alike."

## ON THE RECORD

As Chair of the OCC Foundation Board, York helps the Foundation fulfill its mission: raising money for student scholarships, endowments, and capital and special projects. Originally established to provide scholarships to OCC students, the Foundation also now partners with community leaders in business, industry, education and government to reach a common goal — providing quality, affordable education to OCC students while preparing them to assume their roles in society.

Scholarships are funded in part by the Foundation's signature events like the Annual Scholarship Celebration and the Golf Outing.

a moment with

**MICHAEL YORK**, Esq.,

the new Chair of the OCC Foundation Board



“ OCC is such a terrific asset to Ocean County ...  
a beacon of education and culture in our local community...”

## (NO) OBJECTION

“We’re always looking for ways to keep the community involved with Ocean County College,” said York. “This includes engaging over 40,000 OCC alumni, many of whom work and live right here at the New Jersey shore. Our graduates are one of the college’s finest assets and we hope they stay involved with the college and all it offers to our community, while supporting our current students and leaders of tomorrow.”

## HE RESTS HIS CASE

“OCC is such a terrific asset to Ocean County,” said York. “The college is a beacon of education and culture in our local community and I am honored to play a supporting role.”

## SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

The Coronavirus pandemic affected all of us in so many ways — changing how we learn, work, and live. The Ocean County College Foundation stood ready to assist our students and our community during this crisis.

The Student Emergency Relief Fund continued to help students with urgent needs that prevent or make their college attendance and success difficult. During these uncertain times, the Foundation provided assistance to students for necessities such as electric bills, car repairs, bus passes, childcare and rent.

Throughout the remote operation of the College, our partnership with Fulfill — the foodbank of Monmouth and Ocean counties — remained intact and as active as ever. All food in our Helping Hands Food Pantry and food services operations was donated to students in need and Crisis Boxes were distributed weekly on campus to food-insecure students. The Foundation team and the OCC 100 Women Campaign members also helped support Fulfill by preparing Crisis Boxes for food-insecure members of our community.

**The Ocean County College Foundation looks forward to the continued partnership with our donors and community in the year ahead.**

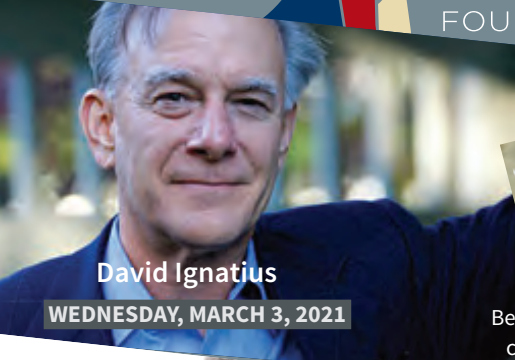
For more information on upcoming Foundation events, please contact Sherri Bray at [sbray@ocean.edu](mailto:sbray@ocean.edu).

# SAVE THE DATE!


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## BBP, Maker's Club Join Forces to Design Sensor System for Bay

**Last summer**, Dr. Jim Vasslides, senior program scientist for the Barnegat Bay Partnership, asked Dr. Angel Camilo, College Lecturer II, Biology, and advisor to the OCC Maker's Club, if the club could help resolve an issue BBP was having with a sensor used to monitor acidification in the bay. BBP maintains three continuous water quality monitoring stations throughout the bay in the local watershed — in Mantoloking, Seaside Park and Beach Haven. Vasslides, an American Fisheries Society-certified fisheries professional, said the stations “help us understand how conditions are changing over both the short and long term.”

“At the Beach Haven location, we also deploy a pair of special sensors that monitor water acidity (pH) and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) levels, both indicators of coastal acidification. As humans have added more CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere, it also increases the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in seawater. Through a series of chemical processes, the water becomes more acidic, which has adverse effects on shellfish and fish. There are other factors that compound and speed up the acidification process, and unfortunately the Barnegat Bay is at risk for these factors.”

He continued, “The Barnegat Bay is a productive system during the spring and summer — nutrient pulses cause the growth of marine plants, phytoplankton and all the small critters that eat them — so the sensors need to be checked and cleaned on a regular basis. Because we want to take our measurements closer to the bottom, they can't be just mounted in place if we want to be able to regularly clean them. Thus, we needed a system that would allow us to lift them up nearly 10 feet from the depth they are to the land surface. There is also a strong current at the deployment site, so whatever system is used needs to be very secure.”

The Partnership's initial design, based on other sensor deployments, was not ideal.



## Citizen Scientists Volunteer for BBP's Paddle for the Edge

**Paddling enthusiasts** — kayakers, canoers and standup paddleboarders are helping the Barnegat Bay Partnership collect data about the condition of shorelines along the bay as part of Paddle for the Edge.

**The BBP launched the Paddle for the Edge** event in 2015, and since then, volunteer citizen scientists have paddled a total of 101 miles of shoreline and collected more than 5,300 data points with their smartphones. Volunteers normally learn all the details at an in-person training session prior to the event, but this year the BBP switched to virtual training to keep them safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 80 volunteers participated during the 2020 collection period from June 27 - August 1.

For more information, visit [www.barnegatbaypartnership.org](http://www.barnegatbaypartnership.org) or email [paddle4theedge@gmail.com](mailto:paddle4theedge@gmail.com)

Paddle for the Edge volunteer Don Crawford

Photo by Life on the Edge Drone Services (Rob Auermüller)

Camilo said, “It turned out that the sensor was not placed in an optimal position and was very difficult to service. We set up a group of students and faculty to brainstorm a new design.” The team included Camilo and Edmond Hong, a College Lecturer II, Computer Studies, and fellow advisor; Kyle Sosnicki, club president at the time; Erick Garcia-Vargas, past president; Andre Romero, current president; and members Jacob Lewis and Peter Tarabocchia.

“After many days of brainstorming, we came up with a solution,” Camilo said. The club created a sliding mechanism that allows the sensor to be attached horizontally so it can be raised and lowered for service.

As Vasslides noted, “We discussed the design, made a few tweaks, and then worked together to fabricate the system. The club advisors and members also came out to the site to assist with the installation, which was done with the help of the Berkeley Township Underwater Search and Rescue Squad.”

**“The system worked perfectly last summer and fall, and we are getting ready to put the sensors back out in the water for another season of data collection.”**

Camilo was happy to report: “Barnegat Bay Partnership was so happy with the project that they included it in their yearly report and want to work with us in the future to develop more devices.”

BBP’s water-quality monitoring stations collect and transmit data every 15 minutes. This data — temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen, turbidity and pH — is archived and available for public downloading and use at [njdep.rutgers.edu/continuous](http://njdep.rutgers.edu/continuous).

# GRUNIN CENTER PRESENTS

## The Anti-Bullying Series

Over the years, various meetings with school administrators throughout Ocean County clarified to staff at the Jay and Linda Grunin Center for the Arts that bullying is a consistent problem. While there are some programs that address this issue, most take a top-down approach — facilitated mainly by teachers — and students are not often provided tools to deal with bullying one-on-one.

With that in mind, the Grunin Center launched its Anti-Bullying Series in 2019, beginning with a visit from award-winning social skills educator Brooks Gibbs. Gibbs presented to students and also offered professional development for teachers in the county. Feedback following the engagement was positive, and many schools requested additional opportunities to participate in similar programs. The Grunin Center, therefore, intends to expand the Anti-Bullying Series in 2021-2022 to bring students, teachers, and administrators to campus to take part in various programs and events designed to deter bullying and empower students to make positive changes in their school environments.

Thanks to the support of the Ocean County College Foundation and funding from community partners, the Grunin Center works to make all school programs affordable and accessible to school audiences. During this unprecedented time, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs are more critical than ever, as students are faced with the challenges of virtual learning due to COVID-19. The Grunin Center is working to meet schools' challenges by offering these programs virtually in the fall.

“New Jersey school districts are searching for opportunities to empower students to end bullying, and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is becoming an important component of arts curricula,” said Mark Wilson, Former Director of Cultural Programming & Partnerships at the Grunin Center. The Social Emotional Learning Alliance for New Jersey and Arts Ed NJ will incorporate SEL components, including creating, performing/presenting, responding and connecting.

“OCC wants to support this work by bringing affordable, effective programming to the Grunin Center that will help youngsters develop emotional resilience and combat bullying,” Wilson added.

..... The facility plans to bring Brooks Gibbs back to host professional

development sessions and present his bottom-up approach to bullying — “Bullies to Buddies” — that empowers young people to protect their emotions from the effects of these behaviors while also making friends. A sought-after speaker who has presented more than 2,500 times, Gibbs explains to students, parents and teachers how to build emotional resilience and live by the Golden Rule.

Dancing pioneer Drew Dollaz, meanwhile, will explore bullying through unique movement stylings, filtered through the specific lens of social media and the study of inherited trauma, in his presentation titled “#imperfect.” Accompanied by powerful visual imagery projections and data visualizations, personal narratives will be collected and conveyed through a range of societal perspectives surrounding the issue of bullying and its greater implications.....

O’Keeffe believes improvisational skills are about listening, collaborating and building something bigger than the bully.

A workshop from Mike O’Keeffe — “Laughing With Me” — is also aimed at eradicating bullying, as well as fostering leadership. The program focuses on helping students express themselves if they see or experience harassment. O’Keeffe believes that improvisational skills are about more than just making people laugh — they’re about listening, collaborating and working to build something that is bigger than the bully. This talk presents a unique way for students to explore the intense conversations needed to interrupt bullying.

Finally, the Grunin Center has also invited Kevin Spencer to provide intensive training for area classroom teachers on how to recognize trauma in their classrooms. Widely considered the leading authority on the educational and therapeutic benefits of arts-based programs in education and rehabilitation, Spencer works with teachers to define trauma and understand how it impacts student learning. He also assists educators in figuring out how to create a trauma-sensitive learning environment using a multi-arts curriculum to enhance the learning experience and outcomes in students who have suffered through adverse childhood experiences.

New Jersey public school districts are searching for opportunities to empower students, from elementary school through high school, to end bullying. Here in Ocean County, the Anti-Bullying Series at the Jay and Linda Grunin Center for the Arts is providing exactly that with these innovative, effective programs.



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**GRUNIN**  
FOUNDATION

The facility plans to bring Brooks Gibbs back to host professional development sessions and present his bottom-up approach to bullying — **“ Bullies to Buddies ”** — that empowers young people to protect their emotions from the effects of these behaviors while also making friends.

photo credit  
Carol Dragon



**K** **EVIN MILLER**  
quick stats

**SPORT:**  
Soccer

**HOMETOWN:**  
Rockaway, NJ / Lacey Township, NJ

**HIGH SCHOOL:**  
Lacey Township High School

**OCC CLASS YEAR:**  
2020

**OF NOTE:**  
Captain. MVP. Named to All-Region XIX and All-GSAC Teams. Vikings won the Region XIX championship and competed in the national tournament his first season.

**POST OCC:**  
Stockton University, to pursue health sciences and become a coach in the fitness industry.

**lead the way**

“My sister went to OCC and it seemed like a great education for a great price. On top of that, some of my friends went there. I had doubts about soccer, but the Vikings’ head coach, Sal Colino, talked to me about playing and it turned out to be an overall great experience. The professors were understanding about everything and the classes were high quality.”

**teamwork**

“Being a student-athlete was amazing. My favorite memories were the games we played in the regional tournament that led up to the championship game. Although we lost in the championship game, we played very, very well, and had a great record through the season: 12-4-1 overall; 7-3 conference.”

**back at lacey high**

“I was very happy at OCC and have recommended it to others. I still get asked from some players on the Lacey High School team what they think the best option for them is. I always bring up OCC as a great student-athlete experience.”

**M** **ARIEL ALMORIA**  
quick stats

**SPORT:**  
Softball

**HOMETOWN:**  
Chicago, IL

**HIGH SCHOOL:**  
Antioch High School

**OCC CLASS YEAR:**  
2020

**OF NOTE:**  
Vikings’ starting shortstop throughout her OCC career, and was slated to pitch this season as well. Academic All-Region Team, Academic All-Conference Team, Sigma Alpha Pi.

**POST OCC:**  
Kean University, for early childhood education, then work as an educator while taking online classes to get a master’s degree, before moving back to Chicago to teach.

**eastward**

“My cousin — also from Chicago — decided to go here right after high school and she absolutely loved it. My first year of college (elsewhere) wasn’t the best experience and I didn’t do as well as I wanted, so I convinced my mom to let me attend OCC. It was a spur-of-the-moment choice. But it was a great decision for me.”

**in the moment**

“Softball is my stress reliever; when I play I get to lose myself and just enjoy the game I love. Doing that with a team you’re close with makes the sport all the more fun. There’s a different bond with teammates than regular friends and no matter what, your teammates will have your back.”

**chicago pride**

“My favorite sports teams are the Cubs, Bulls, Blackhawks and Bears, forever and always. Even if they’re not the best, I’ll always support those teams. My favorite basketball player is Michael Jordan — not a surprise — because he always pushed himself to be the best he could be and he ended up being the best, and I always pushed myself and made goals for myself in each game I played.”



**OCC Esports’ David Ripinsky Wins NJCAA Super Smash Bros. Ultimate (Singles) Title**

OCC Esports — also known as electronic sports, and which involves competition via video games — kicked off its inaugural season this spring, with Coach John Ruhl at the helm. The gamers went head-to-head with other college students in Super Smash Bros. Ultimate, a crossover fighting game and the fifth installment in Nintendo’s Super Smash Bros. series.



**J**OE'L OTERO-SOSA  
quick stats

**SPORT:**

Basketball

**HOMETOWN:**

Lake Worth, FL

**HIGH SCHOOL:**

Forest Hill High School

**OCC CLASS YEAR:**

2020

**OF NOTE:**

Moved from Florida to attend OCC. Worked in the College's Admissions Office.

**POST OCC:**

The Fire Academy, to become a firefighter.

moving up

"My hometown is Lake Worth, Florida, in Palm Beach County. I graduated from Forest Hill Community High School in 2018. I attended OCC Fall 2018-Spring 2020, 2years. I lived with my aunt and uncle in Toms River while I attended OCC."

winning spirit

"My experiences as a student at OCC were great, and busy, since I was an athlete. I have a learning disability and I was nervous that this new experience may be overwhelming and scary since I would be without my parents and friends that I knew my whole life. The students and staff, including the athletic department, helped me through it all."

valued

"I'm really happy I chose Ocean County College as my school. I recommend that if anyone is looking for a school that does not make you feel like a number but an actual person, OCC is for you."

**C**ASSIE LOW  
quick stats

**SPORT:**

Soccer & Lacrosse

**HOMETOWN:**

Toms River / Forked River

**HIGH SCHOOL:**

Toms River North High School

**OCC CLASS YEAR:**

2021

**OF NOTE:**

Overcame a season-ending knee injury her freshman year to return to the field in 2019-2020.

**POST OCC:**

Stockton University, to study health sciences, and continue her athletic career, and then pursue a master's degree in occupational therapy.

goals

"My priority senior year of high school was to go away to school, and that's exactly what I did. I attended a Division II college to play soccer. During the fall season of my freshman semester, I tore my ACL, and it was a difficult decision but I decided to come home to recover. Ever since, I've been at OCC and absolutely love it. I feel as though my experience as an OCC student is very relaxed. All the professors I've had are helpful and strive for the excellence of their students."

vikings family

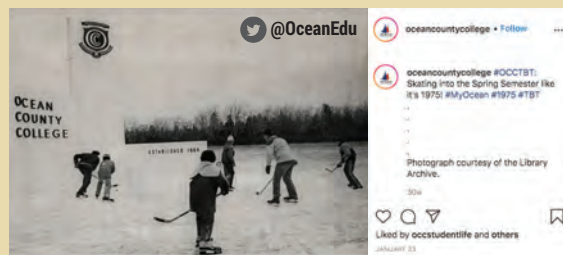
"Through one year of being an athlete at OCC, I have made some of the best friends I've ever had. The members of the Athletic Department care about each and every single athlete and it shows. Scott Royer, the Athletic Director, is the representation of what a role model should be. He treats all of his athletes like family and never fails to lend a helping hand. My soccer and lacrosse coaches are so caring and push us to be the best both on the field and in the classroom."

spread the word

"I am extremely happy that I chose to come to OCC. I have recommended OCC to many of my friends, many of whom are choosing to attend next year."

Freshman David Ripinsky defeated Noah Stockton of Patrick Henry Community College in April to win the Spring 2020 National Junior College Athletic Association Esports (NJCAA) Super Smash Bros. Ultimate (Singles) Championship. Ripinsky — who amassed a 13-1 overall record in singles play last season and was ranked second in the nation heading into the postseason — brought home this championship in OCC Esports program's inaugural season. "Coach John Ruhl and my team have worked so hard to get here, and I couldn't have done it without their support," said Ripinsky. "There were a lot of challenging players, but I didn't give up and I played my heart out." OCC Esports will return to action in the Fall 2020 semester.

# OCC COMMUNITY AS SEEN ON *Social Media*




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**This is not a campaign to end disagreements. Rather it is a campaign to improve communication by reminding ourselves of the basic principles of respect.**

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