

# HCCC Happenings

A publication of the Communications Department



## HUDSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND NEW JERSEY CITY UNIVERSITY SIGN HISTORIC HCCC|NJCU CONNECT TRANSFER AGREEMENT



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**From the Editor’s Desk**

*HCCC Happenings is on the College’s website at <http://www.hccc.edu>*

Items for the March newsletter are due by Friday, February 9, 2024.

Please send your news items, comments and suggestions to:

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**HUDSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND NEW JERSEY CITY UNIVERSITY SIGN HISTORIC HCCC | NJCU CONNECT TRANSFER AGREEMENT**

**T**he Presidents of Hudson County Community College (HCCC) and New Jersey City University (NJCU), Dr. Christopher Reber and Andrés Acebo, met to sign a historic agreement that will enable a seamless transfer experience from HCCC to NJCU as HCCC students take the next step in their academic journeys and pursue their bachelor’s degrees at NJCU.

The agreement facilitates the seamless transfer of credits from HCCC to NJCU, creating inclusive, visible, and barrier-free transfer pathways and ensuring that students do not accumulate excess credits at either institution. When students from a community college are accepted to a four-year college, they can face significant challenges and sometimes find that a portion of their credits will not be accepted, causing them to spend both time and money to retake similar courses at their new school. The HCCC|NJCU CONNECT program proactively eliminates this hurdle and provides transfer students with additional resources, including a transfer counselor who will work with them to ensure they have the support they need to be successful while transitioning from HCCC to NJCU.

The two Jersey City-based institutions of public higher education will also share additional resources, including but not limited to housing and

childcare services at NJCU, and HCCC’s holistic support services and programs. The schools will also establish data and information-sharing procedures among their staff in order to share best practices and promote student success.

Students will be dually-enrolled and have access to all programs and facilities at both institutions throughout their programs of study.

While the two colleges are geographically close, they have many programmatic commonalities, including a shared focus on student success. Reflecting on the impact of the agreement, HCCC President Dr. Christopher Reber stated, “We both serve large communities of traditionally underrepresented students. Many students at both institutions are the first in their families to go to college. Many of these students are navigating monumental barriers to pursue their education. When they succeed, it is life-changing for the students, their children, their families, and their communities, and the outcomes ripple throughout generations.”

NJCU President, Andrés Acebo, echoed this sentiment, stating “This historic announcement for both institutions builds upon NJCU’s nearly century-long commitment to providing a socioeconomically diverse population with access to an excellent education as a catalyst to social

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**ON THE COVER: HCCC President Dr. Christopher Reber and NJCU President Andrés Acebo sign the HCCC|NJCU CONNECT Transfer Agreement, accompanied by students who will take part in the program.**

**HCCC PRESIDENT DR. CHRISTOPHER REBER HONORED BY HUDSON COUNTY LATIN AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AS EDUCATION LEADER OF THE YEAR**

**H**udson County Community College (HCCC) President Dr. Christopher Reber was recognized as Education Leader of the Year by the Hudson County Latin American Chamber of Commerce (HCLACC) at its annual holiday party on Dec. 15, 2023.

HCLACC is dedicated to developing, promoting, and enhancing commerce, trade, tourism, and industry in Hudson County for the benefit of the Latino-American business community.

The organization awarded Dr. Reber with the honor because of his steadfast commitment to HCCC students and his ardent support of Hudson County’s Latino community.

HCLACC president, Heidi Castrillon, stated, “Dr. Reber has long been an ally to Hudson County’s Latino community. He is leading the effort to forge local, regional, and national



*HCCC President Dr. Christopher Reber with HCLACC President Heidi Castrillon.*

partnerships that produce transformative and life-changing opportunities for students and community members.”

Hudson County is one of the most diverse counties in the United States and home to a large demographic of Hispanic and Latino residents who make up over 40% of the county’s population.

*Continued on page 9*

## HCCC'S GATEWAY TO INNOVATION PROGRAM AWARDED \$25,000 GRANT FROM CITIZENS PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATION

HCCC's award-winning Gateway to Innovation program is the proud recipient of a \$25,000 grant from the Citizens Philanthropic Foundation.

Citizens Philanthropic Foundation believes that investing in the communities where its employees live and work enriches us all. Focused on financial empowerment and workforce development, its "Citizens Helping Citizens" initiative aims to provide the tools and support to drive the economic vitality of the streets, neighborhoods, and towns that it serves.

This focus on workforce development and financial empowerment made HCCC's Gateway to Innovation program a natural fit for this grant. Initially created to address the unprecedented systemic challenges facing Hudson County's workforce because of the pandemic, Gateway to Innovation seeks to provide students, alumni, community members, and employers with essential support, skills training, experiential learning, and connection to employment.

Gateway to Innovation won the 2022-23 Innovation of the Year Award from the League for Innovation in the Community College. Gateway to Innovation provides students with a comprehensive suite of services, including financial counseling and benefits screening for WIC, SNAP, and daycare; career development services for alumni; no-cost, short-term credential training for Hudson County residents; and employer engagement in recession-resistant sectors like healthcare, IT, and finance.

On winning the grant, HCCC Associate Vice President for Continuing Education and Workforce Development, Lori Margolin, stated, "The grant from the Citizens Philanthropic Foundation will allow the Gateway to Innovation program to continue providing life-changing training opportunities in financial services and technology for members of our community. Students who complete the training obtain an industry-recognized credential and employment assistance. The result is improved economic mobility for students and their families."

HCCC President Dr. Christopher Reber echoed this sentiment, stating, "With the support of the Citizens Philanthropic Foundation, we look forward to expanding the reach and impact of Gateway to Innovation, empowering more community members with the skills and knowledge they need for a brighter future."



*HCCC Associate Vice President for Continuing Education and Workforce Development, Lori Margolin*

The groundbreaking program has already helped more than 2,600 students and community members embark on pathways to a better future. Thanks to this generous grant, Gateway to Innovation will continue making an impact going forward.

## HUDSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTICIPATES IN VITAL NJ DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH WASTEWATER SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM

Hudson County Community College (HCCC) is proud to participate in The New Jersey Department of Health's (NJDOH) Wastewater Surveillance Program, which is part of the larger Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Wastewater Surveillance System (NWSS) program.

The NJDOH Communicable Disease Service (CDS) and the Public Health and Environmental Laboratories (PHEL)—in partnership with wastewater treatment facilities, the CDC, and local health departments—are expanding the statewide wastewater surveillance program to include targeted surveillance at New Jersey higher education institutions.

The program's mission is to identify whether there are traces of any particulates in the wastewater that might point to the presence of communicable diseases in the area, such as COVID-19, smallpox, influenza, and polio.

As part of the program, wastewater samples are collected twice a week. The samples are sent to the NJDOH for testing. Then, the data obtained from these samples is returned to HCCC and forwarded to the CDC, helping to safeguard the community against these dangerous diseases.

Wastewater testing can serve as an early warning signal for new cases in an at-risk area and as a cost and time-efficient screening approach to complement individual testing. This can be of particular benefit to the institution as it can aid in detecting present diseases, provide early warning to guide policies and procedures, and allow officials to view the data in an organized report.



*Chemistry Instructor, Raffi Manjikian, is leading Hudson County Community College's wastewater surveillance initiative.*

The NJDOH invited all New Jersey higher education institutions, both two-year and four-year, to participate in this program. Hudson County Community College (HCCC) is the only community college participating in this project, joining four-year institutions like Princeton University and Rowan University.

HCCC's participation in the program is the latest example of the College's ongoing initiative to forge partnerships with local, state, regional, and national agencies.

The project commenced in October 2023 and will last at least two years. Dr. Burl Yearwood, Professor Raffi Manjikian, Dr. Fatma Tat, and Faiza Fayyaz contributed to this ongoing and crucial project.

HCCC President Dr. Christopher Reber stated, "This is yet another example of how community colleges like HCCC can collaborate with local, state, and federal agencies to be part of the solution for community health." Professor Raffi Manjikian, who leads the efforts, agrees that taking part in the initiative "exemplifies how academia can work hand in hand with government agencies to help make informed and data-driven decisions on public health."

Commenting on HCCC's inclusion in the initiative, Dr. Burl Yearwood, Dean of the School of Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) stated, "The School of STEM is happy to participate in this project. The Wastewater Surveillance program allows us to use our technical expertise to benefit the College and our local community. We are pleased to be able to contribute health data to the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) that allows them to monitor the risk of disease in Jersey City."

**Hudson County  
Community College**

**OUT of the BOX**

PODCAST



Tune in to our monthly podcast for a timely discussion about education, people, programs, events, issues, and solutions that affect those who live and work in Hudson County.

To listen, visit [www.hccc.edu/outofthebox](http://www.hccc.edu/outofthebox).

## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP) WEBINARS

**Navigating Challenging Workplace Conversations (All Employees, Live, Wednesday, Feb. 21, 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 4 p.m.)**  
Maintaining professionalism is of the utmost importance in the workplace; however, when conversations get tough, and emotions run high, that can be easier said than done. In this session, we will review some techniques to navigate tough conversations while keeping your workplace relationships intact.

**Identifying and Addressing Employee Turnover (Leaders and Managers, Live, Wednesday, Feb. 28, 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 4 p.m.)**

Quiet quitting and labor shortages have many leaders assessing turnover rates and retention strategies, but how does one know if their attrition rate is high, and if so, how to retain talent? In this session, we will learn how to calculate turnover, understand it in context to your industry and geographic locale, and learn solid strategies for retention.

**Painless Estate Planning (Prerecorded; available 24/7 through Thursday, Feb. 29)** Learn the simple steps you need to take to create a basic estate plan.

To sign up for these webinars, visit [eap.ndbh.com](http://eap.ndbh.com), enter company code HCCC, and scroll down to the "Check Out Our Webinars" box. Questions? Connect with your EAP account manager, HR department or call 800-624-5544.

## MILESTONES

*Congratulations to the following on their anniversaries with Hudson County Community College!*

### FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES

#### One Year

Caroline Arreaga  
Ronny Canales  
Kristofer Fontanez  
Everett Mapp  
Jack Velazquez

#### Five Years

Royal Ross

#### 10 Years

Kelly Garay

### PART-TIME EMPLOYEES

#### One Year

Jason Altilio  
Donald Pace  
Neel Patel  
Sylus Salgado  
Kaishena Shinnarayan

#### Five Years

Destiny Rivera  
Dhrushna Vasram

#### 10 Years

Natasha Digenio

#### 25 Years

Elgebily Sohir

## HCCC OBSERVES SPRING 2024 COLLEGE SERVICE DAY



On Jan. 17, Elana Winslow, Associate Professor, Coordinator, Business, and Faisal Aljama, Assistant Professor, Coordinator, Cybersecurity (center) were named as recipients of the Johnston Award for Excellence in Teaching. They are pictured with, from left, HCCC President Dr. Christopher Reber; Philip James George Johnston and Lauri Johnston, son and daughter-in-law of longtime HCCC Foundation Board Director and Past Chair Philip Johnston; Dr. Darryl Jones, Vice President for Academic Affairs; and Monica McCormack-Casey, Chair of the HCCC Foundation Board of Directors.



Pictured from left: Dr. Paula Roberson, Director, Center for Teaching, Learning, and Innovation; HCCC President Dr. Christopher Reber; keynote speaker Dr. Carlo Lipizzi, Associate Professor and Program Lead for the School of Systems and Enterprises at Stevens Institute of Technology; and Dr. Darryl Jones, Vice President for Academic Affairs.

### APPOINTMENT OF STAFF:

Ryan Brady, Academic Counselor, Hudson Scholars Program

Serina Gonzalez, Student Experience Communications Specialist

Shaheedah Johnson, Academic Counselor, Hudson Scholars Program

Amaal Ogburn, Director of Faculty and Staff Development

Josianne Payoute, Director of Benefits and Compensation

Shamina Scriven, Academic Counselor, Hudson Scholars Program

Connie Silletti-Cafaro, Academic Counselor, Hudson Scholars Program

### APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY FULL-TIME FACULTY- SPRING 2024:

Troy A. Burris, Instructor, ESL (Non-tenure Track)

Robert Maurer, Instructor, Culinary (Non-tenure Track)

### APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY FULL-TIME STAFF:

Natalie Brown, Internship Coordinator (Grant-funded)

Gabriel Cisneros, Patient Care Technician Training Specialist (Grant-funded)

Anne Hutchinson, Librarian

Rossella Lopez, Admissions Advisor

Megha Sanghavi, Accounts Payable Officer

### MODIFICATIONS TO STAFFING TABLE:

Ana Cabrera, Administrative Support Specialist, Testing and Assessment to Testing and Assessment Coordinator

Manuel Lendorf, Support Analyst

Laura Riano, Coordinator, NJBIA (Grant-funded) to Training Coordinator, Continuing Education and Workforce Development (Grant-funded)

Lori Margolin, Associate Vice President for Continuing Education and Workforce Development

## INVENERGY TEAM VISIT TO HCCC (CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM)



Sarah Dougherty and Lia Yoo (in the center) with Dr. Azhar Mahmood (Coordinator Construction Management Program), Prof. Khurshed Khan, and the students



Sarah Dougherty and Lia Yoo giving presentation to the students.

Invenergy is an American-based multinational power generation development and operations company. The company develops, builds, owns, and operates power generation and energy storage projects in the Americas, Europe, and Asia, including wind, solar, and natural gas power generation and energy storage facilities. It is North America's largest privately held renewable power generation company.

Invenergy is coming to New Jersey to explore the potential of wind farming as a means of renewable clean energy. For this purpose, the

company is building working relationships with different local institutions to access trained workforce. The Construction Management Program at HCCC was selected as a leading program for this aspect of the company's civil work.

Two representatives of the company, Sarah Dougherty and Lia Yoo, came to HCCC on December 6, 2023. The objective was to educate students regarding potential opportunities in the field of wind farming and visit the facility/lab of the Construction Management Program.

## LOCAL EIGHTH GRADERS EXPERIENCE SCIENCE DAY AT HCCC



Eighth graders from Jersey City's P.S. #5 visited HCCC for a day of science.

On January 11, 2024, approximately 60 students from the Dr. Michael Conti School PS #5 in Jersey City visited the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Building at Hudson County Community College.

The eighth graders participated in hands-on scientific activities to enrich their scientific knowledge and deepen their appreciation of science's role in their everyday lives.

HCCC faculty, staff, and students guided the students through the different activities while asking the students thought-provoking questions. Some of the experiments students worked on

were Simulated Blood Typing, Laser Engraving, pH of Household Chemicals, and Encryption and Decryption of codes.

The students were excited to perform scientific experiments and see the advanced equipment and laboratories at HCCC.

Dr. Burl Yearwood stated, "One of the goals of the School of STEM is to excite the next generation about the mysteries of science, encourage them to continue their studies of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, and inspire them about the opportunities available to them in Jersey City including Hudson County Community College."



## Women in STEM Discussion

Tuesday, March 12, 2024 - 12 p.m.

STEM Building, 263 Academy Street, Multipurpose Room, Jersey City, NJ 07306

Join us at: <https://shorturl.at/nq137>

Meeting number (access code): 2631 368 5275

Password: RxxsqhJd337



**GUEST SPEAKER:**  
**Yosra Badiei, Ph.D.**

Associate Professor of Chemistry,  
Saint Peter's University

Sponsored by HCCC School of STEM, HCCC American Chemical Society, PACDEI, and the Department of Chemistry at Saint Peter's University.

For more information, please contact:

Prof. Raffi Manjikian [rmanjikian@hccc.edu](mailto:rmanjikian@hccc.edu)  
or Ronny Canales [rcanales@hccc.edu](mailto:rcanales@hccc.edu)



## NORTH HUDSON COURTYARD CAFE

### Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

**Monday, February 12, 2024**

**10:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.**

North Hudson Campus  
4800 Kennedy Blvd., 2nd Floor  
Union City, New Jersey

## JOIN US FOR THE DINING SERIES

The spring edition of HCCC's always-anticipated Subscription Dining Series is fast approaching, and subscriptions for this in-demand spring fixture are expected to sell out quickly.

**Culinary Conference Center**

161 Newkirk Street, Jersey City, NJ  
12 p.m. to 2 p.m.

Eight Fridays (February 23, March, 8, 15, 22,  
April 5, 12, 19, and 26)

Your subscription of \$1295 for eight weeks\*, or \$647.50 for four weeks Please choose the first four dates (February-March) or the last four dates (April): Appetizer, entree, dessert courses, and non-alcoholic beverages for four or eight weeks. Seating is limited to four diners per table. \*Single weeks are not available.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Please visit: [www.hccc.edu/foundation](http://www.hccc.edu/foundation).



# Foundation Art Collection

The Hudson County Community College Foundation Art Collection of 1,900+ works is installed in the public areas of campus buildings. The entire College is an educational art museum. This Collection reveals aspects of America's and New Jersey's rich artistic and cultural history from the Hudson River School period to today. In recent years, the College's acquisition efforts have focused on strengthening its American and New Jersey modern and contemporary collections.

Each month, this page in *HCCC Happenings* provides updates on artists whose works are in the Collection, and new additions to the Collection.

## Donor Acknowledgment:

Thank you to Mike Peters, Joseph Levy, Nancy Stein and an anonymous donor for your wonderful gifts to the Collection.

## Artist News

Starting in January, Stanford—one of the nation's top universities—began offering arts-based social prescribing to students through their health services. What is social prescribing? It is, "a practice through which health care providers prescribe social care or social interventions as supplements to traditional clinical and pharmaceutical care." That could include taking a poetry workshop, painting, sitting in on a jam session, seeing an exhibition, attending a concert, or watching a dance performance. Why are they doing this? Research shows that engagement in the arts can have a positive impact on individual mental health and community wellness. The goal of the program is to improve health outcomes for participating students. If you're curious about designing your own engagement program in the arts, check out the weekly HCCC "Happening This Week" emails which lists many interesting free activities on campus. If you want to see art in our free gallery, come up to the 6th floor of the Gabert Library. If you're curious about fine art in our permanent Collection installed throughout campus, please take a look at our website. There are self-guided tours to all kinds of art in the Collection. Over 1,200 art works are installed in nine campus buildings. Scroll to the bottom of this webpage to view the self-guided tours: Foundation Art Collection <https://www.hccc.edu/community/arts/foundation-art-collection/index.html> If you have questions, call the Foundation Art Collection at 201-360-4007. We're happy to give you a tour based on your interests!

Joan Snyder, whose work can be seen on the first floor of 870 Bergen, in the studio arts classroom at 516 Gabert Library, and in the Honors Student area in the tutoring center on the



Kiki Smith, *Red Breast* (2021) Watercolor using Rubber Stamps, 5.75" x 8.5"

lower level of the Gabert Library, will be exhibiting new work in a solo exhibition called, *ComeClose, New Paintings by Joan Snyder at CANADA NYC* gallery through February 24, 2024. The gallery is located near the World Trade Center PATH stop, just a short subway ride or walk uptown to 60 Lispenard Street, in New York City.

You can see photographic work by **John Chamberlain** on the 2nd floor of the Culinary Conference Center. The artist is most famous for sculptures made from crushed car parts. Some of these metal sculptures are on permanent exhibit at MANA Contemporary, down the road from HCCC at 888 Newark Avenue. If you look closely at these monumental structures you can almost imagine the artist's past history: before he was a sculptor, in the 1960s, he was a hairdresser who constructed huge bouffant hair styles! For those who love Chamberlain's work, and have a ride to Colorado this winter, the Aspen Art Museum will be having a major survey of his work through April 7. Called *John Chamberlain: THE TIGHTER THEY'RE WOUND, THE HARDER THEY UNRAVEL*, the exhibition explores Chamberlain's career over six decades. It includes work ranging in scale from monumental to miniature. Other materials he used in his sculptures include foam, foil, resin, paper, air ducts and dismantled appliances.



Robert Wilson, *Untitled* (1990), Print on Paper, 27.625" x 19.75"

At HCCC, you can see five works by **Kiki Smith** on the Sixth Floor of the STEM building which is devoted to New Jersey artists who are also teachers. We hope to install a sixth work next month, so we're including a picture of our newest work, *Red Breast*, above. If you're ever in the new Long Island Railroad terminal in Manhattan, be sure to check out Kiki Smith's *The Spring* (2022), one of five mosaics spread throughout the terminal. This was mentioned in an article about great local transit art in a recent issue of *Hyperallergic*, the online arts magazine. Writers Elaine Velie and Maya Pontone also mention experimental theater artist Robert Wilson's work. Here at the college, you can view Wilson's art at the Culinary Conference Center in room 304 Hospitality Management Lab. You can also see his work at the Coney Island—Stillwell Avenue subway stop in New York City. The mosaic includes, "Nostalgic images of hot dogs, amusement park rides, and beachgoers [...] strewn across a massive glass brick wall [...] in this ode to the city's historic coastal neighborhood. Illuminated by either outside sunlight or the station's interior fluorescent lights depending on the time of day, Wilson's installation captures both the dreamy and mysterious spirit of Coney Island in this brightly colored display."

We welcome anecdotes and information about how the Art Collection benefits our community. If you have enjoyed using the Art Collection in your teaching, your studies, or your everyday life, please let us know! Contact [ASiegel@hccc.edu](mailto:ASiegel@hccc.edu) and tell us the story of how the Art Collection works for you.

To make a monetary gift in support of the Foundation Art Collection, please contact Nicole Bouknight Johnson at (201) 360-4069 or [nicolebjohnson@hccc.edu](mailto:nicolebjohnson@hccc.edu)

To donate artwork, find detailed information here: [www.hccc.edu/community/arts/foundation-art-collection/index.html](https://www.hccc.edu/community/arts/foundation-art-collection/index.html)

Explore the Foundation Art Collection using our new online searchable tools! Go to [www.hccc.edu/community/arts/foundation-art-collection/category-collection-search.html](https://www.hccc.edu/community/arts/foundation-art-collection/category-collection-search.html)



## COLLEGE EVENTS CALENDAR

For the most up-to-date information, please visit <https://www.hccc.edu/calendar>.

Hudson County Community College reserves the right to modify the calendar as necessary.



## NDABA MANDELA SPEAKS AT HUDSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S 2024 DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. ANNUAL MEMORIAL



Advocate, author and activist, Ndaba Mandela, grandson of Nelson Mandela, spoke to members of the HCCC community at the College's 2024 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. annual memorial.

It's not every day that the grandson of a world leader and renowned champion for human rights visits a community college. But that's precisely what happened on Jan. 18, 2024, when Ndaba Mandela, grandson of former South African president Nelson Mandela, spoke at Hudson County Community College (HCCC) as part of the College's annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebration.

While Mandela is the grandson of Nelson Mandela, he is also an accomplished advocate for human rights and social justice in his own right.

Ndaba is the Founder of the Mandela Institute for Humanity, an organization continuing the legacy of Nelson Mandela by inspiring and uniting people to build a fair and just world. He is also the Co-founder and Chairman of the Africa Rising Foundation, an organization dedicated to promoting a positive image of Africa worldwide. Furthermore, he is the longest-serving ambassador to UNAIDS, a United Nations organization focused on combatting the HIV/AIDS pandemic and ending discrimination towards people living with HIV and AIDS.

Ndaba was recently recognized for his efforts in these areas when Black Entertainment Television (BET) named him one of its "28 Men of Change."

Ndaba is also the author of *Going to the Mountain: Lessons from My Grandfather, Nelson Mandela*, which tells the story of Mandela's life through the eyes of his grandson. Part of Ndaba's mission is to introduce the teachings of



Ndaba Mandela (center), grandson of former South African president Nelson Mandela, spoke at Hudson County Community College (HCCC) as part of its annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebration on Thursday, Jan. 18. Pictured with Mandela are, from left, Dr. Darryl Jones, Vice President for Academic Affairs; Michelle Vitale, Director of Cultural Affairs for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Dr. Yeurys Pujols, Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; and Pamela Gardner, Secretary/Treasurer, HCCC Board of Trustees.

his grandfather to the younger generation, who didn't grow up watching Mandela fight against the injustices of and ultimately overcoming South Africa's apartheid government.

HCCC President Dr. Christopher Reber stated, "Nelson Mandela inspired a generation with his tireless fight for dignity and equality for all South Africans, ultimately overcoming the unjust apartheid regime and showing the world that true change can be achieved through peaceful measures. We were thrilled to welcome Ndaba Mandela to HCCC, where the next generation heard his inspiring message that one person can make a difference."

There wasn't an empty seat in the house as HCCC students, faculty, and staff were joined by students from Harrison High School, Liberty High School, and Dickinson High School; members of the community; and local dignitaries, including New Jersey State Senator Raj Mukherji, Councilwoman Denise Ridley, and County Register Jeffrey Dublin. Approximately 300 people attended the event.

### Follow Us

For more information, email: [mvitale@hccc.edu](mailto:mvitale@hccc.edu) or visit [www.hccc.edu/community/arts/doca-culture.html](http://www.hccc.edu/community/arts/doca-culture.html)  
 Facebook: [www.facebook.com/dineenhullartgalleryhccc](https://www.facebook.com/dineenhullartgalleryhccc)  
 Instagram: [www.instagram.com/dineenhullgallery](https://www.instagram.com/dineenhullgallery)

## FEMME DIGITAL

ANNA EHRSAM  
 DEBORRAH JACK  
 DONNA KESSINGER  
 LOVID  
 STEVFNI.XYZ  
 TRICCIA MCLAUGHLIN  
 VANDANA JAIN

*Femme Digital* is an exhibition celebrating the talents of contemporary female-identifying and non-binary artists creating animation, documentaries, and digital works of art. Dineen Hull Gallery proudly hosts works by multi-media creatives Anna Ehrsam, Deborah Jack, Donna Kessinger, LoVid, Stevfni.XYZ, Tricia McLaughlin, and Vandana Jain. Through the use of screens, these femmetastic artists bring the tech heat to the Dineen-Hull Gallery.

**January 30 to March 29**

**Reception: March 22**

**Beginning at 12 p.m.**

**Gabert Library  
 Benjamin J. Dineen III & Dennis C. Hull Gallery  
 71 Sip Avenue, Sixth floor  
 Jersey City, NJ 07306**

HUDSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### Teaching and Learning Symposium on Social Justice in Higher Education

February 26  
 –March 1, 2024

**Come together!  
 Speak out!  
 Take action!**

Join and collaborate with over 150 colleges and social agencies to transform and drive positive change!

**Register at**

[zoom.us/join/register/t/wkdc-hrDwgHNN-8t2nmxecPZ5nyoEE2ewd](https://zoom.us/join/register/t/wkdc-hrDwgHNN-8t2nmxecPZ5nyoEE2ewd)



## CLUB ADVISOR SPOTLIGHT

Each month in HCCC Happenings, you will meet faculty and staff who serve as advisors to student clubs and organizations at Hudson County Community College. To learn more about student clubs and events, please visit <https://involved.hccc.edu>

### Denise Knapp Rossilli

Human Services Club - 10 years

What is the mission and goal of the club you currently advise?

The Human Services Club seeks to promote events to help others and increase knowledge of the differences of others to help build respect between people. The club also works to promote the helping professions.

**Please share your advising style.** My goal is to have the student leaders come up with ideas and my job is to guide them to help bring their ideas to fruition.

**Please share any best advice you have for future HCCC Advisors and student leaders.** Remember that this is for the students to learn valuable skills on leadership. This is their chance to practice skills they will use in the future in their professions, so let them lead and be their guide on this journey.

**Please share an experience with your club or organization you are most proud of.** Previously the club ran a toiletry drive to donate items to a local shelter. The leaders of the club did such a tremendous job that we ended up having to donate to multiple locations.

**What events, gatherings, and activities does your club or organization host that have had a positive impact on our diverse student population?**

The club hosted a speaker from Active Minds in collaboration with the Office of Student Life and Leadership. The speaker shared their experience as a minoritized male with mental illness.



### Diana F. Galvez

Advisor of Active Minds and  
The Latin Society-2 ½ years

What is the mission and goal of the club you currently advise? The purpose of the Latin Society Club is to promote institutional involvement, create a sense of community, and promote student success, especially among Latinx students who are acclimating to a new environment as first-generation college students. Active Minds is a student organization at HCCC that empowers students to increase awareness about mental health issues on a diverse college campus. Helping students utilize resources and making it easier to seek help as soon as needed. Active Minds strives to eliminate the stigma associated with mental health issues, so that students feel like they can openly express themselves without feeling as though they are being judged by others. Active Minds serves as a liaison between the student body and the Mental Health Counseling and Wellness Center and works to improve campus mental wellness.

**Please share your advising style.** Development-oriented advising. I work with my e-board to develop their skills as student leaders by guiding, explaining, encouraging, and supporting them on their club, career, and personal goals.

**Please share any best advice you have for future HCCC Advisors and student leaders.** Make communication a priority! It is the most important thing to keep a club active. Advisors: students leaders have such great ideas, give them a space to share them and see how you can help make them come true. Student Leaders: Talk to your advisor, we are here to help.

**Please share an experience with your club or organization you are most proud of.** I am extremely proud of the Latin Society Club's dedication to creating an environment of inclusivity and involvement. Their Annual Fashion Show is always a success of creativity and Hispanic pride. The students were an amazing presence in HACU in Chicago in October 2023. And they are continuously striving to bring more events onto both campuses. They have accomplished so much in a short two years. Active Minds, though only heading into its second semester as an active club, has accomplished so much. The de-stressor events are a hit and the students never shy away from tabling. These are active and present on campus. They are passionate about making sure the voices of their peers are heard and providing a safe space for them. Looking forward to all of their future accomplishments.

**What events, gatherings, and activities did your club or organization host that have had a positive impact on our diverse student population?**

Independence Day Meet & Greet events, Latin Dance Lessons, Hispanic Heritage Fashion Show, Lego Mania



## Please consider supporting the "Career Closet Fashion Show: Your Runway to Success."

Join us for an evening of Style, Fashion & Fundraising  
**Wednesday, February 28, 2024**

**Cocktail Hour & Silent Auction: 5:30 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.**

**Fashion Show: 7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.**

Culinary Conference Center - 161 Newkirk Street,  
Jersey City, New Jersey

Proceeds from the event will be dedicated to assisting the Hudson Helps Resource Center (HHRC), which provides several services to Hudson County Community College students and their families in meeting their basic needs.

To date, more than \$8,000 has been raised for this event, but much more is needed to support all of the services that HHRC provides. More information regarding the HHRC is available at: <https://www.hccc.edu/student-success/personal-support/hudsonhelps/index.html>

Sponsorship options include Platinum (\$10,000 or more); Gold (\$5,000); Silver (\$3,000); and Bronze (\$1,500).

**No contribution is too small!**



Gift options are available at:  
<https://www.hccc.edu/foundation>



To purchase Fashion Show Tickets:  
(\$35-\$50) <https://hhrc2024.eventbrite.com/>



We want to thank Steve Madden, Follett Higher Education, Jersey Pictures and a host of other individuals and organizations.

## 2023 PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL



Professor Gallo and the students from his Intro to Playwriting course pose with Alumni actors from the Theatre Arts Program at the Fall 2023 Playwrights' Festival.



## HUDSON COUNTY LATIN AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE EDUCATION LEADER OF THE YEAR

*Continued from page 2*

Proudly serving this richly diverse community with a vibrant Hispanic culture and heritage, Hudson County Community College is a Federally-designated Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) – 56% of full-time students are Hispanic/LatinX.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is one of the College's guiding lights, and DEI principles are interwoven into everything that the College does to foster a welcoming and inclusive campus environment.

HCCC's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion leads and supports the HCCC Latino Community Advisory Council, an alliance of more than 30 clergy, educators, business professionals, nonprofit organizations, and community leaders who meet regularly to discuss the needs and concerns of the Hispanic community, and to promote educational attainment throughout Hudson County. The HCCC Latino Community Advisory Council sponsors and hosts networking events, open houses, receptions, and informational and enrollment events throughout the year.

Last fall, President Reber joined other leaders of Hispanic Serving Institutions from the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) to meet with United States Secretary of Commerce, Gina Raimondo. There he outlined his vision to create a semiconductor manufacturing center at the College, and to create customized workforce development programs that align with the needs of this lucrative and high-tech industry. In 2023, Dr. Reber took part in HACU's Washington, D.C. roundtable discussion with U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security, Alejandro N. Mayorkas.

Because of these institution-wide efforts, Dr. Reber and other College leaders are frequently recognized for their consistent and concerted support of the Hispanic community. Last month, HCCC received HACU's "Outstanding Member Institution Award."

In May 2023, the College hosted "HACU on the Road," a conference of over 100 national HACU leaders and members, chancellors and presidents of colleges and universities, superintendents of Hispanic-serving school districts, higher education representatives, state and local officials, and corporate and community leaders. The conference's goal was to advance and promote dialogue about the state of Hispanic higher education.

Additionally, HCCC Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Dr. Yeurys Pujols, was honored with the 48th Annual Hispanic Statewide Parade of New Jersey Excellence in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Award in 2023, and in 2022, Dr. Reber received the Education Leader of the Year Award and served as a Parade Grand Marshal for the Hispanic Statewide Parade of New Jersey.

The College has also received the 2021 Community Partner Award from the Desfile Salvadoreño de New Jersey; received 2021 Recognition for Work with the LatinX Community by Ambassador Alfonso Morales, Consul General of Ecuador for New Jersey and Pennsylvania; 2021 Recognition for Community Service in Support of the LatinX Community in Hudson County by Multicultural Poder Hispano; 2020 Save Latin America Los Tres Antillanos Annual Gala Educational Award to Dr. Yeurys Pujols; and others.

On receiving the Education Leader of the Year award from HCLACC, Dr. Reber stated, "As the proud leader of a Hispanic Serving Institution, it's an honor to be recognized by the HCLACC. The honor speaks to our entire College community's dedication and commitment to breaking down barriers and serving the Hispanic community. We take the word 'community' in our title very seriously. Our mission is to serve our community."

HCLACC celebrated Dr. Reber and the other honorees at its 2023 holiday party at The Fiesta in Wood Ridge, NJ.



**Are you experiencing stress, depression, or anxiety?**

**Difficulty adjusting to the College environment?**

**Dealing with mental health and wellness?**

**Hudson County Community College cares about you and wants to help.**



**Please complete the General Concern Form**  
click here: <https://tinyurl.com/HCCC-Care>  
or scan the QR code.



*The form is NOT monitored 24/7.*  
A member of the CARE team will respond to your request during regular business hours.

**If you need immediate help call or text 988 or visit <https://988lifeline.org>**

## HCCC Alumni: Get Involved!



*Did you enjoy your experience at HCCC?*

*Are you willing to contribute time?*

*Do you want to inspire others with your success stories?*

*Are you looking for career support?*

**If so join, socialize, and network!**

For information about the College's Alumni Association and membership benefits, please email [alumni@hccc.edu](mailto:alumni@hccc.edu).

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## PHI THETA KAPPA HONOR SOCIETY NEWS

### We Have a Winner!

Congratulations to Beta Alpha Phi member Heidy Pesantes on submitting the winning entry in the Gingerbread Decoration Contest sponsored by the Michigan Region Alumni Association of Phi Theta Kappa!

### Chapter Service Projects

Chapter members Camila Pazmino-Izquierdo and Manahil Khan, volunteered with Prof. Raffi Manjikian as judges at the Annual Science Fair at Public School #5 in Jersey City on Dec. 5. (*Editor's Note: Please see page 5 for information about the students' visit to the College in January.*)

On Dec. 16, Nicolle Hansen volunteered at the Christmas Extravaganza for children of New Jersey Reentry Corporation (NJRC) clients. The party was held at Calvary Baptist Church in Paterson.

Stefany Alarcon volunteered in the gardening program at Liberty State Park on Dec. 23 and Jan. 6. Francisco Fabian volunteered on Dec. 30.



*Pictured from left: Camila Pazmino-Izquierdo, Prof. Raffi Manjikian, and Manahil Khan serving as judges at the Annual Science Fair at Jersey City's Public School #5.*

## CONTINUING EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT NEWS



On January 6th, pasta-loving students and aspiring chefs came together to knead, roll, and shape their way to pasta perfection in Continuing Education's Pasta Making class with Chef Marissa Lontoc. Students made pasta dough from scratch, learning how to achieve the proper texture, and a variety of shapes and styles; and made various sauces and pair ingredients.



On January 7th, students attended Continuing Education's "Pizza Perfection" class for a fun and flavorful journey into the world of artisanal pizza. Led by Chef Samantha Pie-drahita, students learned dough kneading techniques, how to make a variety of sauces and combine toppings to create perfectly crusted pizzas from scratch.



On January 13th, Chef Kevin O'Malley led Continuing Education's culinary class, "Precision Blades: Mastering Knife Skills Cooking Class". With Chef O'Malley's guidance, students learned the essential skills of knife handling and cooked a menu including Sauté Chicken with a Wild Mushroom Sauce, Minestrone Soup, and Radicchio Salad with Romaine.



Scene from, "A Day in the Life of a Banker" with Provident Bank and CEWD's Gateway to Innovation team. Provident Bank gave CEWD students a tour of their new facility, explained their hiring process, and offered valuable advice on getting hired.

### Celebrating HCCC's Inaugural ACCESS Program Completion Ceremony

On November 11, 2023, Hudson County Community College School of Continuing Education and Workforce Development proudly hosted a completion ceremony, marking the accomplishments of ten dedicated students who successfully completed the ten-week coursework of the Center for Adult Transition (CAT), ACCESS transition program. The event brought together not only the ACCESS graduates, but also their support circle of family, friends, and staff who stood by them throughout their transformative journey. The ACCESS program is designed to equip students who have diverse abilities with critical life skills, coping mechanisms, work readiness skills, and digital literacy, which have proven to be vital in the preparation of the next chapter of their lives by enhancing their capabilities and versatility in both academic and professional settings.

What sets the ACCESS Program apart is its commitment to the long-term success of its graduates. Following the completion of the program, a 90-day post-program follow-along period is initiated, providing ongoing support to ensure a smooth transition into adulthood. The program recognizes the significance of continued assistance, aiming to connect graduates with community resources, educational opportunities, employment guidance, and support for independent living.

The impact of the ACCESS Program extends far beyond the classroom, as confirmed by the success stories of its alumni. Several graduates are in the process of enrolling into degree and certificate programs, others have transitioned into the workforce, embraced volunteer opportunities, and tapped into community resources for additional support. Notably, one outstanding student, having proven to be a vital part of the ACCESS Program, now serves as a part-time staff member.

As we celebrate this milestone, we also applaud the collaborative efforts of the HCCC community in fostering an environment of growth, empowerment, and inclusion. The ACCESS Program stands as a testament to the College's commitment to not only academic excellence but also the holistic development of its students, paving the way for a brighter, more inclusive, and promising future for all. Congratulations to the ACCESS Class of 2023!

The Center for Adult Transition is now accepting applications for the ACCESS Program. The fifth cohort is scheduled to begin on January 29th with ongoing open enrollment. Contact 201-360-5477 or [cat@hccc.edu](mailto:cat@hccc.edu) for more information.

### Continuing Education & Workforce Development (CEWD) united to spread holiday cheer

last year for students in the Skills Training Academy (STA). On December 13th, a special Toy Drive was held for the children of currently enrolled STA students at the HCCC Journal Square Campus. The CEWD team collaborated with students to create a Santa Wish List, ensuring that the children's holiday dreams came true. CEWD contributions made the season extra special for the young ones. HCCC embodied the spirit of giving and brought joy to the community during the festive season.



### FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

School of Continuing Education and  
Workforce Development  
161 Newkirk Street, Room E504,  
Jersey City, NJ 07306 (201) 360-4224  
[CE@hccc.edu](mailto:CE@hccc.edu) | [www.hccc.edu/continuingeducation](http://www.hccc.edu/continuingeducation)

## CONTINUING EDUCATION **Upcoming Programs**

### CONVERSATIONAL AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

Wednesdays (Live Sessions Only)  
February 7, 2024-April 17 (No class on 2/21) | 7 p.m.- 8 p.m.  
Instructor: Jessica Wohlstetter | Price: \$150  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/conversational-american-sign-language-registration-770552000777?aff=oddtcreator>

### SOULFUL CREATIONS: A JOURNEY INTO THE HEART OF SOUTHERN CUISINE

Saturday | February 17 | 1:30 p.m.- 5:00 p.m. |  
Instructor: Rene Hewitt | Price: \$99

### UPCOMING CULINARY PROGRAMS AVAILABLE AT:

<https://www.hccc.edu/programs-courses/continuing-education/programs/culinary.html>

### SAT PREP CLASSES (IN-PERSON)

#### MATHEMATICS

Saturdays | February 3-March 2 | 10 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.  
Instructor: Reda Mastouri | Price: \$210

#### LANGUAGE ARTS

Fridays | February 9-March 8 | 10 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.  
Instructor: Steven Wright | Price: \$210  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sat-prep-classes-in-person-tickets-797053226657?aff=oddtcreator>

**SAT BOOK WILL BE NEEDED FOR CLASS:** [https://www.amazon.com/s?k=9780593516874&crd=1H73JOUVGLWJ&srefix=9780593516874%2Caps%2C65&ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_2](https://www.amazon.com/s?k=9780593516874&crd=1H73JOUVGLWJ&srefix=9780593516874%2Caps%2C65&ref=nb_sb_noss_2)

### BASIC ARABIC LEVEL 1 (ONLINE)

Mondays & Wednesdays | February 5-February 19 | 6 p.m.- 8 p.m.  
Instructor: Mohamed Sarrouti | Price: \$98  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/basic-arabic-level-i-online-course-registration-780340789307?aff=oddtcreator>

### BASIC LIFE SUPPORT (IN-PERSON)

Wednesday, February 7 | 9:30 a.m.- 1:30 p.m. | Price: \$77  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/basic-life-support-bls-certification-february-2024-dates-tickets-775836226037?aff=oddtcreator>

### BASIC LIFE SUPPORT (IN-PERSON)

Wednesday, February 21 | 9:30 a.m.- 1:30 p.m. | Price: \$77  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/basic-life-support-bls-certification-february-2024-dates-tickets-775836226037?aff=oddtcreator>

### BASIC ITALIAN LEVEL 1 (ONLINE)

Wednesdays | February 7-March 20 | 6 p.m.- 7:30 p.m.  
Instructor: Gabriela Fossati | Price: \$98  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/basic-italian-level-i-online-course-registration-780322675127?aff=oddtcreator>

### CONVERSATIONAL AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

Wednesdays | February 7-April 17 (NO CLASS 2/21) | 7 p.m.- 8 p.m.  
Instructor: Jessica Wohlstetter | Price: \$150  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/conversational-american-sign-language-registration-770552000777?aff=oddtcreator>

### BASIC FRENCH LEVEL 1 (ONLINE)

Mondays | February 12-March 11 | 6 p.m.- 8 p.m.  
Instructor: Georgia Batubenge | Price: \$98  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/basic-french-level-i-online-course-registration-780351922607?aff=oddtcreator>

### SCIENCE/MATH PREP ONLY WINTER 2024 (FOR THOSE STUDENTS WHO ONLY NEED TO PRACTICE THIS PORTION (ONLINE))

Saturdays | February 24- March 23 | 9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.  
Price: \$143  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sciencemath-prep-only-winter-2024-online-tickets-732881106117?aff=oddtcreator>

### UPCOMING CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS AVAILABLE AT:

<https://www.hccc.edu/programs-courses/continuing-education/programs/culinary.html>

### FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

School of Continuing Education and Workforce Development  
161 Newkirk Street, Room E504,  
Jersey City, NJ 07306 (201) 360-4224  
CE@hccc.edu | [www.hccc.edu/continuingeducation](http://www.hccc.edu/continuingeducation)

## HCCC | NJCU CONNECT TRANSFER AGREEMENT

*Continued from page 2*

mobility. This is a pillar of our commitment to being one of the public anchor institutions in Hudson County and surrounding communities. NJCU recently announced the most significant overhaul of its general education program in decades. Our intentional work alongside our partners at Hudson County Community College will only further the distinction that NJCU is now the most transfer-friendly public university in the State of New Jersey. The partnership between NJCU and HCCC provides tools to change the trajectory for students who enroll in the community college, make the transition to the four-year institution, and engage fully in the opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree."

President Acebo also spoke about the positive change that the agreement will bring to Hudson County residents, stating, "The work we are doing lives and breathes within our community. Help doesn't always come from the outside – the most sustained focus of our work must be rooted within the communities that we serve. You can't be for the community if you're not in the community."

There are now 15 academic pathways encompassing a variety of fields and disciplines available to HCCC students who want to begin a course of study here and continue on to NJCU after completing their associate degree. HCCC students in the following programs will be the first to benefit

from these pathways – Accounting A.S. (to B.S. in Accounting at NJCU), Biology A.S. (to B.A. or B.S. in Biology), Business Administration A.S. (to B.S. in Management or B.S. in Marketing), Chemistry A.S. (to B.A. or B.S. in Chemistry), Computer Science (Cybersecurity) A.S. (to B.S. in Cybersecurity), Criminal Justice A.S. (to B.S. in Criminal Justice), English A.A. (to B.A. in Creative Writing or B.A. in Literature), Human Services, Pre-Social Work A.S. (to B.S. in Social Work), Mathematics A.S. (to B.S. in Mathematics), Nursing A.S. (to B.S. in Nursing), and Psychology A.A. (to B.A. in Psychology).

The largest number of HCCC students transfer to NJCU, so the agreement will have a resounding impact for many students.

While the leaders of the two institutions recently met to put pen to paper on the agreement, this didn't happen overnight. This game-changing agreement is the result of several years of intensive work, and the program was initially developed during the Aspen Institute-American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) Transfer Student Success and Equity Intensive, an externally-funded national project designed to advance best practices for improved and more equitable student success. HCCC | NJCU CONNECT is modeled after the highly successful Northern Virginia Community College – George Mason University ADVANCE program.

On the level of collaboration required to turn HCCC | NJCU CONNECT from idea to reality, Dr. Reber stated, "When you set out to achieve something truly meaningful, when it's real change that requires a lot of effort on the part of a lot of people, it takes a village. This is a significant, substantive change that will drive student success. All boats rise when we are rowing in the same direction."

## SPRING 2024

### HUDSON ONLINE

**ATTENTION STUDENTS:**

**7-Week Classes**

**ONB begins on March 19, 2024**



*Earn credits and your degree online from home!*



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**Invest in the education of an  
 HCCC student by making your  
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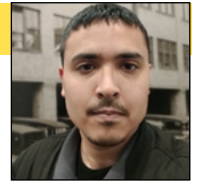
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# ALUMNI CORNER

## Jay Singh - Class of 2021

### A.S. Computer Science

Jay Singh transitioned from a retail management job to an IT position at HCCC before leveraging his computer programming skills into a web development career. Jay is also a full-time student pursuing his degree in information technology at NJIT. He is proficient in networking, web applications, and cloud computing.



### What led you to attend HCCC?

After high school, I went to Bergen Community College in 2013. After a semester, my mother lost her business, and I needed a job. I started in retail and worked my way up to assistant manager. Balancing work and school full-time was hard, so I only took one class per semester.

I needed an associate degree to get promoted to store manager, so I told my dad I wanted to return to school to earn an A.A.S. in Business. My stepmom suggested that I should go to school for technology because I've always been interested in it. She helped point me in the right direction. Because I was working 50-60 hours a week, I didn't qualify for financial aid. However, the Community College Opportunity Grant allowed me to attend HCCC tuition-free, enabling me to transition from full-time to part-time work while becoming a full-time student.

### What challenges did you face as a nontraditional student?

Some students have trouble adapting to the workplace because they've been students for so long. I had the opposite problem: learning how to be a student again.

I had to relearn the habits of being a student, but it was easier for me to absorb what I was learning. I could pick things up more quickly than when I started college because I had more life experience.

I was used to working and being self-sufficient, so it was an adjustment period. But sometimes, you have to take a pay cut in the short term to prosper in the long term. You can see this in my career progression at HCCC: starting as a peer leader, moving into IT, and then into web development.

### What made HCCC the right choice for you?

HCCC was the right choice because I could live in Jersey City with my dad while taking classes. Thanks to the CCOG, I didn't have to take out any loans.

The diversity of the student body also made HCCC the right choice; everyone was very welcoming. On my first day here, someone came up to me, shook my hand, and asked me what classes I was taking. It was refreshing compared to other environments that I've experienced.

The students here are motivated to learn and improve their lives. It inspires you to work harder in pursuit of your goals.

### What advice do you have for other nontraditional students?

If you commit to returning to school, make sure it's school first and work second. Not everyone can do that, and not everyone is fortunate enough to be in the situation that I was in. Not having to work full-time was the determining factor of my success. I took one class at a time at Bergen because I worked so much. It's a marathon, not a sprint. It took me almost 10 years to get my associate degree, but it was worth it.

### How did you break into your first role in IT?

I was interested in work-study opportunities at HCCC. I started as a peer leader. I got involved, helped other nontraditional students, and built my work experience. My computer science knowledge helped me get an interview with IT. Aside from what I learned at HCCC and on my own, my customer service experience in retail ultimately helped me land the job.

### How were you able to succeed in IT?

The key to success in IT is customer service. Customer service comes first, and the technology is secondary. You can learn the tech, but you also need customer service skills to help people solve their problems. Dealing with people face-to-face in retail helped me succeed. I realized later that my retail experience wasn't a waste of time. Helping customers, dealing with difficult people, and managing employees all helped set the foundations for my future success.

### Why did you opt for IT rather than Computer Science at NJIT?

I already had a lot of hands-on experience, so I was more interested in software engineering and the technical application of computer science than the theory of computer science. NJIT's IT program features more hands-on programming experience, a web applications specialization, and game development. This fall, I'm taking a class about making video games on the Unity game engine with C#.

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 please email [alumni@hccc.edu](mailto:alumni@hccc.edu).**

