



**Dream.
Excel.
Inspire.**

2021 STATE OF THE COLLEGE ADDRESS

Christopher M. Reber, President
Fall College Service Day
August 25, 2021





Good morning! It is wonderful to be together again with all of you! It is a great pleasure and honor to join you this morning, to take stock of the tremendous challenges we have faced and navigated together, to celebrate so many successes and outcomes, and to look forward to the coming year.

Today, we begin a new academic year, and we begin to discover and define our emerging “new normal” following the protracted challenges and devastation of the twin pandemics over the past year and a half. By twin pandemics, I mean the COVID-19 pandemic, and the racial and social violence and injustice pandemic.

We have been through so much together, and I have been inspired every day by the caring, selfless, and often heroic acts of kindness by so many students, faculty, and staff, coming together to support one another through adversity. We have never lost sight of our overarching goals, and our guiding principles throughout the pandemic of safety, and student success. In spite of the challenges we have navigated together, we have continued to build upon our culture of care that was a priority before the pandemic and remains a top priority for all of us going forward.



Last spring, we launched our **Hudson Helps Resource Center**, an umbrella of support services for our students and a beautiful manifestation of our shared commitment to student success, and to diversity, equity and inclusion. We are honored to welcome today’s morning speaker, Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab. Dr. Goldrick-Rab’s leadership of the Hope Center at Temple University has inspired so much that we are doing. We thank Dr. Goldrick-Rab for her national leadership around issues of student needs, including food insecurity, housing insecurity, homelessness, and equity!

Colleagues, working as one community in more ways than ever, we have stayed on top of constantly changing dynamics over the past year and throughout the unprecedented challenges of the past 18 months. Today, we are together again, largely on ground, and using our new, state-of-the art Immersive Telepresence Video, or ITV, technology that is exceedingly important to our new normal and to our future.



The theme for today is “Post-Pandemic Excellence,” which captures precisely our focus as we embark upon the new academic year. I thank all who have planned today’s activities, with a special thanks to Director of Faculty and Staff Development, Lilisa Williams; Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Darryl Jones; CIO, Patricia Clay; Director of Communications, Jennifer Christopher; Custodial Manager, Julio Maldonado; their team members, and all members of the College Service Day Planning Committee.

We also thank Dr. Pamela Bandyopadhyay, Dr. Peter Cronrath, Sharon Daughtry, Robert DeFina, Aycha Edwards, Fidelis Foda-Kahouo, Diana Galvez, Andrea Goodwin, Linda Guastini, Zakia Hmamou, Sami Khouzam, Deseree McFarlane, Ken Melewski, Alexis Muniz, Candice Petersen, Dr. Paula Roberson, Mariel Shinnick, Willie Shirer, John Urgola, Michael Whelpley, and Omar Williams.

For those I’ve likely missed, thank you also! To all involved, we extend our sincere gratitude.

As I shared in the opening letter of my recent Annual Report to the Board of Trustees, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times!” This introduction to Charles Dickens’ classic 1859 historical novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, aptly describes our shared experiences during the past year and beyond.

Again this year – in spite of, and, in part, because of – the myriad challenges of two pandemics, we have realized unprecedented positive outcomes in support of our College’s mission, vision, and values. Thanks to the HCCC family’s enduring commitment to our students, community, and justice for all, the 2020-21 academic year has been marked by significant and meaningful progress in areas of institutional priority. These priorities center on student success, and diversity, equity and inclusion.

Thanks to our inspirational HCCC Village – thanks to each and every one of you – we celebrate many achievements over the past year, a number of which represent national best practices.

Indeed, together, we have achieved a host of notable outcomes while surrounded by unprecedented challenges.

Our HCCC Dream Team members, including over 100 faculty, staff and students working on committees and teams, have led the College community in efforts to achieve specific goals and objectives of our Student Success Action Plan. We have begun to observe measureable outcomes of this work.



For example, our three-year graduation rate has increased by 25% since 2018. The percentage of first-time, full-time ESL students exiting ESL in their first academic year increased from 13% to 24% since 2017. And the percentage of Academic Foundations Math students exiting foundations coursework in their first academic year increased from 65% to 77% for the fall 2020 cohort.

In spring 2021, 75% of students earned a GPA of at least 2.0, the second highest percentage in the past five years. Further, the percentage of students earning zero credits decreased from 14% last fall to 11% this spring.

Supporting this work are many successful and creative initiatives, such as the continued development and expansion of the highly successful Student Success Academy, led so capably by Associate Dean, Dr. Pamela Bandyopadhyay; Director of the Writing and Tutoring Center, Kenny Fabara, and their colleagues.

Many in our community participated in the improved and expanded use of “multiple measures” in lieu of placement testing by adjusting required GPA thresholds, SAT scores, and High School Equivalency assessments.

And our preliminary trial of new Directed Self Placement processes helped remove barriers imposed by the pandemic, and provided us experience and insight into the potential continued use and improvement of this option for students where appropriate.

Also important and highly valued were efforts to increase enrollment in Learning Community courses during 2020-21 in spite of the pandemic, and the continued growth and development of the HCCC Honors Program. We thank Professor and newly appointed Executive Director of the North Hudson Campus, Joe Caniglia, and Associate Director for the Honors Program, Kyle Woolley, respectively, for their leadership.

We thank College Lecturer Michael Whelpley and colleagues across the college for their continued leadership and support in promoting and expanding the use of Open Educational Resources, or OER, including virtual instructional materials, in order to save students textbook costs. The growing cost of textbooks and educational materials is an increasingly significant financial challenge and barrier that delays or prevents many students from completing their degree programs. During the 2020-21 academic year, all College Student Success course sections were offered textbook free.

I also want to thank Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Darryl Jones, for his leadership of a collaborative working group of approximately 10 faculty and staff, representing the Divisions of Academic and Student Affairs, to research best practices and determine the viability of offering on-ground courses in seven-week formats starting in spring 2022. We thank Assistant Professor Denise Rossilli, who conducted a pilot to assess the effectiveness of seven-week courses. Survey results demonstrated that students had favorable opinions of condensed courses. The working group has identified a robust and diverse offering of seven-week courses across disciplines for spring 2022.

I also thank Dr. Heather Devries, and colleagues in the Divisions of Academic and Student Affairs, for developing outreach and recruitment strategies for adults in Hudson County and beyond who have earned some college credits but have not earned a degree.

These are important initiatives and outcomes that represent hard work of students, faculty and staff across the College.

In May, we celebrated the achievements of our graduating students with a virtual Commencement Ceremony, featuring Commencement speaker and award-winning author, Wes Moore, and Valedictorian, Pedro Moranchel. During the following week, we celebrated graduates and their families at eight, two-hour “Grad Walks” held inside and outside of the Culinary Conference Center. Over 5,000 individuals watched the virtual Commencement Ceremony, and over 1,700 students and family members participated in the Grad Walks, which were live streamed to the College’s Facebook page and viewed by over 4,000 people from around the world. We celebrated 31 Early College students who graduated high school with an HCCC associate degree at the Grad Walk events. We thank Assistant Dean of Student Life and Leadership, Veronica Gerosimo, and colleagues across the College, for arranging and managing these inspirational events.





During the past year, and in spite of the challenges of the twin pandemics, we opened our HCCC Student Center, which is a new, central hub for our students. This inviting student facility will support the involvement and engagement of students, the increased use of the Gabert Library and services, and contribute to the achievement of the College's student success and completion goals. We will formally celebrate this milestone new facility later in September.

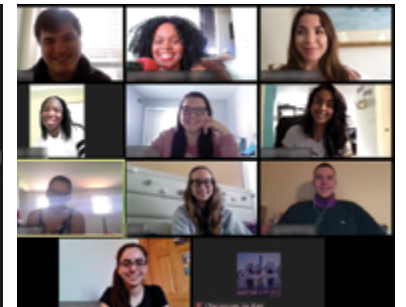
Our President's Advisory Council on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion has continued to make significant progress in leading and supporting our College-wide commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in all forms. In collaboration with staff in the Office of Student Life and Leadership, the Office of Human Resources, staff at the North Hudson Campus, and many others, the President's Advisory Council on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion developed and offered hundreds of programs during the past year. These programs promoted DEI-related professional development, community engagement, remembrances and celebrations, mutual respect and support, and opportunities for open dialogue.

We thank North Hudson Campus Associate Director Amaalah Ogburn; Assistant Director Diana Galvez; Associate Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion,

Natalia Vazquez-Bodkin; Programming Coordinator, JaVia Hall; Assistant Dean, Veronica Gerosimo; and other members of PACDEI for developing the new HCCC Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Student Passport Program. The program is cohort-based and allows students to participate in a range of DEI workshops, with foundational topics that include unconscious bias, microaggressions, and privilege.

With the strong support of our Board of Trustees, we created a new Cabinet-level position reporting to the President to lead, support and sustain HCCC's growing diversity, equity and inclusion goals, initiatives and outcomes. On July 1, our valued colleague, Yeury Pujols, became the College's inaugural Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and we opened a new Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion on the sixth floor of the Gabert Library.

During the past year, two important committees of community representatives and leaders were established and have become engaged in supporting the College's DEI goals. The HCCC Latino Advisory Council, and the HCCC African American Outreach Committee, are promoting the increased educational attainment of members of the Hudson County Latino and African American communities, respectively.



Director of DEI for Cultural Affairs, Michelle Vitale, in collaboration with PACDEI, and faculty, staff and students across the College and throughout our community, offered multiple virtual exhibits during 2020-21, many of which supported and celebrated diversity, equity and inclusion. These included free virtual programs to create an atmosphere that is open and welcoming to people of all ages.

And our Office of Student Life and Leadership, student organizations, and others offered a wide array of outstanding and well received virtual cultural programs. These included a myriad of events during Hispanic Heritage Month; Black History Month; Women's History Month; Arab American Heritage Month; Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month; LGBTQ programming including "Safe Zone" training and other collaborations with the Hudson Pride Center, and many others. New opportunities continue to be developed to celebrate students, such as the Lavender Graduation, Kente Graduation, and Alpha Sigma Lambda, the Adult Student Honor Society.

PACDEI also offered a multitude of programs, such as the "Our Stories Untold" series; "The Barbershop" series; "Wanna Talk About It?" series; "Same Same Different" series; memorial celebrations related to the passing of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader

Ginsberg, and Congressman and Civil Rights Icon John Lewis; remembrance events and discussions pertaining to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Americans of Asian descent, and other murders, tragedies, and acts of violence; a first Holocaust Remembrance Day that will be an annual event going forward; a college-wide discussion of the Derek Chauvin verdict, and many others.

We thank Amaalah Ogburn, Natalia Vazquez-Bodkin, Kyle Wooley, Veronica Gerosimo, Angela Tuzzo, Yeurys Pujols, Lilisa Williams, Anna Krupitskiy, Elana Winslow, Dr. Paula Roberson, and so many others for their leadership in developing and offering these and other programs.

Meanwhile, our Foundation Art Collection continued to grow during 2020-21 thanks in large measure to Collection Curator, Dr. Andrea Siegel. In what was a donation-record-breaking year, fifteen donors gifted HCCC 460 works, and over 820 fine arts books and catalogs, many of which reflect DEI themes. Our Foundation Art Collection now contains over 1,600 original works. In addition, 1,930 decorative posters were donated for offices and non-public areas. Over 160 diverse works were installed in campus facilities over the past year, including student art in our new Student Center.



Members of the HCCC family offered and were provided a host of professional development opportunities during 2020-21. Dr. Paula Roberson, Director of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Innovation, led and coordinated workshops on a multitude of topics, such as “Multicultural Education and Equity Pedagogies;” “Utilizing Support Services to Boost Student Performance;” “Leveling the Playing Field through Universal Design;” “How to Make Teaching More Inclusive;” “Stackable Credentials as a Pathway to Student Success;” “Open Pedagogy and Open Educational Resources;” and “Facilitating Student Feedback,” among others.

Dr. Roberson coordinated and facilitated a summer book read of *Stamped from the Beginning* by Ibram K. Kendi. The book read sessions were well attended by HCCC community members and colleagues from seven other New Jersey community colleges and New Jersey Council of County Colleges staff.

The Center for Teaching, Learning and Innovation, led by Dr. Roberson, continued HCCC’s successful partnership with the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) to offer professional development for full- and part-time faculty and staff.

Vice President Anna Krupitskiy, and Director of Faculty and Staff Development Lilisa Williams, supported by all staff in our Office of Human Resources, offered a myriad of professional development activities in collaboration with every department and division at the College. These included professional development workshops, conferences, in-service days, weekly and monthly events; related college-wide activities such as College Service Day, Convocation, the Annual Adjunct Faculty Conference, HCCC employee participation in the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development International Conference on Teaching and Leadership Excellence; and an inaugural Professional Development Day involving faculty and staff across the College. Workshops on performance management, faculty recruitment, ITV and WebEx trainings, DEI, benefits, and many others were offered this year.

Increased college funding was provided to a growing number of HCCC faculty and staff who are pursuing advanced credentials and engaging in a wide range of professional development activities, including a growing number of professional presentations at national conferences and virtual webinars, among others.

During 2020-21, 85 full-time employees and five adjunct instructors benefitted from the College's professional development reimbursement funding to defray expenses associated with their enrollment in programs leading to advanced credential attainment.

We thank so many colleagues for their leadership and participation in professional development activities. Promoting the professional development of faculty, staff and students is a college-wide priority, and a specific priority in our new 2021-24 College Strategic Plan.

We are happy to continue our work with Evergreen Solutions that will help us create an equity-embedded employee classification system. The system will help identify and correct internal salary equity gaps over time, facilitate greater consistency in titles and pay, and improve our ability to recruit and retain employees in the long term. We thank Vice President Anna Krupitskiy, and members of her team who are working closely with Evergreen to lead and support this very important project.



Our colleagues in the Offices of Accessibility Services, Safety and Security, Facilities, Hudson Helps Resource Center, and others have led the development and improvement of policies, procedures, outreach, services, and facilities to better serve members of our College community with needed supports, and the removal of physical and other barriers to ensure equity and the success of all students, faculty, and staff.

Under the leadership of Director of DEI for Accessibility Services, Jackie Safont, we have continued to develop and enhance accessibility support services, outreach, and accommodations through our growing Office of Accessibility Services. And we have continued to develop the Hudson Helps Resource Center throughout the past year, and officially opened the one-stop location for the Center's services last April.



These services include our HCCC food pantries; a new clothing closet funded by Lord, Abbett & Company; social work graduate interns from NYU and Rutgers; Department of Family Services representatives; mental health support services; emergency funding assistance for students; childcare assistance for students, faculty, and staff; SNAP benefits application assistance; "Single Stop" and one-on-one financial counseling funded through our \$850,000 corporate grant from JPMorgan Chase, and more. Over 1,100 Chromebooks and 50 Hot Spots were provided through the HCCC Food Pantries to assist students with inadequate access to technology over the past year.

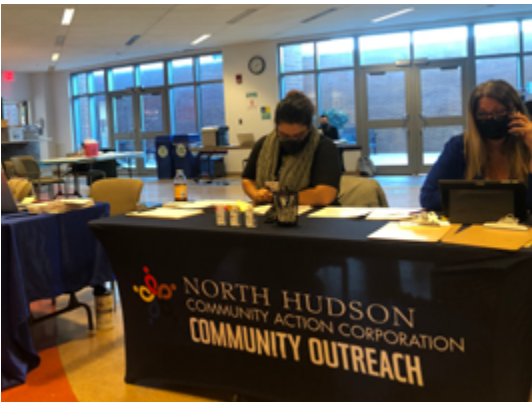
We are delighted to have retained Katherine Morales to be the inaugural, full-time Director of our Hudson Helps Resource Center. She officially joined the HCCC family last month. Welcome, Katherine!



During the past year, our Culinary Club students, under the direction of Chef Puk, and other students and faculty in the HCCC Culinary Arts program, engaged in an ongoing project to prepare fresh meals for HCCC community members through the Journal Square and North Hudson Campus food pantries. With the installation of refrigeration and freezers at both locations, faculty and students in the Business, Culinary Arts, and Hospitality Management Division donated delicious and nutritious frozen meals for individuals and families. Meals were prepared several times every week throughout the past year, after which they were transported to the food pantries on the same day they were prepared. Since July 2020, over 5,500 meals have been prepared and distributed through the HCCC food pantries to students, their families, and others in need.



And through our partnership with the North Hudson Community Action Corporation, COVID-19 vaccinations were provided to students, faculty, staff and community members for many months at our North Hudson and Journal Square campuses. Over 50,000 vaccinations were administered by the North Hudson Community Action Corporation, primarily at the North Hudson Campus. We are now planning to offer booster vaccines on campus later in the fall. I thank Executive Director of Public Safety and Security, Jack Quigley; our colleagues at the North Hudson Community Action Corporation; and many others for their leadership and support.



Our Information Technology Services and other colleagues have developed and installed state-of-the-art technology throughout our facilities to support student success goals and improve access to our programs and services for those not currently served by the College. These include significantly enhanced broadcast capabilities in classrooms such as Immersive Telepresence Video, or ITV; hybrid technology and WebEx boards; the expansion of Virtual Desktop Infrastructure for graphics-intensive applications; the implementation of "Single Stop" technology to assist students in a wide range of areas of need in the Hudson Helps Resource Center, and others.



I would like to specifically thank Diana Perez, Academic Lab Manager, and her team, including Academic Lab Coordinator, Paola Valcarcel; Senior Lab Assistant, Kelly Garay; and their team of lab assistants. These dedicated colleagues provided direct support to our faculty and students in over 125 remote and on-ground classes, and conducted regular ITV training sessions.



During 2020-21, 45 new ITV instructional and meeting facilities were developed on the Journal Square and North Hudson campuses in order to share courses and enhance participation in meetings at both campuses. The new ITV technology has enabled the launch of nine additional full program offerings at the North Hudson Campus, which now include 19 programs that can be completed fully at North Hudson. Our technology in support of the College's mission has become nationally distinctive as a result of these significant improvements throughout the pandemic and beyond. All told, we have invested nearly \$10 million in technology since the beginning of the pandemic.

We thank CIO Patricia Clay; Interim Director of the Center for Online Learning, Dr. Robert Kahn; their colleagues, and so many others, for their leadership and support of these initiatives.

Our colleagues in the Office of Grants, the HCCC Foundation, our academic divisions, Student Affairs and Enrollment, and beyond secured record external funding in support of student success during 2020-21. These include grants and gifts to support STEM and ESL instruction, food pantries, apprenticeship programs, student services, Hudson Helps, emergency funding for students, DEI, and many others.

Thanks to the leadership of our colleagues in the Office of Financial Aid and beyond, we have realized significant improvements in student financial aid outcomes during the 2020-21 academic year. These include a 37% reduction in the number of students needing to apply for student loans, and a reduction of over \$1 million in student loan indebtedness. Further, the number of Community College Opportunity Grant financial aid awards increased by over 10%.

During 2020-21, 87.4% of HCCC students received some form of financial aid, including 4,620 Pell recipients receiving more than \$17 million in Pell funding. HCCC proudly leads New Jersey's 18 community colleges in the proportion of students eligible for and receiving Pell, TAG, and CCOG grant funding. A total of \$27.7 million in financial assistance from all sources was awarded to 5,874 HCCC students during the past year.



For the second consecutive year, our Board of Trustees approved a freeze in tuition and fee increases to support our students. And, recently, we erased every dollar of students' funding balances since the start of the pandemic in spring 2020. Nearly \$5 million in funding balance forgiveness was provided through federal stimulus funding to over 4,800 HCCC students. With this support, thousands of these students have enrolled or will enroll in fall and spring courses this year. I thank colleagues in our Business and Finance Division, including Veronica Zeichner, Geoff Sims, Sharon Wilson, and Leslie Lang for their conscientious administration of HEERF and other stimulus funding throughout the past year and beyond.

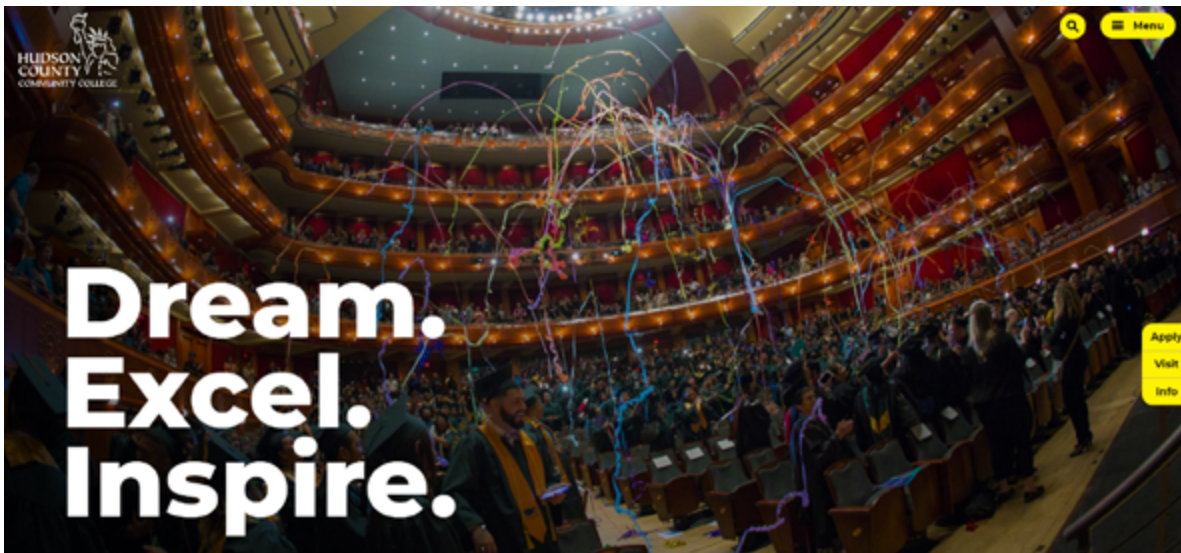
Our colleagues in the Division of Continuing Education and Workforce Development, led by Associate Vice President Lori Margolin, developed and refined a plethora of programs and services to support the economic and workforce needs of our region, including significant needs and challenges related to the pandemic. These initiatives resulted in a 70% increase in Continuing Education enrollment, generating a record of \$1.7 million in revenue and nearly \$700,000 in net revenue last year to further support our students and academic mission.

Under Lori Margolin's leadership, the College is offering the "Gateway to Innovation" project supported by an \$850,000 corporate grant from the JPMorgan Chase Foundation. The project is helping community members, many of whom experienced devastation during the pandemic, develop skills leading to jobs that pay family-sustaining wages. The project is also helping expand access to benefits for students, support alumni by connecting them to jobs and training, and align degree programs with in-demand skills in the tech and finance career pathways.

During 2020-21, Continuing Education and Workforce Development students were asked to take a nationally normed survey of student satisfaction developed by the Ruffalo Noel Levitz organization. This survey instrument is considered the national standard for benchmarking student satisfaction in higher education. The national average of community college student satisfaction for survey participants is 65%. HCCC students reported a 95% satisfied or very satisfied rating, up from 89% in 2019-20.

Our colleagues at the Center for Online Learning, working collaboratively with and supporting our academic and other teams, offered unprecedented services and programs to our entire College community during the past year and beyond. During the past academic year, three additional fully online programs were developed, bringing the total number of fully online programs to nine, with three additional fully online programs expected to be added in 2022. In addition, the Center for Online Learning team, in partnership with many faculty and staff colleagues, developed 14 new online courses last year, bringing the total number of courses now offered online to over 100.

We are working closely with the newly formed Hudson County Department of Housing and Community Reintegration, led by Frank Mazza, and the New Jersey Reentry Corporation, led by former New Jersey Governor James McGreevey, to offer virtual courses and programs in the Hudson



County Correctional Facility, and on-ground courses and programs at the new Reentry Training and Employment Center in Kearny beginning this fall.

A new Task Force, chaired by Dr. Heather DeVries and Lori Margolin, is coordinating both of these initiatives, working with Director Mazza, Governor McGreevey, their colleagues, our College leadership, faculty, staff, students, and others to consider all of the possibilities and plan early approaches to education for individuals who are or were justice involved.

Beginning this fall, HCCC will offer noncredit and credit on-ground classes and workforce training programs in the new Reentry Training and Employment Center in Kearny, where HCCC will be the primary educational provider. We will also deliver virtual noncredit and credit degree and workforce training programs to approximately 55 inmates at the Hudson County Correctional Facility beginning this fall. We are committed to growing and further developing these instructional programs and outreach services over time.

We have all benefitted greatly from the work of the Return to Campus Task Force, co-chaired by Lisa Dougherty and Heather DeVries. Lisa and Heather have provided collaborative and inclusive leadership for a cross-functional team of approximately 35 faculty, staff and students that has met weekly during the past year and throughout the pandemic. The RTC Task Force developed HCCC's Restart Plan that included extensive protocols, services, communication, and other considerations to

ensure the safety of our community and the continued success of our students to the fullest extent possible.

During 2020-21, our entire College community was engaged in the development of our new, 2021-24 HCCC Strategic Plan. We thank Dean of Academic Affairs and Assessment, Dr. Heather DeVries; Executive Director of Institutional Research and Planning, John Scanlon; a core planning team of 45 students, faculty, staff and community representatives; strategic planning consultant, Dr. Jim Davy; Trustees; Foundation Directors, and others in the development of our new plan. The plan contains five strategic directions that are aligned with Board of Trustee Goals, the Academic Master Plan, Student Success Action Plan, and PACDEI Goals and Action Plan. The nearly final College-wide strategic plan will be completed and submitted to the Board of Trustees for their approval next month.

We also celebrate the completion of the comprehensive redesign of the HCCC website, and the launch of the new site following two years of extensive work across the College. The beautiful new site was launched in early May 2021, and refinements and further development of the site continue. This, too, is the work of the entire college, but I want to especially thank Lisa Dougherty, Jen Christopher, Omar Williams, Kristofer Fontanez, Trisha Clay, and their colleagues for their extraordinary leadership and dedication.

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Over the past year, we completed a long process of recruiting a new Vice President for Advancement and Communications to lead and support significant increases in external funding over time in order to promote excellence and sustain the College's operations. Nicole Johnson will officially join our HCCC family on September 20. We look forward to the leadership Nicole will bring to developing and securing new resources to support our students and the College's mission, and sustain our progress in the long term.

Meanwhile, this was a record year for gifts and grants in several respects. Thanks to the leadership of Lori Margolin, Dr. Nicholas Chiaravalloti, and others, we successfully cultivated and received the College's largest-ever single corporate grant of \$850,000 from JPMorgan Chase. We received over \$6 million in grants with millions more in grant requests under review. Funders include state, federal and private organizations, and do not include federal or state stimulus funding. We especially thank Sean Kerwick and Nydia James in the Grants Office for their leadership and dedication.

We were awarded a record \$1.25 million in Carl D. Perkins grant funding from the State of New Jersey, again representing the largest Perkins allocation of all New Jersey community colleges. Thanks to the leadership of Assistant Professor, Dr. Azhar Mahmood; Associate Dean, Dr. Burl Yearwood; HCCC Grants staff; and Continuing Education colleagues, HCCC received its first grant from the prestigious National Science Foundation last spring. The \$300,000 grant is the first ever to be awarded directly to HCCC and will support the continued growth and development of the new Construction Management program.

And we received a \$500,000 Opportunity Grant for Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments from the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education. The grant project was spearheaded by Dr. Chris Conzen, Jennie Pu, and Natalia Vazquez-Bodkin, with assistance from Sean Kerwick, Nydia James, Yeury Pujols, Anna Krupitskiy, and others.



And in spite of the twin pandemics, our Early College programs continued to grow under the superior leadership of Dr. Christopher Conzen, Executive Director of the Secaucus Center and Early College Programs. Working with academic leaders and other faculty and staff colleagues, Dr. Conzen led the continued growth of HCCC's K-20 educational pathways, including curriculum mapping for Bayonne High School, Liberty Science High School, and Kearny High School. The Division of Business, Culinary Arts, and Hospitality Management expanded its Early College offerings to the West Orange School District, and entered into discussions with four additional area school districts for new Early College offerings. And 31 high school students graduated last May with their high school diplomas and an HCCC associate degree, a significant increase over the previous year and a number that will continue to grow.

Collectively, these outcomes are truly extraordinary. We have remained together as one community – as a family – to achieve these outcomes and support one another.

It is impossible for me to thank all of the thousands of faculty, staff and students, who truly deserve recognition, for their dedicated and tireless efforts to support one another. They include the scores of faculty, staff and students who have been working on-ground throughout the pandemic, and all of us who now begin or continue working on-ground to

support our students in the fall. They include the many faculty, staff and students who have worked long hours on our Return to Campus Task Force.

They include colleagues on our All College Council, in our Professional Associations, our President's Executive Council, Cabinet, our Student Government Association, Phi Theta Kappa, and many other student organizations, our Peer Leaders, and so many others who came together to work far outside of their comfort zones to rise to the challenges, support our students, and serve our community.

They include our Trustees and Foundation Directors, who have provided steadfast leadership, advocacy and support, in so many forms, every step of the way.

In addition to those already mentioned, there are several individuals and groups I would like to specifically thank for their extraordinary leadership and support, and, again, please forgive me as there are so many whom time will not allow me to acknowledge, but who are also deserving of our deep and sincere thanks and gratitude.

I want to thank Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment, Lisa Dougherty, and Dean of Academic Affairs and Assessment, Dr. Heather DeVries, who have co-chaired our Return to Campus Task Force. Lisa and Heather led initiatives to establish, implement, and communicate our approach, planning, and deliverables throughout the pandemic in support of students, safety, and our culture of care. They have led with unwavering dedication, transparency, and integrity.

We thank Associate Dean for Financial Aid, Sylvia Mendoza, and all members of her team, who developed complex procedures for distributing CARES Act, Hudson Helps and other funding to students in need, throughout the pandemic and continuing through the coming year and beyond.

We thank Dr. David Clark, June Barriere, Larry Anderson, Diana Galvez, Bernadette Barns, and the ITS Help Desk team, who have worked at the food pantries and managed the deployment of food, supplies, and Chromebook distribution throughout the pandemic.

We thank Vice President Veronica Zeichner and the Accounting and Finance team, who implemented e-student refunds and direct deposits to provide faster student access to needed funding, maintaining seamless student account processes throughout the pandemic.

We thank Dr. Sheila Dynan and Dr. Heather DeVries, who have so capably chaired our Student Success Dream Team, which has helped us keep a focus on student success throughout the pandemic and beyond. I thank the many members of our Dream Team and our Student Success Implementation Teams, who have worked tirelessly to develop our Student Success Action Plan that charts our goals and defines our focus for achieving continuous improvement in student retention, completion, transfer, and gainful employment. This work is informed by the development and consideration of data and best practices nationwide, and by our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in all forms.

We thank former Executive Director for Online Learning, Archana Bhandari, and Interim Director, Dr. Robert Kahn; CIO Trisha Clay and her colleagues in Information Technology Services; and all of their team members for their unrelenting dedication to substantive and comprehensive support for thousands of our community members in the areas of remote and online teaching, learning, services, and new uses of technology.

We thank former Dean of Libraries Jennie Pu and her team for their phenomenal work to expand access to library resources, deliver training and special programs, and support students in all of their educational endeavors.



We thank Executive Director of Engineering and Operations, Ilya Ashmyan; Custodial Manager, Julio Maldonado; Executive Director of Public Safety and Security, Jack Quigley; and their team members for their expert and conscientious efforts to ensure that our facilities and services are safe, organized and maintained in an environment of constantly changing needs and circumstances.

We also thank members of our President's Advisory Council on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, led so capably by Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Yeurys Pujols; and co-chairs of the President's Advisory Council on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Lilisa Williams, and, now, Director of the Educational Opportunity Fund, Jose Lowe, who succeeds Yeurys as PACDEI Co-Chair. We thank these exceptional colleagues, all members of PACDEI, and others across the College for their inspirational leadership and daily efforts to support community members as we have observed and grieved new acts of murder, racial injustice, and intolerance in our community and our nation that continue the long cadence of such violence and injustice.



We thank CARE Team co-chairs, Dr. David Clark and Assistant Professor Denise Rossilli, and team members Joseph Caniglia, Jennifer Christopher, Dr. Chris Conzen, Lisa Dougherty, Veronica Gerosimo, Anna Krupitskiy, Katherine Morales, Doreen Pontius, Yeurys Pujols, Jack Quigley, Jackie Safont, Kathleen Smith-Wenning, and our Social Work graduate interns. These caring colleagues have met weekly to support our students and other community members in myriad ways during this time of unprecedented challenge.



We thank Lisa Dougherty, Dr. Sheila Dynan, Matt Fessler, Sylvia Mendoza, Dr. David Clark, Veronica Gerosimo, Angela Tuzzo, Jose Lowe, and so many others in Student Affairs and Enrollment Services for their steadfast caring, and enduring support of our students, including prospective students, all hours of the day.

We thank Director of Communications Jennifer Christopher and her team for ensuring consistent messages to our College community, and a positive presence in our social media outlets and other media throughout the past year and throughout the pandemic.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank the officers and leaders of our All College Council and our Professional Associations, with whom my colleagues on the President's Executive Council and I work closely and collaboratively for the College community's welfare. We thank these colleagues for their leadership and support throughout the past year and throughout the pandemic, and for their ongoing collaboration and contributions to our participatory governance processes.

From the All College Council, we thank Chair, Dr. Peter Cronrath; Vice Chair, Sharon Daughtry; and Secretary, Karen Galli. We also thank All College Council Sub-Committee Chairs, including College Life Committee Co-chairs Jose Lowe and Kyle Wolley; Space and Facilities Committee Co-chairs Eric Adamson and Faiza Fayyaz; Development and Planning Committee Chair Shannonine Caruana; Technology Committee Chair Jing Yang; and Student Affairs Committee Chair Heather Conners. Elections for Chair and Co-Chair of the new Academic Senate will be held at the first meeting in September. We also thank last year's ACC Officers, Lauren Drew, Angela Tuzzo, and Kathleen Smith Wenning, for their superior and dedicated leadership and service.

From the HCCC Professional Association, we thank President Michael Ferlise; Vice President Dorothy Anderson; Treasurer Claudia Delgado; Corresponding Secretary Tony Acevedo; and Recording Secretary, Dr. Sirhan Abdullah.

From the Academic Administrators' Association, we thank President Jose Lowe; Vice President Christine Petersen; and Secretary Angela Tuzzo.

From the Support Staff Federation, we thank President Dorothea Graham-King; Vice President Patrick DelPiano; Treasurer Daisy Baiza; and Recording Secretary Hope Guirantes.

And from the Adjunct Faculty Federation, we thank President Nancy Lasek, Vice President Qamar Raza, and Secretary Raffi Manjikian.

Valued colleagues, thank you for your dedicated and caring leadership!

I would also like to recognize several of our student leaders, and I regret that I do not have enough time to thank everyone who deserves recognition.

We thank HCCC Peer Leaders who are helping welcome all of our new students: Ahmed Abdelkader, Jay Singh, and Igor Tserkun;

We thank EOF Peer Leaders, who have supported our EOF Summer Program Scholars: Marlenne Andalia; Omar Law, Victoria Ferreira-Silva, and Chrystele Reid;

Our Phi Theta Kappa Executive Board: President Racco Angelo Maristela; Vice President Angel Beebe; Vice President of Service, Walid Achkir; Vice President of Scholarship, Jeffrey LeVine; Vice President of Public Relations, Marlenne Andalia; Vice President of Leadership, Iham Haider; and Vice President of Fellowship, Christian Rodriguez.

We thank and so value Phi Theta Kappa Chapter Advisor, Professor Ted Lai, whose extraordinary leadership and support for our students is nothing short of life-changing and transformational.

We also acknowledge and thank our 2021-22 Student Government Association Executive Board: President, Angel Beebe; Director of Finances, Racco Maristela; Director of Record Keeping, Christian Rodriguez; Director of Inter-Club Council, Marlenne Andalia; Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Yasmeen Abdelaziz; Senators, Ahmed Abdelkader and Jay Singh; and Alumni Advisors, Diana Gomes and Jasmin Ngin.

We also thank all of our student employees, including work study students, our student academic coaches, tutors, and so many others.

Very importantly, I also want to thank Dr. Sheila Dynan, Dr. David Clark, Veronica Gerosimo, Angela Tuzzo, and all of their team members, who support and mentor our students with superior dedication and excellence. They lead the finest student and academic support, and student life and leadership programs I have observed in my forty-one year higher education career.

I also thank members of the Cabinet, with whom I work so closely. To a person, these colleagues have offered unceasing and selfless leadership and support over the past year, throughout the pandemic, and beyond. I thank Dr. Nicholas Chiaravalloti, Lisa Dougherty, Dr. Darryl Jones, Anna Krupitskiy, Jennifer Oakley, Yeurys Pujols, Veronica Zeichner, and, soon, Nicole Johnson.

In addition, I thank all members of the President's Executive Council, and Marcella Williams and Alexa Riano in my office, who lead and support our community conscientiously and with the greatest caring and skill.

Thank you, gifted colleagues, and so many others unmentioned, who make our mission of life-changing and transformational opportunity possible!

As we often say, "It Takes a Village," and our Village remains united in its care, appreciation, and support for all community members. I look forward to working with all of you in the coming year to serve our students and our community, and to realize our collective vision and aspirations for Hudson County Community College.

As we begin a new year together – new in so many ways – we continue our mission-central work as a community and family that focuses on student success; on diversity, equity and inclusion; our culture of care; and other related priorities and values.

Going forward, our work this year will include several interrelated priorities:

- Considering lessons learned during the twin pandemics, including continued innovation in how we serve students and our College's mission;
- Continuous improvement in the opportunities for online and remote learning, and the quality of the online experience, specifically informed by our collective experience since March 2020;
- Remaining laser focused on our efforts to promote student success – guided by our work with Achieving the Dream and our Student Success Action Plan – including continuous improvement in how we address student needs; holistic supports; how we remove barriers to student retention, degree completion, transfer and gainful employment; and how we address equity and student achievement gaps;
- Addressing our shared values and goals for reaching new levels of excellence in support of diversity, equity, and inclusion in all forms, informed by the new DEI Action Plan and the overarching goals developed by PACDEI following their now two years of leadership and service in this area of institutional priority; and,
- Integrating and acting upon other vital planning over the past year, including our new Mission, Vision, and Values statements, and the new College Strategic Plan.

As I begin my fourth year at HCCC, what continues to inspire me most is the commitment everyone here has to our students. We have the honor of working in an institution that changes and transforms lives, and it is clear that our core common value – what everyone here champions – is our students and their welfare.



In spite of the unprecedented challenges of the past year and beyond – particularly the continuing pervasive challenges of the pandemic, coupled with racism, violence and intolerance that were manifest so brutally, both locally and across the nation – the 2020-21 academic year was also a year of progress and significant outcomes for HCCC and our students, thanks to the efforts of everyone in our community.

Over the past year, we celebrated nationally distinctive student, faculty, staff and trustee accomplishments and recognitions.

We celebrated HCCC May graduates, Adoum Allamine and Pedro Moranchel, for their transformative achievement of having been awarded 2021 Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Transfer Scholarships. Adoum and Pedro are two of just 72 community college students from across the nation to have been selected as this year's Cooke Scholars. This marks the third consecutive year in which HCCC students have been selected as Cooke Scholars, and the first time our College has had two students selected in the same year.

We further celebrated the selection of Pedro Moranchel as one of just eight students from across the United States to be named a 2021 Dream Scholar by Achieving the Dream.

We celebrated a 9.4% increase in the overall graduation rate in the Division of Nursing and Health Sciences over the previous year, with 248 graduates this year.

We celebrated a 5% Educational Opportunity Fund student enrollment increase in fall 2020, and a 14% increase in spring 2021, in spite of the twin pandemics.

We celebrated recognition of HCCC's Office of Human Resources, the recipient of the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources 2021 Eastern Region Excellence Award. Our Human Resources staff donated their award honorarium of \$1,000 to the Hudson Helps Resource Center clothing closet.

We celebrated the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund's sponsorship of Hudson County Community College to participate in a fully funded, four-year program with the Jed Foundation that will begin in fall 2021. JED is a nonprofit organization that seeks to protect emotional health and prevent suicide for our nation's teens and young adults.

We further celebrated the work of Associate Director of Mental Health and Wellness, Doreen Pontius, and our Mental Health Counseling and Wellness team members, for their achievement of "Stigma Free Campus" commendation by the



Hudson County Department of Health and Human Services, and the Hudson County Board of Commissioners.

We celebrated the Middle States Commission on Higher Education's invitation to Dr. Heather DeVries, Yeurys Pujols, and John Scanlon to offer an HCCC presentation in the Spring 2021 Middle States Webinar Series. Entitled "Continuing Momentum After Re-Affirmation: A Case Study in Applying Change Management Principles," the presentation described HCCC's focus on student success, and diversity, equity and inclusion, from the completion of the College's Middle States reaffirmation of accreditation in 2019, through joining Achieving the Dream, the development of PACDEI, and our current strategic planning process.

We further celebrated the invitation of the College and University Professional Association to Anna Krupitskiy, Yeurys Pujols, and Lilisa Williams, to present "Improving Engagement and Diversity by Promoting a Culture of Inclusivity" at the CUPA-HR spring 2021 conference. The presentation highlighted the collaborative approach of the HCCC community through transparent leadership, new policies, diversity recruitment efforts, and related programs and services.

We celebrated the election of HCCC Trustee Pamela Gardner to represent the northeastern United States on the Association of Community College Trustees Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

We celebrated the development of a national presentation on PACDEI to conclude ACCT's two-day Virtual Diversity Institute offered in June 2021. As a result of Trustee Gardner's sharing of our DEI model and initiatives with the ACCT Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, ACCT President and CEO, Dr. Noah Brown, invited HCCC to share the College's DEI model as a best practice in the concluding session of this national convening. We congratulate and thank Trustee Gardner, Yeurys Pujols, Eric Adamson, and Alumni Representative to the Board of Trustees, Koral Booth, who joined me in making this presentation.

We celebrate the upcoming presentation by Trustee Gardner, Yeurys Pujols, and Amaalah Ogburn at ACCT's annual Leadership Congress in San Diego this October. They will discuss our DEI goals and initiatives.

We celebrated the first-ever, virtual Foundation Gala that raised over \$150,000 for student scholarships last December. Organized by the HCCC Foundation –with the strong support and leadership of Dr. Nicholas Chiaravalloti and Development Assistant Mirta Sanchez, and delivered by the HCCC Culinary Arts Institute – the Gala honored former Business, Culinary Arts, and Hospitality Management Associate Dean, Paul Dillon.

We celebrated the selection of Natalie Akel to become HCCC's inaugural Student Poet Laureate in spring 2021. We thank Assistant Professor of English, Eric Adamson, for developing this new annual tradition.

We celebrated the selection of Hudson County Community College to receive the ACCT Northeast Region Equity Award in recognition of the College's leadership and excellence in the areas of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The award will be presented at the October ACCT Leadership Congress in San Diego, CA.

Recently, I had a long telephone conversation with Lenore Pearlstein, Publisher of *INSIGHT Into Diversity*, the largest and probably most well-respected national diversity and inclusion publication and website in higher education. Hudson County Community College has been selected to receive the *INSIGHT Into Diversity* 2021 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award. The award "recognizes colleges and universities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion." HCCC is one of only 10 or so community colleges nationally to be recognized this year.

During our conversation, Ms. Pearlstein was very specific and congratulatory in her remarks about what we are doing at HCCC to promote and support diversity, equity and inclusion. She noted that our receipt of this award will gain HCCC significant national recognition and will be very helpful in future grant applications.

There are many more outcomes we realized together and celebrate, which time will not allow me to mention. All of these accomplishments reflect the dedication and commitment of our entire community to excellence, student success, and diversity, equity and inclusion, which are central to our mission. Very importantly, these accomplishments are focused on our shared HCCC values.

At HCCC, every person matters! We celebrate every community member's contributions, which, collectively, lead to our mutual and shared success.

Community colleges are uniquely positioned to address many of the nation's highest priorities, challenges, and aspirations. We are a gateway to the American Dream for the millions of students who join our communities, traverse our pathways, and realize transformative outcomes through their community college experience.

It is particularly inspiring and fitting that Hudson County Community College continues to thrive in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty! May she, and we, continue to bring light, inspiration, and caring to all of our people!

And let us remember the words of Nelson Mandela that are inscribed on the plaque at the entrance to our new Student Center: "Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world."

Colleagues and friends, I pledge to do everything I can as your president to support our collective efforts to continue to grow and excel as an institution that is committed to serving our students, our community, Hudson County, the surrounding region, and beyond. I am honored to have the opportunity to work side by side with all of you!

As we continue to strive for excellence during and beyond the pandemic, I look forward to our close-knit work together in the coming year to support our students and our mission. Moreover, I look forward to continuing to celebrate our successes, and work through our challenges, as one extended and caring family.

Indeed, Hudson is family.

"Hudson is Home!"

Happy New Year!



MISSION

Hudson County Community College provides its diverse communities with inclusive, high-quality educational programs and services that promote student success and upward social and economic mobility.

VISION

As one of the nation's leading and most diverse urban community colleges, we aspire to offer consistently best-practice, transformative educational and economic opportunities for our students and all residents of Hudson County.

VALUES

Hudson County Community College is committed to these values:

Holistic Services

Understanding through Data

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Student Success

Open to All

National Distinction

Collaboration and Engagement

Academic Excellence

Responsible Stewardship of Resources

Ethical Behavior, Integrity, and Transparency

Support of Innovation and Leadership