



**State of College Address**  
**Christopher M. Reber, President**  
**College Service Day**  
**Wednesday, August 23, 2023**



Good morning! It is wonderful to be back together again with all of you as we begin a new academic year and a new chapter in the story and life of the College. It is a great pleasure and honor to join you this morning!

I thank all who have planned today's activities, with special thanks to Dr. Darryl Jones, Dr. Paula Roberson, and all of the members of the 2023 College Service Day Planning Committee. Thank you, Domonique Callens, Joseph Caniglia, Dr. David Clark, Veronica Gerosimo, Andrea Goodwin, Linda Guastini, Dr. Darryl Jones, Dr. Ara Karakashian, Karen MacLaughlin, Dr. Paula Roberson, Willie Shirer, Kurt Sippel, Dr. Catherine Sirangelo, Angela Tuzzo, Dr. Alison Wakefield, and Dr. Burl Yearwood. For anyone I've missed, thank you also! We extend our sincere gratitude to all involved.

Allow me to review some highlights of the last year and our shared aspirations for the new year and going forward. I would like to begin by recognizing and

thanking the 2023-24 officers and leaders of our All College Council and our Professional Associations, with whom my colleagues on the Cabinet, President's Executive Council, and all of us work closely and collaborate for the College community's welfare.

We thank these colleagues for their leadership and support, and look forward to our shared contributions to the College's participatory governance process in the coming year.

From the All College Council, we thank Dr. Christopher Cody, Raffi Manjikian, and Sarah Teichman.

From the HCCC Professional Association, we thank Michael Ferlise, Lauren Drew, Claudia Delgado, Dr. Sirhan Abdullah, and Gilda Reyes.

From the Academic Administrative Association, we thank Christine Petersen, Dr. Chris Conzen, Jose Lowe, and Angela Tuzzo.

From the Support Staff Federation, we thank Patrick DelPiano, Felicia Allen, Tess Wiggins, Marta Cimillo, and Jacky Delemos.

And from the Adjunct Faculty Federation, we thank Nancy Hynes Lasek and Qamar Raza.

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

I also thank members of the Cabinet, with whom I work so closely. To a person, these colleagues offer unceasing, caring, inspirational, and selfless leadership and support. I thank Dr. Nicholas Chiaravalloti, Patricia Clay, Dr. Heather DeVries, Dr. Lisa Dougherty, Nicole Johnson, Dr. Darryl Jones, Anna Krupitskiy, Lori Margolin, Dr. Yeurys Pujols, Alexa Riano, John Scanlon, and Veronica Zeichner. Thank you, senior leaders and valued colleagues!

And I thank all members of the President's Executive Council, who lead and support our community conscientiously and with the greatest caring and skill.

The theme for today is "Igniting Employee Engagement." What an appropriate theme for our time together today as we all take stock of the past year and beyond, and look forward to the coming year and our future! Thanks to the engagement of everyone, HCCC continues to achieve excellence in the delivery of our mission.

Recently, I sent my "2022-23 Annual Report of Goals and Outcomes Under My Leadership" to the Board of Trustees and the HCCC family. Very importantly, this is a report of *college-wide* initiatives and outcomes in service to our overarching priorities of student success; and diversity, equity, and inclusion. In my introduction to the report, I quoted Helen Keller, who wisely stated, "Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much."

The phenomenal achievements of the past year are truly a manifestation of "Igniting Employee Engagement." I'd like to review a number of outcomes over the last year and beyond that are strong examples of the HCCC family's commitment to our shared mission, vision, and values in serving our students and communities.

There is so much to say, and not enough time to say nearly everything! I have chosen examples that illustrate a broad range of best-practice initiatives and outcomes – *across the college* – that we celebrate today. Please forgive me for many outstanding achievements that will not be mentioned purely due to time constraints. They are all highly meaningful.

To begin, a central point of pride: In May, we celebrated 1,505 HCCC graduates at Red Bull Arena, a record number of graduates in the history of the College!

Our ATD *Dream Team*, led by Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Assessment, Dr. Heather DeVries – and colleagues and students across the College – continues to advance and achieve the goals of the HCCC Student Success Action Plan and beyond.

We celebrate phenomenal accomplishments in our continued development and expansion of the “Hudson Scholars” program. Under the leadership of Director of Advisement, Dr. Gretchen Schulthes, and Director of Institutional Research, John Urgola, and with the engagement of colleagues throughout the college, Hudson Scholars has had an unprecedented impact on the retention of all students, and, particularly, on students from traditionally underrepresented groups.

Participation in Hudson Scholars contributed to a 73% reduction in variance for fall-to-fall retention across racial and ethnic groups. Fall-to-fall retention of Hudson Scholars Latino students was 46% greater than the retention rate of HCCC Latino students historically, and African American student retention was 83% greater.

Traditionally underrepresented students in the Hudson Scholars Program were 233% more likely to graduate in two years, and approximately 130 students from the first Hudson Scholars cohort graduated in May. *More* students were provided *more equitable* opportunities for success as a result of Hudson Scholars, and the scale-up of this program continues.

During the past year, we awarded over \$524,000 in financial stipends to 953 Hudson Scholars students who reached established academic milestones. Thanks to the strong support and engagement of faculty across the College, more than 11,000 student progress reports were submitted to Hudson Scholars counselors, offering important feedback and targeted suggestions for supporting students in the program. “Hudson Scholars” continues to be a significant point of pride for Hudson County Community College.

In the coming year, we are proud to launch the further scale-up of the program through our innovative Hudson Scholars Faculty Mentor initiative. We thank 14 pioneering full-time faculty for stepping up to coach and mentor third-year Hudson Scholars. Our new Faculty Mentors are Robin Anderson, Jonathan Cabrera, Sharon Daughtry, Dr. Nadia Hedhli, Gabriel Holder, Dr. Jerry

Lamb, Craig McLaughlin, Raffi Manjikian, Dr. Jihan Nakhla, Dr. Raffaella Pernice, Josue Perez, Laura Samuelsen, Jeremiah Teipen, and Elana Winslow. Thank you, faculty pioneers!

We thank Michael Ferlise, and the officers and members of the Professional Association, for their full support, leadership, and partnership in this exciting Hudson Scholars project. We all agree that, if successful, the Faculty Mentor structure might completely reform our academic advising model and be memorialized in our next faculty contract.

As we start the new academic year and the third year of Hudson Scholars, we are deeply engaged college-wide in scaling Hudson Scholars and its four pillars to all HCCC students taking 6, or 9, academic credits. We are currently considering which threshold to use. What we now call “Hudson Scholars” will eventually become the model for nearly all HCCC students. When this happens, the title of “Hudson Scholars” will likely disappear.

We then envision focusing on how to apply lessons learned to supporting part-time students taking less than 6 or 9 credits. We are also considering how to expand our four Hudson Scholars pillars to returning adults and fully online students, and how the four Hudson Scholars pillars can be applied to specialty programs that currently are not part of the Hudson Scholars Program; namely, Nursing, ESL, and Culinary Arts.

The four “Hudson Scholars” pillars are:

- Personal and intensive academic advising, coaching, and mentoring;
- Financial stipends awarded for achievement of specific monthly academic milestones;
- High-impact educational experiences such as undergraduate research, internships, field trips, student leadership, and many others; and,
- Systemic use of an early alert system to inform advisors, mentors, and coaches of concerns and student accomplishments as soon as they surface.

Meanwhile, our Educational Opportunity Fund, or EOF Program, which has inspired the Hudson Scholars Program, was expanded to the North Hudson Campus last year. 263 students participated in EOF last year, a 23% increase. We thank and congratulate EOF Director Jose Lowe, Assistant Director Tejal Parekh, Victoria Migochi, Eric Okai, Rosa Perez, and other colleagues for their phenomenal leadership and support of our students.

Our systemic efforts to promote student success and completion will be enhanced by the college-wide implementation of the new EAB Navigate student success platform. This best-

practice platform offers myriad capabilities to engage students through timely communication and analysis of needs and supports to provide individualized success.

We thank Dr. Devries and Associate Vice President for Institutional Research and Planning John Scanlon for developing a successful application to *Achieving the Dream* for ATD Leader College status, which was announced at the 2023 Dream Conference in Chicago. Heather and John are already working on upcoming applications for ATD Leader College of Distinction, and Leah Meyer Austin awards.

We thank Vice President Dr. Lisa Dougherty, Associate Vice President John Scanlon, Dean of Student Success Dr. Bernadette So, Director of Advisement Dr. Gretchen Schulthes, Director of Transfer Pathways Jennifer Valcarcel, Dean of Enrollment Services Matt Fessler, and their colleagues on the HCCC CONNECT team for their development of a robust new transfer pathway program with NJCU. This is the outcome of the Aspen-AASCU Transfer Intensive, a year-long, grant-funded national best practice collaboration. We continue to analyze transfer data patterns between our two institutions in addition to data to support expansion of the CONNECT model to other four-year partner colleges and universities.

We all value and thank the HCCC Care Team, led by Dr. David Clark, which met weekly or bi-weekly throughout the year to review Care and Concern forms and develop plans to address reported concerns and support those in need. We all cherish the work and caring of Director of Mental Health Counseling and Wellness Doreen Pontius and her team, now including 12 MSW graduate interns who support students individually, in groups, and through programming. During the past year, we added two full-time social workers, one at Journal Square and one at the North Hudson campus, to further support students.

Doreen and her colleagues continue to offer employee and student training focused on mental health and wellness. And during the past year, the Mental Health Counseling and Wellness team offered more than 2,500 individual and group counseling sessions. Under Doreen's leadership and with the full support of her colleagues, HCCC continues to benefit from the College's engagement with JED Campus. A nationwide initiative of the Jed Foundation, our grant-funded partnership is designed to guide schools through a collaborative process of comprehensive systems, programs, and policy development with customized support to build on existing student mental health, substance abuse, and suicide prevention efforts.

Outcomes to date have included an improved staff member to student ratio; the addition of crisis information on all Student ID cards; development of a mental health leave policy; inclusion of a mental health statement on course syllabi; engagement with student clubs and the coordination of a new Active Minds Club; promotion of enhanced understanding of drug use and recovery; additional community partnerships, and others.

Doreen and her team were awarded over \$306,000 through the “Mental Health in Higher Education: Community Provider Partnerships and Professional Development Innovation Grant.” This grant funding will be used to support HCCC mental health community partners and provide professional development opportunities for HCCC family members.

During the pandemic, the Office of Financial Aid dispersed nearly \$25 million to students in need through federal stimulus grants. In addition, nearly \$200,000 was awarded last year to 1,335 students who provided proof of vaccination and/or booster shots. Since the program’s inception during the pandemic, over \$1.1 million was awarded to 8,769 students who received vaccinations and boosters.

With the depletion of CARES funding, we are developing processes and funding streams to continue awarding emergency grants for students in need. These processes will be coordinated by the Hudson Helps Resource Center so that students’ full and comprehensive needs can continue to be assessed and addressed. Our College’s commitment to this funding demonstrates our commitment to supporting the whole student. We thank Hudson Helps Resource Center Director Katherine Morales and her incredible team for their leadership and support of our students!

And we all are so proud of the “Food Fuels Minds” project led and facilitated by Professors Laurie Riccadonna and Jeremiah Teipen, Hudson Helps Resource Center Director Katherine Morales, and advanced by faculty, staff and students of the Hudson Helps Resource Center, Dineen Hull Gallery, and the Studio Arts program. Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, this ambitious project included artwork created by HCCC art and design students. The project utilized words and art about food, hunger, struggle, and success, culminating with art displays on the windows of the Gabert Library and the third-floor art wall at the North Hudson Campus.

During 2022-23, Dean of Financial Aid Sylvia Mendoza and her colleagues awarded Community College Opportunity Grant (CCOG) funding to 1,298 HCCC students, who received nearly \$3 million in dispersed CCOG funding. This again represents the most students served and dollars awarded of New Jersey’s 18 community colleges. Further, over \$30 million in financial aid was awarded to 7,432 individual students during 2022-23, including scholarships, grants, and loans.

The nationally distinctive work of the President’s Advisory Council on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and the Office of DEI, continues to inspire and engage all of us. We were so proud to host Rev. Al Sharpton and Dr. Jelani Cobb at the DEI Summer Retreat a few weeks ago, and we have all benefited from the myriad programs and initiatives of PACDEI. We thank PACDEI co-chairs, Raffi Manjikian and Natalia Vazquez-Bodkin, Dr. Yeurys Pujols, and everyone involved in this work.

We further thank Assistant Professor of Education, Dr. Angela Pack, and her colleagues for the growth and development of the PACDEI Student Action Group, through which students identify their own areas of interest and focus before developing interventions to address them. Last fall, the PACDEI Student Action Group secured over 1,200 signatures from students, faculty, and staff to request that the College officially recognize the observance of the Muslim holiday, Eid Ul Fitr, and the Hindu holiday, Diwali. The addition of these holidays into the academic calendar were approved by the Board of Trustees in February 2023.

HCCC's engagement in DEI supported our selection to participate in the national Racial Equity Leadership Academy, or RELA, a joint initiative of the University of Southern California and *Achieving the Dream*. This one-year program includes various planning meetings; conceptualization of a logic model; and a road map of interventions to address a Racial Equity Change Effort identified by the College. HCCC's Racial Equity Change Effort in this project focuses on increasing the retention and completion rates of Black and African American male students. Members of our RELA core team are team leader, Dr. Yeury Pujols; Dr. Darryl Jones; Anna Krupitskiy; Dr. Jeanne Baptiste; and me. In addition, our expanded on-campus RELA team also includes Dr. Christopher Conzen; Dr. Heather DeVries; Dr. Lisa Dougherty; Dr. Floyd Jeter; Dr. Jerry Lamb; John Scanlon; Dr. Gretchen Schulthes; and John Urgola.

We celebrate Dr. Paula Roberson's leadership and development of the College's Second Annual Teaching and Learning Symposium on Social Justice in Higher Education offered last March. The week-long virtual synchronous symposium featured 30 individual sessions, 53 presenters, and over 900 participants from 132 colleges across 35 states and several foreign countries. Thirty-five New Jersey institutions and representatives of 32 municipal, civic, and social service agencies participated. This annual convening has become a national hallmark program and a great point of pride for Hudson County Community College!

In May, we were proud and honored to welcome colleagues across the College, community members, and individuals from multiple states to our hosting of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Creative Placemaking Summit; and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities "HACU on the Road" at HCCC. The events were attended by hundreds of participants. We thank Vice President Yeury Pujols and many other HCCC family members for their leadership and participation.

The College continues to benefit from the implementation and positive outcomes of our \$3 million, five-year Title V Grant, "La Puerta Dorada/The Golden Door." Outcomes include significant ESL curriculum revisions and improvements, Summer Bridge programs, Skills for Success courses, hiring of ESL Academic Coaches, creation of the ESL Resource Center, and ongoing ESL Resource Center workshops, among others.

This is exceedingly important work, and, as in all things that make a monumental impact, it “Takes a Village.” We thank Tahrier Ahmad, Patrizia Barroero, Domonique Callens, Joseph Caniglia, Dr. Heather DeVries, Lauren Drew, Kenny Fabara, Matt Fessler, Nydia James, Dr. Darryl Jones, Anna Krupitskiy, Dr. Linda Miller, Jed Palmer, Stephanie Pina, Dr. Paula Roberson, Nicole Sanchez, John Scanlon, Michelle Vera, Dr. Alison Wakefield, Irma Williams, and Saliha Yagoubi. Thank you, dedicated colleagues, and all others who contribute to this transformative work!

We were all delighted and honored to receive an invitation to participate as a pioneering college in New Jersey’s trailblazing “Pay it Forward Fund” program announced by Governor Phil Murphy at HCCC last summer. The program helps close equity gaps by providing students from low-income backgrounds with opportunities to enroll in academic and training programs that lead to gainful employment. Through “Pay It Forward,” HCCC nursing students receive no-fee, no-interest loans and living stipends to help cover students’ expenses outside of the classroom.

Last year, HCCC’s Office of Financial Aid certified 46 nursing students to receive funding through Pay it Forward, and 19 of these students graduated in May. We thank Dean of Nursing and Health Professions Dr. Catherine Sirangelo, our dedicated nursing and health professions faculty and staff, Dean of Financial Aid Sylvia Mendoza and her team, Associate Vice President Dr. Heather DeVries, and others for their support of this new opportunity for our students.

During 2022-23, we experienced continued improvement in the College’s accessibility and accommodation services for students and others in need. We thank Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Dr. Yeury Pujols, Interim Director of Accessibility Services Karine Davis, and colleagues across the college. Accommodations were provided last year to 482 students to promote their success and help advance their goals.

Services included alternative textbooks for those who are visually impaired, weekly audio files, and readers; testing accommodations including readers, scribes, and proctors for remote and on-ground courses; note-takers for students in over 180 remote and on-ground courses; captioning services for deaf and hard-of-hearing students; and accommodation support for a multitude of projects and events such as Commencement, Open Houses, Care Team, and many others. Services were provided to students in remote, hybrid, and in-person modalities. Going forward, we strive to serve at least 20% of HCCC students, a national benchmark provided by our accessibility consultant, Salome Heyward and Associates. A national search for the currently vacant Director of Accessibility Services position is currently underway.

The quality and quantity of offerings through our Center for Online Learning continue to grow and develop at rapid speed under the leadership of Executive Director Matthew LaBrake and his dedicated team, along with faculty and staff across the college. Students who study online are now automatically enrolled in the Hudson Online Student Orientation, a self-paced course that introduces students to the Canvas platform and multiple aspects of online learning. During



2022-23, 1,783 students were enrolled in the Online Orientation. Further, the Center for Online Learning produced a series of Introduction to Canvas videos that were developed around faculty observations regarding areas of difficulty experienced by online students. In fall 2022, the videos were updated to include Spanish and Arabic captions.

This series is now a component of CSS-100, our College Student Success course. Approximately 71% of HCCC students take CSS-100 during their first semester. The Center for Online Learning has also created a new webpage to help students understand how to be a successful learner within each instructional modality.

During the past year, Associate Vice President for Information Technology Services, Patricia Clay, and colleagues across the College led and supported the continued development of technology plans for improvements in all campus facilities including the new HCCC Tower. Projects last year included the upgrading of college-wide WiFi and telephone systems to employ the latest technology, and the development of a colocation site for College servers and services in preparation for a future data center migration required by the eventual decommissioning of 70 Sip Avenue.

We thank Associate Director for Open Educational Resources Michael Whelpley and colleagues across the College for the growth and development of Open Educational Resources and textbook-free courses and programs. Dean of College Libraries John Hernandez and his colleagues have assisted many faculty in finding zero-cost and low-cost textbook alternatives for their courses. In summer, fall, and winter of 2022, 175 sections of 32 different courses were offered with zero-cost textbooks. Total enrollment in these courses was 1,616 students who saved an estimated \$161,000 in textbook costs. Last spring, 148 sections of 32 individual courses were offered with zero-cost textbooks, serving 2,017 students who saved an estimated \$201,700.

We have begun tagging OER course sections on the course schedule so that students can easily identify zero-cost course sections available to them. During 2022-23, 344 zero-cost textbook sections were offered, and this number is expected to increase each semester until every course and every program has a zero-cost option. This is a charge of the newly appointed OER Task Force.

We thank and congratulate Associate Vice President for Institutional Research and Planning, John Scanlon, and his colleagues for their hosting of the second annual HCCC Data Summit last spring. This college-wide convening focused on the “big picture” of institutional data. Feedback from the Summit confirmed areas of focus for the coming year. These include democratization of data access, and offering more professional development to support faculty and staff in data literacy and assessment strategies.

Associate Vice President for Continuing Education and Workforce Development Lori Margolin and her team continue to offer extraordinary and nationally distinctive programs and approaches to education and training, including a growing array of micro-credentials nested in degree pathways and serving thousands of students and community members. Continuing Education and Workforce Development is an entrepreneurial engine for HCCC's offering of cutting-edge, transferrable, and stackable credentials that often meet and exceed industry-recognized standards and requirements.

Recently, HCCC completed its invited participation in the national Noncredit and Credit Alignment Lab. HCCC is one of only fourteen colleges nationwide that were selected to participate in this best-practice program funded by the Association of Community College Trustees and Education Strategy Group.

Lori Margolin, Anita Belle, their team, and community and business leaders have collaborated to offer the HCCC Gateway to Innovation Program, which was selected as a Top Ten Program in the Bellwether workforce development category last spring. The program's components include basic support for students through enhanced access to benefits and one-on-one financial counseling; recession-resistant employment and continuous learning opportunities for HCCC alumni; expanded access to short-term health care, IT, and finance credentials for dislocated low-wage workers from retail, service, and hospitality sectors, and low-wage essential workers among communities of color; and deepened engagement with employers in finance, insurance, IT, and health care sectors to create and develop finance and information technology career pathways.

Nearly 80% of students enrolled completed GTI training. Of the students completing the program, 73% continued on to earn credentials, and 83% have been placed into employment. To date, 354 individuals have participated in GTI credential, certification, or licensure programs in health care, finance, and technology. Since the program's inception, 2,296 people have screened for benefits through "Single Stop;" 110 students have participated in the new Financial Counseling Passport Program; 694 HCCC alumni have been served; 215 students have enrolled in health care training programs; and 68 new employers have been engaged to bring total involvement to 169 employers.

The Gateway to Innovation program has been funded through a \$1 million grant from the JPMorgan Chase Foundation, an additional \$1 million in federal stimulus funding, and \$253,000 in New Jersey grant funding in addition to employer scholarships.

Continuing Education and Workforce Development enrollment saw double-digit enrollment growth in 2022-23. We thank and congratulate Lori Margolin, Anita Belle, Chastity Farrell, Catherina Mirasol, and the entire CEWD team. CEWD also achieved continued growth in the

number and scope of programs and partners that provide transformational opportunities for students.

During 2022-23, HCCC continued to benefit from an upward trend of college-wide enrollment growth thanks to efforts under the leadership of Dean of Enrollment Services Matt Fessler, the Enrollment Management Council, colleagues in Continuing Education and Workforce Development, Dr. Christopher Conzen and his Early College team, and the entire college community. Enrollment is always the outcome of the engagement of the entire HCCC family.

Enrollment in credit programs increased by 1% in 2023, while Continuing Education and Workforce Development enrollment increased by 38%. Total unduplicated credit and non-credit enrollment increased by 6.71%. The College served 10,148 unduplicated credit students and 9,640 continuing education and workforce development students, bringing total 2022-23 student enrollment to 19,788 students.

Very importantly, *new student* credit enrollment increased by 18% over the past year, and Early College enrollment increased by 37%. Total applications received increased by 32% over 2021-22. Significant data points further include an increase in the *college-wide* three-year student completion rate from 18.4% to 21.9%, and 8.6% completion rate improvements for Academic Foundations Math and English courses. These positive trends bode well for continued incremental enrollment growth going forward.

During 2022-23, Dr. Heather DeVries and Lori Margolin led continued growth in HCCC's programs that serve incarcerated, reentry, and court-involved individuals in partnership with the New Jersey Reentry Corporation, the Hudson County Department of Housing and Community Reintegration, and others throughout the College and community. More than 169 students have participated in the associate degree and workforce development courses offered in the Hudson County Correctional Facility. The students pursuing an associate degree have earned a collective GPA of 3.3 in the six semesters since the program's inception. Two incarcerated students graduated with an associate degree and participated virtually in our May 2023 Commencement. We are told these are the first two individuals in the United States to earn a degree while incarcerated in a county jail. Twenty of the students who began their programs while incarcerated have now been released into the community, and six are currently enrolled at HCCC.

Similarly, HCCC's partnership with the New Jersey Reentry Corporation has continued to grow since its inception in 2021. To date, more than 94 reentry students have enrolled in HCCC programs including the Hot Foods Proficiency Certificate, Certified Welding, Certified Phlebotomy Technician, and Computer Basics courses and programs.

HCCC was one of 10 community colleges nationwide to receive a \$100,000 grant from the American Association of Community Colleges and the Metallica Band's "All Within My Hands"

Foundation. An additional \$50,000 has been awarded to the college for 2023-24. This funding supports student tuition for the certified welding program.

HCCC is also participating in a New Jersey Reentry Corporation Summer Institute launched this summer, offering Certified Phlebotomy Technician and Computer Basics training at the Journal Square campus. The College is the administrator of a nearly \$400,000 New Jersey Pathways grant to provide construction, solar, Cisco, Emergency Medical Responder, Peer Recovery Specialist, and culinary training for court-involved young adults between the ages of 18 and 25.

We are honored that Hudson County Community College is one of five colleges and organizations selected to participate in *Generation Hope's* national "FamilyU Cohort," a two-year project focused on the use of data, best practices, and professional development in support of student parents. Hudson Helps Resource Center Director Katherine Morales will lead our HCCC FamilyU cohort team that also includes Dr. David Clark, Dr. Lisa Dougherty, Aycha Edwards, Christine Peterson, and Dr. Alison Wakefield.

We continue to focus on the continuous improvement of services and programs for Veteran and International students. These include the review and refinement of the VA catalogue; review and improvement of all VA processes and structures; and approval of a new, full-time Director of International and Veteran Student Services position that is now in the search phase. Working with all members of the HCCC community, our new Director will help advance a vision and leadership for the growth and development of both areas.

We are becoming proactive in recruiting and supporting international students. HCCC currently serves 37 international students with plans to increase that number with new strategies and staffing. We are engaging with Keystone Academic Solutions to identify potential international students, and we are creating and refining a new landing webpage with HCCC branding, pictures, and information of interest to prospective international students. During the past year, an HCCC team visited institutions hosting successful Veteran and International student services, and invited the review and input of our 17 sister New Jersey community colleges. We thank Dr. Yeury Pujols, Matt Fessler, Victoria Orellana, Sabrina Bullock, Willie Malone, and others for their research, recommendations and initiatives to better serve and support Veteran and International students.

Our Early College Program continues to flourish under the leadership of Dr. Christopher Conzen, his team, and colleagues across the college. During 2022-23, HCCC's partnership with Jersey City Public Schools was renewed, and three Jersey City Public Schools established partnerships to offer pathways for their high school students to complete HCCC associate degrees upon high school graduation. Chris, Cristhian Altamirano, Joycelyn Wong-Castellano, and their colleagues were awarded a grant from the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education for the "College

Readiness Now” project. Jersey City Public Schools ninth through twelfth graders will have opportunities to take gatekeeper courses in English Composition I and College Algebra, with the costs of tuition and all course materials covered. The grant will further support students taking a STEM meta course.

Thanks to the leadership of Dean of Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management, Dr. Ara Karakashian; and Associate Vice President for Continuing Education and Workforce Development, Lori Margolin, along with many faculty, staff, and community partners, we celebrate the successful development of cannabis studies credentials and pathways. These include noncredit workshops and courses that articulate for credit, an academic proficiency certificate, academic certificate, and associate degree program. Beginning this fall, the programs will be offered both on-ground and fully on-line. During the past year, CEWD also launched robust non-credit cannabis programming to support the College’s goal of providing access and opportunities in this emerging industry for traditionally underrepresented and marginalized citizens. HCCC has further executed six agreements with cannabis dispensaries to provide opportunities for internships, scholarships, workshops and employment for our students.

Over the past year, HCCC has led and engaged significantly in the nationally acclaimed New Jersey Pathways Initiative. This project is a collaboration of the New Jersey Council of County Colleges and the New Jersey Business and Industry Association and is designed to address the rapidly changing needs of employers while providing students and workers with the career pathways they need to be successful.

HCCC is the administrative lead college for the New Jersey Pathways Construction Center, and the Supply Chain and Logistics Center, in partnership with Rowan College of South Jersey, and Rowan College at Burlington County, Salem Community College, and Union College of Union County, respectively. A new Hudson County Community College A.S. degree in Supply Chain has been developed that will be shared with community colleges throughout New Jersey, helping reduce the disparity between curricular offerings and industry needs throughout the state. We thank and congratulate Lori Margolin for her leadership of the Supply Chain and Logistics Center for Workforce Innovation, and Dr. Burl Yearwood for his leadership of the Construction Center.

We celebrate the development and implementation of the new HCCC Transitional Program, which includes the Summer Bridge Program, Winter Mathematics Enrichment Program, and Summer Mathematics Enrichment Program. These interventions offered by the School of STEM, in collaboration with the Abigail Douglas Johnson Academic Support Services Center, assist current and new students in moving from developmental classes to college-level classes faster, helping them graduate on time.

During 2022-23, members of the HCCC family have participated in myriad professional development activities. We thank Vice Presidents Anna Krupitskiy, Dr. Darryl Jones, Dr. Paula

Roberson, Raffi Manjikian and PACDEI, and colleagues across the college and beyond for their leadership and support of these activities. They include the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Adjunct Faculty Conference; College Service Days; All-College Adjunct Faculty Orientation; Convocation; Professional Development Day; and the creation and implementation of the Professional Development Calendar that features professional development programs and workshops conducted by our own employees throughout the year.

We have expanded funding for employee professional development, including the allocation of \$9,000 for each full-time employee's continuing professional development. These funds may now also be applied to conference and other approved professional development participation and engagement. Over 70 HCCC employees used this professional development funding last year, a 42% increase. Of these employees, 46 are pursuing advanced academic degrees including 19 employees who are currently pursuing doctorates.

Last year, we continued to offer college-wide Title IX training, eCornell Diversity and Inclusion Certificate training available to all HCCC community members, and other opportunities. Going forward, HCCC employees will have the opportunity to explore additional areas of professional development through eCornell including marketing, data science and analytics, environmental interests, governance, leadership, technology, project management, human resources, business and finance, hospitality, food and plant science, real estate, health care, engineering, law, nutrition, and others.

We thank Director of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Innovation, Dr. Paula Roberson, for her leadership and support of continued growth in the Center's professional development activities that are open to HCCC faculty, staff, and students. A hallmark of these opportunities is the Center's offering of Association of College and University Educators, or ACUE, certificate training that addresses a wide range of professional development topics.

We were delighted to promote valued faculty during the past year.

We celebrate six faculty promoted to the rank of Assistant Professor, with tenure, in spring 2023. They are Dr. Jeanne Baptiste, Fidelis Foda-Kahouo, Karen Gali, Dr. Clive Li, Dr. Jihan Nakhla, and Dr. Fatma Tat.

Promoted to the rank of Associate Professor were Dr. Sirhan Abdullah, Dr. Peter Cronrath, Evgeniya Kozlenko, Kewal Krishan, Craig McLaughlin, Lester McRae, and Elana Winslow.

And promoted to full Professor were Dr. Shannonine Caruana, Claudia Delgado, Dr. Nadia Hedhli, and Catherine Sweeting. Congratulations, esteemed faculty colleagues!

Last spring, we conferred Emeritus/Emerita status on nine retired faculty and one retired administrator. They are Philip Cafasso, Paul Dillon (posthumously), Salvador Figueras, Dr. Thomas Hsieh, Dr. Nabil Marshood, Siroun Meguerditchian, Denise Philips, Harvey Rubinstein, Dr. Modjeh Tabatabaie, and Barry Tomkins.

Hudson County Community College family members offered presentations last year about HCCC best practices in national venues including conferences of the American Association of Community Colleges; Association of Community College Trustees; Achieving the Dream; Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities; National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development; Middle States Commission on Higher Education; Bellwether College Consortium; National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education; National Association of Student Personnel Administrators; National, Eastern, and New Jersey Associations of Student Financial Aid Administrators; National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships; National Anti-Hunger Policy Conference; New Jersey Chair Academy; Leadership Institute in the Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Programs; National Association of Colleges and Employers; Western Association for Counselor Education and Supervision; National Council for Workforce Education; New Jersey Education Association, and others.

We want to ensure that the HCCC workplace is respectful, caring, inclusive, and celebrates the contributions of everyone. During 2022-23, annual employee turnover was estimated at just 0.7%, and HCCC was named a “Great College to Work For” for the second consecutive year as a result of a spring 2023 national survey of our workforce.

We celebrate the engagement of students in the life of the College, in programs and activities that enrich our students’ educational experience and the experience of the entire HCCC community. With the strong support of Assistant Dean Veronica Gerosimo, Associate Director Angela Tuzzo, and other staff in the Office of Student Life and Leadership and beyond, a record 332 student events were held last year with a collective duplicated attendance of 26,777, representing a 7% increase over the previous year.

During 2022-23, Phi Theta Kappa inducted 229 students into our HCCC Beta Alpha Phi Chapter. We thank and celebrate the mentoring and support of PTK Chapter Advisor and Professor of Mathematics Ted Lai, Director of Academic Affairs Kenny Fabara, Phi Theta Kappa student officers, and so many others who support our students. Outcomes of excellence during the past year included recognition of HCCC’s Beta Alpha Phi Chapter of PTK as a Five-Star Chapter, the highest level of recognition in the Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society; recognition of HCCC students with Leadership Excellence Awards and Service Excellence Awards; Chapter President Recognition; Chapter Member Hall of Honor; Chapter Officer Hall of Honor; and Middle States Hero Hall of Fame, among others. Last spring, six HCCC members of Phi Theta Kappa were named Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship semifinalists, a College record.

We celebrate growth of HCCC's Chapter of the National Society of Leadership and Success. Membership rose to approximately 400 students in 2022-23, one of the largest in the ten-year history of this organization. The membership induction rate increased by 10% over 2021-22.

We further celebrate student members of HCCC's chapter of Sigma Kappa Delta, the national honor society for English advised by Instructor of English Heather Connors. Sigma Kappa Delta's recently graduated president, Marlene Andalia, was awarded the Dr. William C. Johnson Transfer Scholarship; 34 new student members were inducted into SKD last spring; and 15 SKD members graduated in May.

We also celebrate students in the College's chapter of Psi Beta, the national Psychology Honor Society advised by Assistant Professor of Psychology Sal Cuellar. Student members held multiple events during the academic year; hosted a panel discussion with therapists; attended the New York City Albert Ellis Institute's "Friday Night Live" event; and coordinated activities for the annual Psychology Week national celebration, among others. Professor Cuellar accompanied two HCCC students at the regional Eastern Psychological Association Conference in Boston.

We celebrate eight HCCC students who attended the February 2023 Harvard Model United Nations Conference in Boston under the mentorship of North Hudson Campus Executive Director Joe Caniglia. Our students participated with over 1,500 peers from across the world to discuss and debate global issues.

We celebrate students in the Business and Accounting Club, advised by Professors Lester McRae and Sharon Daughtry, who led student travel to numerous business venues including the New Jersey Franchise Show, Wall Street, and Bloomberg offices.

And we celebrated students in the HCCC Culinary Club that offered the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Friends and Family event at the Culinary Conference Center last spring. Our student chefs showcased their knowledge and skills to the community at this and other events including, of course, our annual HCCC Foundation Holiday Gala.

And we thank faculty advisors Dr. Raffaella Pernice and Raffi Manjikian for their leadership in forming a new HCCC student chapter of the American Chemical Society, the premier national student organization for chemists.

In March, we hosted HCCC's tenth annual "Girls in Technology" Symposium. The day-long event was designed to inspire and support young women in pursuing stimulating and well-paying careers in STEM. More than 270 students and staff participated. We thank Lori Margolin, Chastity Farrell, Dr. Burl Yearwood, and their colleagues for offering this remarkable event.



A growing number of HCCC students are attending and participating in regional and national conferences. During 2022-23, these included the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities; Association of Community College Trustees National Legislative Summit; Achieving the Dream's annual DREAM conference; Phi Theta Kappa's Middle States Region Conference and National Catalyst Convention; National Model United Nations; New Jersey League for Nursing; New Jersey Nursing Society Convention; Inclusive Leadership Conference; Bellwether Futures Assembly; Eastern Regional Psychological Association Conference, and others.

We thank Yeurys Pujols, Michelle Vitale, Natalia Vazquez-Bodkin, Candice Peterson, Mirta Sanchez, and the Office of Cultural Affairs for leading and supporting multiple initiatives to involve and serve students, faculty, staff, and community members while illuminating HCCC's educational mission. During 2022-23, it is estimated that more than 14,000 people participated in Cultural Affairs programs, partnership events, exhibitions, and off-site offerings.

And we thank Director of Communications Jennifer Christopher, Strategic Marketing Director Michael Byrne, Website Manager Kristofer Fontanez, and their colleagues in myriad efforts and initiatives to tell our inspirational story and all of the points of pride we are discussing today, and many more! During 2022-23, more than 650 communications and marketing projects were developed and advanced, representing a 46% increase over the previous year. These initiatives led to significant increases in HCCC's social media, and use of the much-improved HCCC website.

During the past year, more than 50 press releases were written and promulgated. The College received significant coverage in a wide range of local, state, regional, and national publications.

We thank Vice President for External Affairs and Senior Counsel to the President, Dr. Nicholas Chiaravalloti, for his leadership in developing and executing strategies and priorities for securing HCCC funding from local, state, and federal sources. Dr. Chiaravalloti conducts regular meetings with elected officials to discuss policy and funding priorities. Nicholas led HCCC's successful efforts to secure \$2.2 million in direct federal funding for HCCC Tower infrastructure, a successful \$980,000 Earmark grant for seven ITV classrooms at the North Hudson Campus, and over \$600,000 in state funding for the Tower through the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education.

Dr. Chiaravalloti also continues to advocate gap funding from the County and state related to the upcoming construction of the HCCC Tower. We further thank Nicholas for his leadership and ongoing efforts to research, plan, and negotiate additional parking options in Journal Square and at the North Hudson Campus in order to mitigate the impending lost parking associated with the construction of the Tower; impending loss of parking behind Loew's Theatre; and eventual loss of parking adjacent to HCCC facilities sold to the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency.

In the past year, we completed and approved a lease for reserved spaces in the Harrison Parking Garage, and at a church on Vroom Street that is now available for HCCC employees to use on a first-come, first-served basis. There are approximately 25 spaces in this lot. We are also out to bid for demolition of 119 Newkirk and the development of a parking lot there, including the potential installation of double or triple stacks to create up to 108 new parking spaces there. Recently, Nicholas and John Scanlon conducted a survey completed by many HCCC faculty and staff that has informed our understanding of current and potential future parking demands, and how the Tower construction and other projects will affect parking and transportation to HCCC campuses.

We thank Dr. Chiaravalloti and Dean of Student Affairs, Dr. David Clark, for their leadership of the HCCC Athletics, Intramurals, and Club Sports Task Force. Last spring, HCCC's athletics consultant, Dr. Robert Bunnell, conducted a feasibility study and a recommended plan to reintroduce athletics and intramural sports upon the opening of the HCCC Tower that will include a full gymnasium and Wellness Center. The plan reflects our commitment to student scholar athletes and the integration of the athletics program into the College's strategic plan, core priorities, and academic mission.

We thank Vice President Veronica Zeichner and her colleagues for their college-wide financial planning and effective stewardship of college resources. During FY 2023, we recorded a positive revenue variance over budgeted revenue; a projected increase in net position for the fifth consecutive year; and a clean audit report with no management issues or comments for the seventh consecutive year.

Last December, we held the most successful annual Foundation Holiday Gala in College history. Nearly \$600,000 in gifts and pledges was raised and celebrated. Nine donors established and contributed to endowments with gifts ranging from \$25,000 to \$50,000, and five donors made unrestricted gifts of \$10,000 and above. We thank Vice President for Advancement and Communications Nicole Johnson and her team, Dr. Ara Karakashian and his colleagues and students, the HCCC Foundation Board of Directors, and others for this progress.

And we celebrate the development last year of endowment investment and spending policies, and the selection of the Foundation's first-ever Financial Services Provider. During 2022-23, thirteen newly endowed funds totaling nearly \$1 million in endowment investment were developed. These include the new Hudson Scholars Program Endowment created with a leadership gift from Ellucian.

We thank Vice President Nicole Johnson, Director of Grants and Sponsored Programs R.M. Stineman, and their colleagues for developing new college-wide processes and tools to improve

the successful research, writing, capacity for, and management of grants. These include creation of a new database of grant proposals from which a variety of reports can be drawn; an improved system for documenting and tracking grant requests and narrative; a webpage for faculty and staff to request grant support; and other contributions to our growing culture of seeking grants and other external funding.

We thank Executive Director of Engineering and Operations Ilya Ashmyan and his colleagues for their continued employment of energy efficient strategies to save operating costs, such as energy demand information and events, and reduced building operating hours during breaks and summer months. We continue to implement sustainable, energy efficient practices in facilities maintenance and operations to promote environmental responsibility.

We also celebrate a range of facilities improvements, including the design and construction of the North Hudson Campus Café; and planning and implementation of terrace renovations, furnishings, and plantings at the Gabert Library and North Hudson Campus.

We thank Executive Director of Public Safety and Security Jack Quigley and his colleagues for their leadership and continuous review and improvement of measures to ensure the safety of the HCCC community. Initiatives last year included staff development, ongoing campus-wide threat assessment in collaboration with the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office, management of the ALICE Academy, installation of additional cameras and panic buttons college-wide, support for the HCCC Office of Mental Health and Wellness, participation on the HCCC Care Team, and many other proactive efforts. Under Jack's leadership, we developed and refined the College's five-year Emergency Management Plan that was submitted last year to the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education. We are committed to clear and transparent processes in all areas of safety and security, and incident reporting processes that are free of intimidation and respectful of confidentiality.

All of these collective efforts and best practices in support of student success; diversity, equity and inclusion; and the delivery of our mission have led to increasing acknowledgement and recognition locally, statewide, and nationally. The following examples of recognition for excellence are the result of everyone's efforts and contributions; indeed, they are the result of *Ignited Employee Engagement!* We all own the following HCCC points of pride:

- *INSIGHT Into Diversity's* 2023, 2022, and 2021 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award, this year honoring HCCC as one of six community colleges nationally to be named "Top Colleges for Diversity;"
- *INSIGHT Into Diversity's* 2023 and 2022 "Inspiring Programs in STEM Award;"

- For the second consecutive year, HCCC was recognized by ModernThink LLC and the *Chronicle of Higher Education* as a “Great College to Work For,” this year achieving honor roll status for reaching seven of ten standards of excellence as determined through ModernThink’s survey of HCCC employees;
- HCCC is one of 20 community colleges nationwide to be named “2023 Most Promising Places to Work in Community Colleges” by the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) in collaboration with *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, the second consecutive year HCCC was so recognized;
- HCCC is one of two community colleges in the United States to be named a “Top Ten Finalist” in all three program categories for the nationally coveted 2023 Bellwether Awards, and HCCC won the 2023 Bellwether Award for the College’s cutting-edge “Hudson Scholars” program;
- HCCC achieved 2023 “Leader College” designation by *Achieving the Dream*, recognizing the College’s exemplary work in advancing student success;
- At the Association’s October national conference in Chicago, HCCC will receive the 2023 Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities “HACU-Member Institution Award” for exemplary leadership in support of Hispanic communities in higher education;
- And we recently learned that HCCC Trustee Bakari Lee will receive the ACCT Trustee Leadership Excellence Award for the Northeastern United States at the Association of Community College Trustees National Leadership Congress in Las Vegas, also in October. Congratulations, Trustee Lee! We thank all of our Trustees for their leadership, advocacy, and support that make all things we do possible!
- We further celebrate the American Association of Community Colleges 2023 Dale P. Parnell Distinguished Faculty Recognition of Dr. Clive Li. Dr. Li and two of his research students were selected as one of only 12 finalist teams in the nation to compete in the Community College Innovation Challenge sponsored by the American Association of Community Colleges and the National Science Foundation.
- We celebrate the 2023 National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE) Teamwork Award to Lori Margolin and her team for the Gateway to Innovation project;
- And we celebrate the 2023 NAPE Heart and Hope Award to Natalia Vazquez Bodkin, recognizing “a person who has managed significant projects or programs with hope, works intentionally with heart, and has made a considerable impact by ensuring

diversity, equity and inclusion in education leading to high-wage, high-skill, in-demand programs of study and careers;”

- We celebrate Laserfiche’s “Run Smarter Nien-Ling Wacker Visionary Award” presented to Patricia Clay;
- And the 2023 “Campus Prevention Network Seal of Prevention” by Vector Solutions for “demonstrating leadership in digital prevention programming focused on student safety, well-being, and inclusion;”
- We further celebrate other recognitions too numerous to mention that all are points of pride for Hudson County Community College.

Dale Carnegie offered this insight that we all strive for: “Throw yourself into some work you believe in with all your heart, live for it, die for it, and you will find happiness that you had thought could never be yours.” And Marilyn Carlson, former CEO of Carlson Companies, said that high-performing organizations strive to create “A great place for great people to do great work.”

Valued members of the HCCC Family, together, and going forward, we commit ourselves to living and breathing today’s College Service Day theme. We are “Igniting – *and Celebrating* – Employee Engagement!”

Colleagues and students, thank you for everything you do – thank you, each and every member of our beautiful HCCC Family! It is an honor to serve as your President. Hudson is Home! Happy New Year!

