

OCEAN VIEWS

A Magazine for Ocean County College Alumni, Our College Family and the Community
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THE POWER TO CHANGE



JOSEPH NAPPI '02

NJ TEACHER OF THE YEAR

p.10 - p.11



A magazine for Ocean County College alumni, our College family and the community

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Supporting Student Basic Needs

Ocean County College has been awarded grant funding in the amount of **\$949,275** from the U.S. Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE).

The FIPSE grant helps eligible institutions of higher learning improve educational opportunities for students from underrepresented communities. It provides funding to support programs that address basic needs such as food, housing, transportation, health care and dependent care and to report on best practices that improve student outcomes.

The funds will assist OCC’s FIPSE Grant Student Financial Resource Center in its mission to help students meet financial needs that can serve as obstacles to reaching their academic goals.

“It is incredibly exciting to have the ability to provide holistic financial support to the students of Ocean County College,” said James Campbell, OCC’s FIPSE Grant project manager. “There are many resources available to students, but few that can have as significant an impact on the life of a student as the ability to provide a financial safety net.”

OCC’s FIPSE Grant Student Financial Resource Center services include direct financial support for students as well as connection with campus and community programs for long term support, and are focused in the following areas:

- **Basic Needs Security:** obtaining food security, hygiene and cleaning products, and support in utilizing campus and community-based resources, including the Helping Hands Food Pantry.

- **Transportation Support:** including funding for public transit, ride sharing, gasoline, and one-time emergency auto repairs.

- **Dependent Care Support:** vouchers for temporary childcare and dependent care items such as diapers, Depends, formula, nutritional shakes, etc.

- **Emergency relief:** Funding is available to help contribute to auto repair costs, healthcare costs, emergency housing costs, and utilities payments, along with connection to resources both on and off campus that may provide long-term assistance in these areas.

To date, the FIPSE Basic Needs grant has had 104 referrals and awarded over **\$64,015** in funding directly to students in the form of utility and housing assistance, grocery and gas cards, dependent care items, and medical assistance. Of the total recipients, 73% received multiple services through the grant.

For more information about the FIPSE Grant Student Financial Resource Center at Ocean County College, visit the center online at go.ocean.edu/basicneeds.

“ It is incredibly exciting to have the ability to provide holistic financial support to the students of Ocean County College. ”
 - James Campbell, FIPSE Grant project manager



LIKE IT'S 1964!

On January 15, 1964, the Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders adopted a resolution to establish the first county college in New Jersey. Sixty years later, Ocean County College is still going strong—and the college community is ready to celebrate!

OCC officially launched its 60th anniversary celebration on March 27, when President Pamela Monaco and OCC Foundation Executive Director Ken Malagiere threw out the ceremonial first pitches at the baseball game against Brookdale Community College, kicking off the festivities.

Since OCC first opened its doors, the College has been serving area residents through a commitment to providing a first-class education and career opportunities that help students transform their lives. That tradition continues today, more than sixty years later, and our commitment is stronger than ever.



Ocean TV-20 Launches “Shore of Support”

A new broadcast series developed by OCC’s on-campus TV studio highlights nonprofit organizations that enhance the lives of members of our community through their charitable efforts.

Each episode of “Shore of Support” focuses on a common theme and features two organizations working toward a similar goal. Representatives from each organization are encouraged to discuss their mission and services and to provide information for viewers who wish to contribute through donations, volunteer, or just spread the word.

Recent episodes focused on food insecurity, healthy living habits, and utility assistance during the winter months, shining a spotlight on organizations such as the United

Way of Monmouth and Ocean County and New Jersey Shares. Upcoming topics will include financial assistance and housing insecurity, mental health awareness, and LGBTQ support services.

“We recognize the importance of highlighting nonprofits that are doing great things, assisting people in our community through charitable efforts,” said TV Production Director Mary Granahan. “Focusing on two organizations per episode allows us to highlight more local organizations that are working toward similar goals.”

“Shore of Support” airs on Ocean TV-20 and FIOS 24 Tuesdays and Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. and Sundays at 10 a.m. All episodes are also available on the college’s YouTube channel. For more information, visit ocean.edu/community/ocean-tv-20/.

Employment Opportunities for Students with Disabilities

OCC students and recent graduates with disabilities can access internship and job opportunities with federal agencies through the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP). Facilitated by the U.S. Department of Labor and the Department of Defense, the program connects individuals to federal agencies and, in some cases, private employers. Since 1995, the program has enabled thousands of college

students, graduate students, and alumni to showcase their abilities in various roles within federal workplaces nationwide.

Jamie A. Prioli, assistant director of OCC’s Office of Disability Services, emphasizes the significance of the annual program in providing opportunities for crucial work experience. “We see ourselves in a unique position of helping to provide students and recent graduates with disabilities with an opportunity to grow personally and professionally through participation in this nationwide program,” said Ms. Prioli.

“Student veterans with disabilities, service-connected or not, are also welcome to participate and connect with our office to obtain additional information.”

Applicants from OCC who applied for WRP in October have been successfully interviewed by the Department of Labor and are now in line for interviews with potential employers. OCC plans to continue offering the program in 2024. Students interested in participating are encouraged to visit WRP.gov for more information or reach out to Jamie Prioli at jprioli@ocean.edu.

OCC Receives Gold Marketing Award!

The office of College Relations is thrilled to announce that Ocean County College is once again the recipient of a Gold Medallion Award from the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations (NCMPR). The honor was announced at the organization’s annual District 1 Conference in Boston, MA.

The Medallion Awards celebrate excellence in design and communication at community and technical colleges in each of NCMPR’s seven districts. OCC took home the top medal in the Newsletter category for the inaugural issue of *Life & Legacy*, a quarterly publication designed for the OCC Foundation in support of its multi-year Legacy fundraising campaign.

During the three-day conference, Ms. Jan Kirsten, executive director of College Relations, and Dr. Sheenah Hartigan, executive director of Enrollment Services, gave a presentation on *Developing and Implementing a Collaborative Communications Plan*, describing how OCC used behavioral intelligence to develop and implement a college-wide, collaborative communication plan.

The National Council for Marketing and Public Relations is the leading professional organization representing marketing and communication professionals at two-year community and technical colleges. With a focus on learning, networking, and advocacy, NCMPR helps members become better at their jobs and supports two-year colleges in their mission to promote student success.



Photo: Michael Leon, Creative Director



Hands-on Learning for Criminal Justice Students

Students in OCC's Criminal Justice program had numerous opportunities this semester for valuable hands-on learning that provided a closer look at activities in the real world.

In October, a live demonstration by the New Jersey State Police Medical Helicopter Team included an awe-inspiring medevac landing on the College's soccer field. After the landing, students were given a tour of the aircraft and learned about the program's mission, dispatch and requesting guidelines, along with a typical workday for the four-person flight team, which includes two pilots, a nurse and a paramedic.

Dr. Patrick Beatty and Dr. Stephen Agresti, College Lecturers in Criminal Justice, believe that experiences like this are a valuable tool for students enrolled in the program.

"This is a fantastic educational opportunity for hands-on academic demonstration," said Dr. Beatty, noting that the students truly benefit when they can see concepts from the classroom applied to real-world situations and get the chance to ask questions.

Students also received a visit from the Ocean County Sheriff's Department Mounted Horse Patrol, led by Sheriff's Officer Juan Mercado and his horse, Sangria. The students listened in

rapt fascination as Officer Mercado described the role of the horse patrol in things like crowd control, safety patrols and public relations. The Sheriff's K-9 Unit was on campus the same day and gave students a demonstration of the techniques used by dogs to detect explosives and conduct searches.

In January, Dr. Beatty and Dr. Agresti introduced students to a new MILO shooting simulator, which enables firearm training in a virtual environment. With this technology, students are placed in interactive scenarios where they must respond to a variety of situations that could include domestic violence incidents, individuals in crisis, hostage takers, and school shootings.

"MILO allows the instructors not only to teach our students how to fire a weapon, it also helps us to show the importance of firearm safety," Dr. Agresti explained. "Students respond to each situation with a 9MM semi-automatic pistol, a TASER, pepper spray, and, if needed, a semiautomatic rifle. The students are trained when to use force and when to simply use their voice and commands to diffuse the situation."

This experiential learning offers OCC's Criminal Justice students a well-rounded educational experience for these chosen careers.



“ This is a fantastic educational opportunity for hands-on academic demonstration. ”

- Dr. Patrick Beatty, College Lecturer II, Criminal Justice

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

CHAMPIONING A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION AT OCC

In her first official address to the college community, at the Fall Colloquium on September 1, 2023, OCC President Pamela Monaco told the crowd, “I’m a metaphorically bad driver, meaning I have a hard time staying in my lane. You should expect me to turn up at your office, ask to visit your class, see me at various games, and hear me ask lots and lots of questions.”

In fact, she had already begun. In the months leading up to July 1, Dr. Monaco met with college stakeholders, community groups, political and educational leaders and the presidents of other New Jersey colleges. She visited neighboring towns, saw local plays, and even attended a BlueClaws game to get to know the community she now calls home.

“I’m a firm believer in the importance of community in all the work I do,” she told the faculty and staff in her address. “When we bring teams of people together, we exchange ideas and hear perspectives that can help us make better recommendations and decisions.”

At her inauguration in October, it was evident that Dr. Monaco meant what she said. She personally invited representatives from nearly every constituency on campus to join her on the stage to share their own vision for the college’s future. It was a clear sign of things to come. In the months that followed, she could be seen at basketball games, meeting with student government groups, attending club meetings, and working the phones in the HUB. In December, she invited the entire faculty and staff to her home for a holiday open house, encouraging them to spend more time with each other.

Getting to know the OCC community in this way left Dr. Monaco with some strong impressions. “People are doing great things here on campus. They were able to share with me their enthusiasm and their dedication to their profession. It was palpable, how much the faculty and staff have impacted the lives of others in a positive way.”



However, she cautioned, there are big challenges ahead: things that will require a real shift in our collective thinking. She sees this as part of a broader initiative – to build bridges and create opportunities for more collaboration among faculty and staff.

“There are so many stories,” she said. “How do we use them to help support and motivate one another? One of my priorities is helping generate those connections and removing silos.”

If all of this is a herald of a new type of leadership at OCC, then it’s a change, according to Dr. Monaco, that is necessary in order to continue serving students in today’s world.

“Today’s students will not tolerate a professor who stands in front of a lectern and talks at them for an hour. Nobody wants that anymore. So how do we make learning meaningful? Like any other challenge we face, we have to respond by evolving the way we teach.”

She added, “After the impact of COVID, human beings are trying to figure out how to exist in shared spaces. People are hungry for human contact, but it’s also about remaining safe. We have an obligation to provide the tools and safe spaces so that students are able to learn how to be with others in a healthy and supportive way.”

To do that will require flexibility and a willingness to change, but it’s a worthy endeavor.

“Change is hard for everybody,” she said. “We are asking people to get uncomfortable with how they do things. I’m angling for quick change because our students need it, but I can’t mandate how people behave – I can only lead by example, and ask our students to tell us what they need. As teachers, we need to respond to the students we have in front of us, and they are all different. But we are ready to help and support the professors who are doing that. I want us to celebrate our success together.”

“Together” will be the most important part, according to President Monaco. Collaboration is key. “We’ll get there,” she said confidently, “and it will be done through teamwork.”



C E L E B R A T I N G A P R E S I D E N T I A L I N A U G U R A T I O N

History was made at Ocean County College on Friday, October 13, as Pamela J. Monaco, Ph.D. was formally inaugurated as the College’s fifth president – and first female president – during an inspiring ceremony held in the Health and Human Performance Center.

Paul Chalakani, College Lecturer II in Communications/Theater, served as master of ceremonies for the day’s events. The OCVTS Grunin Performing Arts Academy Vocal Ensemble, directed by Mary Kenny, began the ceremony with a performance of the National Anthem, while Major Jeffery Bassett of The Salvation Army delivered the invocation. Guest speakers offered messages of support from groups across campus, including Professor Lynn Kenneally; Ilene Cohen, Executive Director of Athletics; Walter Lukas Jr., Craftworker/General Mechanic; Alumni Trustee Casey Conner; Student Representative Cheyenne Severin; OCC Foundation Board Chair David Paulus; and Ocean County Commissioner Virginia Haines. OCC Board Chair Jerry Dasti presented Dr. Monaco with the presidential medallion and Judge Robert Fall administered the presidential oath.

In her inaugural address, Dr. Monaco thanked family members, friends and colleagues who have supported her throughout her career, giving special acknowledgement to the many strong

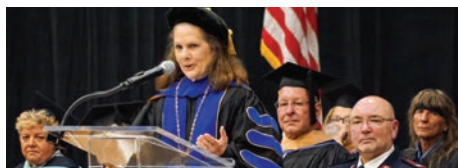
and positive women whose influence encouraged her along the path to becoming OCC’s first female president.

Dr. Monaco also acknowledged the significant challenges that lie ahead as a college leader. “Anyone in higher education today better be ready to roll up their proverbial sleeves,” she said. “The high cost of a college education has put it out of reach of too many, and those who have accumulated a large debt to earn a college degree too often do not see the value of their investment of time and money.”

“And yet,” she added, “I believe we are on the precipice of the golden age of two-year colleges, if we listen to our communities and embrace change.”

Throughout the celebration, Dr. Monaco emphasized the importance of collaboration and teamwork as OCC moves ahead with its mission to serve the students of Ocean County. “If I prove to be a good president,” she said, “it will be because we have come together as a team to transform lives.”

President Monaco assumed her role on July 1, 2023, after an extensive search led by the College’s Board of Trustees. An accomplished administrator, she brings more than thirty years of experience in higher education to OCC, most recently serving as the vice president of Academic and Student Affairs at Wilbur Wright College in Chicago, Illinois.



“ I believe we are on the precipice of the golden age of two-year colleges, if we listen to our communities and embrace change. ”

- Dr. Pamela Monaco, President, Ocean County College

CIVIL ENGAGEMENT

CRITICAL THINKING IN THE CLASSROOM

Last year, students in Jason Ghibesi's Global Issues class were asked to read and analyze the book "Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy" by Kevin Bales. While researching the project, the students received assistance from an unexpected source: the author himself.

Ghibesi arranged a virtual meeting between Mr. Bales and the students, providing them with a unique opportunity to ask questions and learn more directly from the source. That kind of interactive teaching is one of the ways Ghibesi connects with his students in a world that competes for their attention 24 hours a day and encourages them to actively engage in their own education.

"I always kind of knew I wanted to teach," says Ghibesi, who graduated from Seton Hall with a B.S. in political science and earned a master's in public administration from Kean University. He began his career at Ocean County College in 2007 as an adjunct professor in history and was hired as a college lecturer in 2011. Today, he teaches all of OCC's political science classes, which include American Federal Government, International Relations, and Public Administration as well as Global Issues and Comparative Politics, two courses he developed himself.

Teaching political science to students in 2024 is very different than in the past, Ghibesi says. "More students are politically engaged than earlier in my career. Young voters are turning out more to the

last couple of elections; they're more politically aware, more tuned into current events."

In a nation increasingly divided by partisan disagreements, and with information coming at them from every direction, it can be a real challenge for students to know what to believe – although Ghibesi insists that young people are savvier than people may think.

"They're good critical thinkers," he says. "As a generation, they use technology to work toward accomplishing their goals and promoting causes that are important to them. The challenge is trying to help them understand how to avoid the pitfalls of fake news."

In his classes, he encourages students to lean on their critical thinking skills and to be as informed as possible, rather than relying solely on biased or unverified sources such as social media.

"There's a lot of questioning sources, encouraging them to dig deeper. The students follow the elections and we have a lot of good discussions. It's not about taking one side or the other. It's my goal that they understand the institutions and the Constitution and the way our government works, so they can form their own opinions. If they leave my class being able to develop an informed political opinion, then I've done my job."

Ghibesi also serves as coordinator for the college's Government Affairs Institute, a campus initiative that helps students

better understand the political landscape, both locally and nationally. The Institute hosts film screenings, guest lectures and other activities throughout the year to encourage students to get involved.

"The function is to expose students to a variety of opportunities to foster civic engagement," he explains. "We bring in experts to facilitate discussions on topics that are important to students, like First Amendment rights and climate change."

Past events have included an election-season conversation about political polling with Patrick Murray, director of the Polling Institute at Monmouth University, and a discussion with Marny Requa, department chair for Criminal Justice, Anthropology, Sociology and Human Rights at Georgian Court University, about recent Supreme Court decisions and their social justice implications.

The Institute also holds a voter registration drive on campus in September in conjunction with the office of Student Life and the League of Women Voters and coordinates the annual Constitution Day commemoration, which focuses on the enduring importance of our founding documents. "It filters all the partisanship out of the conversation and focuses purely on the words," Ghibesi explains. "Very few students have actually read the documents, but it's important to know. It's the foundation of why we are all here."





EMPOWERING ACTION THROUGH EDUCATION



“ This generation can make a change, especially in and around the issues that are important to them. ”

- Jason Ghibesi,
College Lecturer II, Political Science and History

JOSEPH NAPPI '02

NJ 2024 TEACHER OF THE YEAR

For Joseph (Joe) Nappi, walking across the stage in his cap and gown in 2002 was a novel experience.

“I had never walked in a graduation ceremony until OCC,” he explains. “That was the first time I ever actually graduated from anything.”

Nappi’s transformation from troubled youth to New Jersey’s Teacher of the Year is a redemption story that inspires the imagination and exemplifies the power that teachers have to transform lives.

A ROUGH START

Joe’s parents divorced when he was young. His mom lived in Tinton Falls and worked long hours as an oncology nurse, while his father, remarried and living in Bayonne, supported his family as a postal worker. Joe was an honor student early on, but when things got stressful at home, he started getting into trouble.

“I was always acting out, looking for attention,” he explains. He finished eighth grade on suspension, and although he received a diploma, he wasn’t permitted to graduate with his class. “Mom put me in Catholic school to set me straight, but I got kicked out by Thanksgiving.”

Next came a stint in a probation program – “the kind where they try to scare you straight” – but his reputation preceded him, and he was quickly labeled as a discipline problem. Overwhelmed by new rules and lacking the support to help him adapt, Joe says he simply stopped going to school. “That was my bright idea on how to respond.”

After spending time in a group home, he moved in with his father, but he continued acting out and skipping school and made it through his senior year by the skin of his teeth. Once again, he received a diploma but was not permitted to participate in the graduation ceremony.

When his family moved to Bayville, Joe enrolled at OCC. “My father was adamant that I had to prove myself,” he says. “It was up to me how I was going to do at OCC. That pressure really helped motivate me.

A CHANGE OF COURSE

At OCC, Joe initially enrolled in Computer Science in hopes that it would lead to a lucrative career, but he quickly realized that sitting behind a computer wasn’t the life he wanted.

“I absolutely hated it,” he recalls. “I was really miserable.”

His life was turned upside down when the September 11 terrorist attacks occurred in the beginning of his sophomore year. The loss of several close family friends combined with an overwhelming feeling of helplessness soon had him reconsidering his options.



"I thought, 'what am I doing with my life?' I wanted to do something that had purpose," he explains. His girlfriend, Cristina (now his wife) suggested that he go into teaching.

"I laughed," Joe recalls. "But then she said, 'If you're in charge, it could be whatever you want it to be.'"

Joe began to think about how he might use his own troubled past to make a difference for others. What had prevented him from being successful in school? How could he do things better? He changed his major to liberal arts, and classes in creative writing and ethics encouraged him to think critically about what he had been taught, giving him tools to process the things he'd been through.

"I always had the capability to do the work," he says now. "I just didn't see any purpose in it." Inspired by those class discussions and a transformative Western Civilization class that reignited his interest in history, he finally knew what he wanted to do with his life.

In 2002, Joe graduated from Ocean County College with honors and a 3.9 GPA, and finally got the chance to walk across the stage.

BE THE CHANGE

After graduating from OCC, Joe attended Rowan University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in history and education. In the years since, he has been named Teacher of the Year at the school, district, and county levels, received the Ida and Jeff Margolis Award for Excellence in Multicultural Education, the Dr. Frank Kaplowitz Outstanding Human Rights Educator of the Year Award from Kean University, and became a member of Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honor society.

He is also a Museum Teacher Fellow with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and recently worked with PBS to develop lessons for the 2022 Ken Burns documentary, "The U.S. and the Holocaust."

"Coming up in school, I did not get a lot of instruction about the Holocaust," Nappi says. "I thought it was made up." His journey into Holocaust education began with an extra-credit assignment for which he attended a talk by a Holocaust survivor. That event left him deeply moved and desperate to learn more.

Reflecting on the survivor's personal account as a child in Auschwitz, Joe says he was

struck by the profound impact individuals can have on the lives of others. That message stuck with him.

"Part of my anger growing up was that I saw all kinds of problems with the world, but I felt powerless," Joe explained. "I felt like there was nothing I could do."

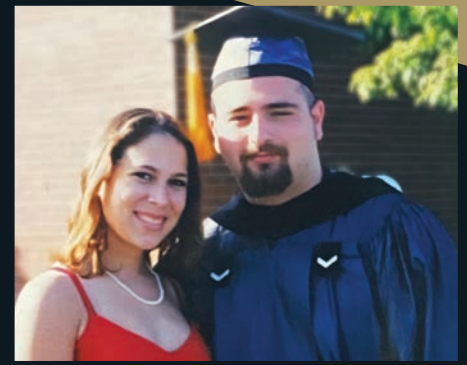
As he honed his teaching skills, the Holocaust remained a focal point in his classes, and for more than a decade Joe has remained dedicated to this cause. Partnering with Kean University, he expanded his reach: teaching dual enrollment courses and leading field trips to the National Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., where he brings between 50-100 students each year.

Joe also found himself inspired by another local Holocaust survivor, Manny Lindenbaum, who dedicated his adult life to volunteering to help others. "Whenever Manny sees his grandkids, he doesn't ask, 'what did you do today?'" Joe explains. "Instead, he asks them, 'What are you doing to help others?'"

Joe decided to put that same question to his students, and the "Be the Change" project was born. Each year, his students choose a topic that needs a champion and try to identify how they can help.

"They look at the work people are already doing, and they create a SMART action plan for how they can make progress on that particular issue," Nappi explains. "The kids have taken on all kinds of issues: local food insecurity, refugee resettlement, human trafficking, paper straws - they've made some really significant positive changes. Even more significant is the knowledge that it leaves them with as they go forward: you don't have to just shake your head and get angry or go to the bar and get angry. There is something you can do. It's a very empowering lesson for kids to take away."

As a student, Joe says, he often felt irrelevant, even invisible. Returning to the classroom as a teacher, he wanted things to be different. "I understand how students can slip through cracks. I want to find ways to make that not happen. I'm really focused on learning who these kids are, what their stories are, and what they might bring to the class. Obviously, part of the challenge is that you have this curriculum, that material that you have to go back to, but there's always perspectives, different ways of looking at things. I try to understand where they're coming from." Once he identifies a student's interests, he is able to connect with them.



"Whether they want to be stand-up comics or members of a jazz band, you can help kids find something they're passionate about and encourage them in that direction," he says. "You can really help a kid by seeing something that they're overlooking in themselves."

IN JOE'S WORDS:

Advice for Teachers: "Don't be afraid to make mistakes, as long as you're willing to learn from them. I was so bad at teaching when I was doing my student teaching; we were having conversations about whether this was the right career for me. It took a lot of commitment, a lot of time, and being willing to take advice. It's a process. Don't put too much pressure on yourself to walk in that first day and be great at it."

Be a Student for Life: "The second-best part of this job is the opportunity to be a lifelong learner. Your job is to learn and grow: to learn about your students, learn about the craft of education, learn about things you're passionate about."

Ocean County College: "I really think that community college is a great choice. Everything I got from OCC was on par with the education I got at a four-year state school. I felt very satisfied with my classes, very prepared for the things I had to do. I saved a ton of money, got a top-notch education and discovered my purpose in life by going there. If I can do it, anyone can."



“ I understand how students can slip through cracks. I want to find ways to make that not happen. ”

- Joseph Nappi, NJ Teacher of the Year

ART COLLECTION



The Ocean County College Foundation Art Collection debuted in October with the installation of 20 bronze life-art pieces from the esteemed Seward Johnson Atelier. Johnson, a New Jersey native, is widely revered for his captivating sculptures depicting people engaged in everyday activities. More than 450 of his life-size cast bronze figures have been featured in private collections around the world.

The sculptures were placed at strategic locations throughout the College's main campus in Toms River with an additional piece installed at OCC Manahawkin, and will remain on display through June 2024. The intent, according to Kenneth J. Malagiere, executive director of the Ocean County College Foundation, was "to usher in awareness of the Ocean County College Foundation Art Collection as an opportunity to engage our students, campus and broader community."

In March, the Foundation Art Collection expanded further with the addition of Cipher by Creighton Michael, currently on display in Kean Ocean's Gateway Building. Michael, a New York artist, has showcased his work in various public and private collections around the world, including exhibitions at the High Museum of Art, Katonah Museum of Art, Vanderbilt University, Queens Museum of Art, Neuberger Museum of Art, Colgate University, University of Richmond Museums and The Mint Museums, as well as numerous galleries and art centers in the United States and abroad.

Members of the Ocean County community are welcome to visit the OCC campus and enjoy the Foundation Art Collection. To learn more, visit go.ocean.edu/SewardJohnson.



SAVE the DATE

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

Tuesday, June 25

8 p.m.

ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP CELEBRATION

Friday, June 28

6 p.m.

VIKING 5K AND FUN RUN

Sunday, September 8

9 a.m.

2024 SUP THE RIVER

Saturday, September 14

9 a.m.

23RD ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC

Tuesday, October 15

11 a.m.

A LEGACY of GIVING

A major gift from the **Citta Foundation** will **allocate \$500,000** over the next five years to the OCC Foundation's current Legacy Campaign, providing crucial support for students in Ocean County.

The Citta Foundation is well known for decades of positive impact in Ocean County through its support of local charitable and educational organizations. The foundation's generous contributions to Ocean County College have played a substantial role in the growth of the College and the success of its students throughout the years.

"We wish to thank Kristin Farfalla, president of the Citta Foundation, for their most generous commitment to our Legacy Campaign," said OCC Foundation Executive Director Ken Malagiere. "This inspirational gift is but the most recent testimony to the Citta Family's enduring commitment to the mission of our Foundation, the students of Ocean County, and Ocean County College."

THE NEW BOARD CHAIR

Announcing the appointment of **MICHAEL MANZO**

The OCC Foundation has announced the appointment of Michael Manzo, President and CEO of Atlantic Physical Therapy Center, as its new Board Chair for 2024.

Born and raised in Toms River, Manzo is a graduate of Monsignor Donovan High School, Gettysburg College and MCP/Hahnemann University (now Drexel University), where he excelled in both basketball and baseball. His journey into physical therapy wasn't just a career choice; it was inspired by a pivotal moment in his life, after an injury playing basketball in college sent him on a path of surgery and rehabilitation. Today, Manzo stands as a beacon in his field. A physical therapist for more than 20 years, he has served as the president and CEO of Atlantic Physical Therapy Center since co-founding the company with his brother, Dave Manzo, in 2001. Under Manzo's leadership, the practice has grown from one office in Freehold to more than 20 centers in Ocean, Monmouth, Mercer and Middlesex counties, and is the official physical therapy provider for the Lakewood BlueClaws. The company was named Physical Therapy Practice of the Year at WebPT's Ascend Business Summit in Chicago in September of 2015.

Manzo is active in his local community and committed to working with others to make a positive impact. He joined the OCC Foundation Board in 2017, serving as Vice Chair since 2022. Manzo also serves on the Board of Governors for the St. Joseph's Century Club, Vice President of the Manasquan Park Property Owner's Association, and as a coach for many youth sports in his community.

"Michael Manzo brings tremendous expertise and leadership to guide our foundation towards even greater success in fulfilling our mission," said Kenneth J. Malagiere, Foundation Executive Director. "On behalf of the OCC Foundation Board and Team, please join us in welcoming him to this pivotal role in our organization as we continue our work to make Ocean County an ideal place to live, learn and grow together."



THE TASTE OF SUCCESS

Ocean County College's new Culinary Arts option, part of the College's associate degree in Hospitality, Recreation, and Tourism Management, offers a gateway for students interested in exploring a career in the fields of food and beverage service, management, and culinary or pastry arts.

The program is a comprehensive overview that includes fundamental cooking skills, plating techniques, menu design, food safety, kitchen management, inventory control, and more. Students learn how to apply these techniques and skills in a professional kitchen while exploring advanced management concepts that will prepare them for a career in the industry.

"We have a great group of students," said program chair Sean Bips. "One of my students is applying to enroll at The Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. Another is planning to open up her own bakery business in Toms River after graduation."

Culinary student Bridget Morris is excited by the opportunity to combine her passion for baking with her education and future career goals. "I felt like it was so perfect for me and meant to be!" she explained. "I'm a hospitality major, so rather than just take culinary as an elective, I was able to add a culinary minor to my hospitality degree."

The new program extends beyond the classroom, offering real-world experience opportunities through an apprenticeship at the College's on-campus café, Java Junction, and at other approved off-campus work sites. This hands-on approach enables students to apply their learning in a professional setting, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

"I learned so much about restaurant and menu planning," said Morris. "In fact, I've already started applying what I'm learning in these classes in my home baking business, *Baking by Bridget!*"

Joshua DiGianni signed up for the class as an elective last semester to learn some helpful cooking skills and also as a way to feel closer to his late mother, who worked in a kitchen for nearly 40 years. "I wanted to learn more about cooking so that I could keep that memory alive within me, and to continue to keep that tradition of knowing how to cook in the family," Joshua said. "This class has jump-started my passion for cooking and taught me the basics so that I can be successful in the kitchen. I am thankful to Professor Bips for his teaching and mentoring... he has definitely opened up a world of possibilities within the culinary field."

Sophomore Sophia Delgado agreed. "The courses Professor Bips provides are extremely helpful for people who want to learn the important skill of cooking." Delgado, who completed a two-year program at OCTVS before coming to OCC, was recently accepted into the Baking and Pastry Arts program at The Culinary Institute of America. "Even with my experience, I have been learning something new and trying new things in every class," she said. "I am so glad to have taken the course and I wish more students at OCC could try it for themselves."

Through this holistic and experiential approach to learning, the Culinary Arts option in HRTM prepares students for success in the high-demand field of food and beverages and equips them with the skills and confidence they need to excel in future culinary careers.





O C C HYDROPONIC G A R D E N

Herbs and produce for the on-campus cooking classes in the Culinary Option are provided by the Ocean County College Hydroponics Garden, a hands-on learning project that is a collaboration between Lecturers Angel Camilo, Edmond Hong and Sean Bips along with students in the Makers Club and Hospitality Club, who grow, maintain and harvest the garden for use in Culinary classes.



CASEY CONNER '23

A Q&A WITH AN ALUMNI TRUSTEE

Casey Conner, a 2023 graduate of Ocean County College, was sworn in as the new alumni representative for the OCC Board of Trustees during the board's monthly meeting in July. Following the announcement, President Monaco invited Conner to share the perspective they intend to bring to their new role. Conner expressed a commitment to addressing the sense of disconnection many students feel regarding administration and policy and bringing more emphasis on student perspectives to board discussions and decisions. "My number one goal is to ensure that students are being heard," Conner said.

Read on to find out more about Casey!

Q What led you to choose Ocean County College?

A It was cost effective, and I heard that the history courses were incredible.

Q What was college like at first, as a new student?

A It made me both nervous and excited. Walking on campus for the first time was incredible and I'll never forget it. From that point forward, I knew pursuing an education was the right choice and would be my future.

Q What did you study? Did you have a favorite subject/class?

A I studied Liberal Arts with a history focus. My favorite subject would be history, but it would be too difficult to choose a favorite class. Each one had its own unique challenges and milestones that were a huge part of my academic growth.

Q Were you involved on campus?

A I was involved on campus a great deal. I was president of the history club [and] helped put together events with the other clubs on campus that helped the Ocean County community. "Clubs for a Cause" [was] one of the most challenging yet rewarding events at my time on campus.

Q Tell me about a professor who made a significant impact on you.

A Dr. Pfeiffer, Professor Marchie, and Professor Downey were huge components to my success here at Ocean County College . . . Michelle Youngs, Reenie Castellanos, and Jen Fazio, to just name a few. Without these wonderful educators, none of what I accomplished at OCC would have been possible.

Q Where did you go/what did you do after graduation?

A After graduation, I began working towards another promotion at Wawa to get off overnights. By the end of next month, I should be off them and applying to schools. I have run into some housing issues, as well, that have delayed my process a bit. But once I start applying, my main choice is Rutgers. I want to enroll in a labor program, and I hear they have one of the best. I am also currently the student representative on the Board of Trustees for OCC.

Q How did you end up on the Board of Trustees? What did that mean to you?

A I wished to help serve the place that had done so much for me in my life. When I was asked to submit an essay as to why I wished to join the board, I knew this was my opportunity. My experience on the board thus far has been extraordinary. It has helped develop my leadership skills and gives me the opportunity to be the voice of the campus. This position means a lot to me and is one I serve with respect. My job is to represent the students and is exactly what I intend on doing. Any concerns or ideas the student body may have I must address to the board. It is not a position I take lightly. I encourage any students with concerns, ideas, or comments to reach out to me. Ocean County College is an incredible institution. I wish to see it continue to grow.





Q What did you do outside of school? Work? Hobbies? Activities?

A I worked full time at Wawa, tutored on campus, and read when I wasn't in class or doing something club related! I was constantly busy during my time at OCC. That still hasn't changed since I left, though; still busy as always.

Q What are your future plans or career aspirations?

A Wawa will help pay for schooling, so while I work full-time for them and go to school, I plan on taking advantage of that opportunity. I plan on graduating with my master's in labor and moving on to a career in labor relations after that.

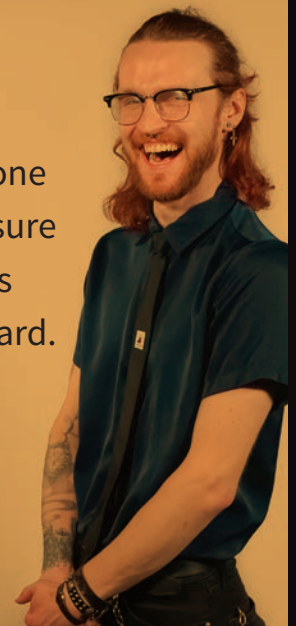
Q What advice do you have for current or future OCC students?

A I'm not the first one to say this, but you truly get what you put into this college. The campus offers a wide variety of tools to help you succeed. Not just in your academics, but in your life. The people I have been lucky to work alongside of have helped shape me into the person I am today. OCC and the people there have helped me discover my future and have helped me focus in on how I want to contribute my time here on this giant floating rock. This college can do the same for you; you must put in the work and the rest will find you. Don't let anyone tell you things are impossible, because with the right people, anything is possible. OCC has proven that to me time and again. Never give up and keep pushing.

“

My number one goal is to ensure that students are being heard.

- Casey Conner,
OCC alumni and
board of trustee



STAR of the SHOW

The Novins Planetarium
CELEBRATES 50 YEARS



Ask anyone who grew up at the Jersey Shore, and chances are they can recall a visit to the Robert J. Novins Planetarium at Ocean County College. Whether it was for a class field trip, a laser show, or a romantic date night among the stars, the planetarium has been captivating audiences and providing unique and unforgettable learning experiences since first opening its doors in 1974.

From the beginning, the planetarium was intended to play a key role in the educational and cultural enrichment of Ocean County, with programs designed to tap in to the widespread fascination with space prevalent at that time. Over the years, its mission has remained the same: to enable students of all ages to learn about the universe in exciting and innovative ways.

"It's great when folks come up to us and say, 'I came here on a trip when I was in elementary school and now I'm bringing my kids here,'" said Cara Muscio, the planetarium's associate director. "We joke about how enormous the theater looked to them when they were 8 or 10. It's great that we have this history in the community of parents bringing their kids and then their grandkids to see their first show!"

The planetarium's namesake, Robert J. Novins, was a leading advocate for higher education in Ocean County whose leadership and guidance were instrumental in the expansion of initiatives supporting the College.

“ County residents and generations of students to come will benefit from these tangible symbols of Robert J. Novins’ dynamic support of Ocean County College. ” (OCC Yearbook, 1974)

The planetarium has come a long way since 1974. Early technology consisted of several slide projectors around a recess at the edge of the dome with a series of slide carousels loaded into each projector for every presentation. Producing a show meant creating each 360-degree sky scene out of at least six different slides, and all of the projectors had to be loaded just right to keep the images synchronized around the dome. The Planetarium still has thousands of old slides from these presentations as well as some of the original four-track recordings of the narration and music for these shows.



ARTS | ENTERTAINMENT | EXPLORATION EXPERIENCE OCEAN COUNTY COLLEGE!

Concerts • Theater • Jazz • Dance • Planetarium • Family Shows



#GruninCenter

In October 2023, the Grunin Center for the Arts under the guidance of Executive and Artistic Director Heidi Sheridan, held a series of special events in collaboration with the Quebec Government Office in New York. Staff were delighted to celebrate this partnership with students and members of the OCC community.

This included a performance by the French-Canadian band Grosse Isle, a musical trio comprised of Sophie Lavoie du Lac-St-Jean (fiddle, piano, vocals); Fiachra O'Regan (uilleann pipes, whistle, banjo); and André Marchand (guitar, vocal). Together, the three musicians blend traditional Irish and Quebecois music for what Le Devoir called "a striking musical experience." The group's music has been unanimously applauded by critics and audiences and has earned them multiple nominations at the ADISQ awards and the Canadian Folk Music Awards.

Visit grunincenter.org for more upcoming events.



A major renovation in 2010 brought the addition of a Zeiss ZPK4 optomechanical planetarium projector and an Evans and Sutherland (a Cosm company) 360-degree Digistar 4 digital video system to combine a brilliant night sky with movies and other visual effects, along with a laser light system, surround-sound audio, and enhanced exhibit space for special displays.

But today, the planetarium experience is truly out of this world. The 103-seat, state-of-the-art dome theater has been upgraded to the latest technology: the ZPK4 is now LED and capable of projecting approximately 7,000 stars that would be visible to the naked eye in dark skies, along with planets, the Sun and the Moon. The digital system has been upgraded to Digistar 7, which now has Domecasting capabilities to share content between planetariums and an increasingly impressive library of shows and imagery available through its cloud library system, much of which is uploaded by planetariums around the world. A jam-packed schedule of sky shows, full dome movies, and immersive special events centered around pop culture interests, such as Harry Potter or Star Wars, draw people in, enabling audiences to learn

about science and astronomy while having a great time. The ever-growing repertoire of musical laser shows continues to sell out regularly, with popular new additions including Laser Queen, Laser Grateful Dead, and a new Laser Taylor Swift, which will debut in May! The space also continues to support academic teaching and learning while hosting events for a wide range of community groups.

"Yet the astronomy is still the primary lens for our programming at the Planetarium," said Muscio. "While longtime favorites have brought the wonder of the night sky to multiple generations over the Planetarium's history, the future of the Planetarium extends our view into an interdisciplinary, participatory space where we learn about the earth and space, and technology and society, and our place as humans in all of it," said Muscio. "We are constantly striving to inspire new generations of makers and scientists and dreamers, the engineers of our shared future as we look out on the cosmos together."

2024 is set to be a very special year at the Novins Planetarium. To learn more about upcoming events, visit www.ocean.edu/planetarium.



VIKINGS - MAKING THE GRADE

by Kevin Byrne

The fall 2023 semester was an extremely successful one for OCC Athletics, with all of our teams posting winning seasons and advancing into the postseason. OCC Women’s Volleyball completed its 2023 campaign with an 18-3 overall record (the best finish since 2014) and placed second in the district. Our men’s soccer team experienced similar success, posting a 10-2-4 record, and also placing second in their

district. Our men’s and women’s cross-country teams competed in the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) National Championship on November 11 in Huntsville, AL, and our women’s soccer team captured the Region 19 championship for the second straight season, after upsetting top-ranked Rowan College of South Jersey-Gloucester on their field on October 28. The ladies moved on to

compete in the national championship tournament in Gastonia, NC, where they fell to #1 seed Delta College. Upon the season’s conclusion, both men’s soccer sophomore Mattia Assante and women’s soccer freshman Rory Hagen were named NJCAA All-Americans. Additionally, Mattia was named Player of the Year by both Region 19 and the Garden State Athletic Conference (GSAC).

Not only was the fall season a strong one for our student-athletes on their respective fields of play, but many of our Vikings also achieved great success in the classroom. Congratulations to the following 46 OCC student-athletes for their outstanding academic achievements this past fall, including 12 who earned 4.0 grade point averages (GPA)!

Students Achieving 4.0 GPA (12 student-athletes)

- Katie Bromborsky - Cheer
- Natalie Christie - Soccer
- Joshua Corsentino - Cross Country
- Abby Edwards - Volleyball
- Emily Flores - Cross Country
- Robert Giovine - Basketball
- Adam Grelak - Soccer
- Dekari Harrell - Basketball
- Julie Lees – Softball / Esports
- Jordan Motyka - Volleyball
- Alyssa Maisano - Soccer
- Abigail Szuba – Volleyball

Students Achieving 3.25 GPA or higher (26 student-athletes)

- Holly Applegate - Soccer
- Sofia Arguedas - Volleyball
- Averie Barneman - Volleyball

Students Achieving 3.25 GPA or higher (26 student-athletes cont.)

- William Caruso - Soccer
- Joao Capobianco - Soccer
- Ashley Chandler - Cheer
- Mikayla Colonnello - Volleyball
- Victor Colon - Cross Country / Esports
- Claudia Cosme - Volleyball
- Cara Cribbin - Basketball
- Julianna Cummings - Soccer
- Mattia Assante DiCupillo - Soccer
- Max Dyba - Soccer
- Brandon Farber - Basketball
- Rory Hagen - Soccer
- Jesse Hedlund - Soccer
- Molly Herr - Soccer
- Taylor Lewis - Soccer
- Anna Malandro - Volleyball
- Kai Messeroll - Basketball

Students Achieving 3.25 GPA or higher (26 student-athletes cont.)

- Alexander Nguyen - Esports
- Olivia Palombo - Volleyball
- David Patterson - Soccer
- Alexis Scully - Basketball / Soccer
- Joseph Spisso - Basketball
- Brian White – Basketball

Students Achieving 3.0-3.24 GPA (8 student-athletes)

- Jamal Cetoute - Basketball
- Zachary Laprise - Soccer
- Katey Martinez - Soccer
- Brian Starrett - Basketball
- Albert (AJ) Truskowski - Soccer
- Lily Van Deventer - Cheer
- Dallas Weisse - Basketball
- Rhianon Wohlrab – Volleyball



TEAM SPIRIT

As if success on the courts, fields, and in the classroom isn't enough to keep them busy, OCC's Vikings also work hard to support their local community. The basketball teams recently held a food drive during a home game against rival Brookdale, collecting donations to support OCC's Helping Hands Food Pantry. The teams also hosted an All-Skills Basketball Clinic for local children ages 5-12, and in lieu of payment, accepted donations on behalf of Family Promise of Southern Ocean County, a local organization that assists families in overcoming homelessness.

The name of the game is teamwork, according to Athletics Executive Director Ilene Cohen. "The Athletic department as a whole is a big family. We get to know each student as a person, and we are invested in their success. We have full coaching support. The student-athletes build lifelong friendships, and everyone volunteers to help each other: the men's soccer team supports women's soccer, the baseball team supports the volleyball team. If they're not playing or practicing themselves, they are out there supporting each other."

Their dedicated fans also include OCC's new President Pamela Monaco and her husband, Don Kehne. "I could count on one hand the number of games Dr. Monaco and her husband have missed," says Coach Cohen. "They are so supportive, they know all the students by name."

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH



photo: Delaware Center for the Inland Bays



“ The Barnegat Bay Partnership will continue to use the best science available to protect and restore this unique ecosystem that we all treasure ... join us in these endeavors and help build on the successes of the past five years. ” - *Dr. Stan Hales, director of Barnegat Bay Partnership*

BBP WELCOMES ANDREW MCGOWAN

After more than ten years away from Ocean County, Andrew McGowan, the Barnegat Bay Partnership's new Program Scientist, has come home. Andrew, who grew up in Toms River, came to the BBP in August 2023 after attending graduate school in Maryland and then spending the next eight years as the Manager of Estuary Science for a fellow National Estuary Program in Delaware.

In his role at the BBP, Andrew oversees an accomplished and outstanding team of scientists working in coastal wetlands, fisheries, water quality, and the surrounding watershed. He also manages several research and restoration projects, and serves as the program lead to the Barnegat Bay Partnership's Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee, a workgroup composed of environmental experts from academia, state, local, and federal government, and NGO's. His previous experience with living resources and estuarine habitats includes work with forage fish population modeling, horseshoe crab movements, oyster reef restoration, seagrass mapping and restoration, and salt marsh trajectories under increased sea level rise. He has also led the creation of a continuous water quality monitoring network focused on uncovering dissolved oxygen impairments in upper tributaries.

"I hope to help continue the excellent work that the dedicated staff here at the BBP have begun, while also helping us grow in some strategic areas like habitat restoration," Andrew said.

As the Program Scientist, Andrew is focused on the implementation of the program's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan. This document outlines both short-and long-term goals for the Barnegat Bay, such as restoring clam populations to the levels estimated for 1985 and increasing the number of bay beaches and lakes open for public swimming.

"These goals are important for the future of Barnegat Bay, and I'm excited to be working on them with so many engaged partners and community members."

Andrew received his B.S. from East Stroudsburg University, his M.S. from Salisbury University, and has published papers on forage fish populations, horseshoe crab movements, and bat assemblages. His interests include the restoration of estuarine habitats, in particular seagrasses and shellfish beds, the ecological importance of forage fish, and the economic and ecological impacts of estuarine water quality issues.



photos: Barnegat Bay - Little Egg Harbor Estuary ©Michael Leon



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