



VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1, SPRING 2026

Heart of Hudson



FOUNDATION

A publication of the Hudson County Community College Foundation



HCCC Foundation Endowment Surpasses \$2 Million



"This milestone reflects the dedication of Foundation Board members past and present, the generosity of our donors, and the support of the entire College community, all united by a shared commitment to expanding educational opportunity throughout Hudson County."

- Ronnie Sevilla, Foundation Chair



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Dear Friends and Supporters,

Spring is in the air at Hudson County Community College, and 2026 promises to be an especially exciting year for our nationally recognized, award-winning institution. As we celebrate our 50th Anniversary, we are also preparing to enter an important new chapter—one that will expand opportunities for our students and strengthen the experience of being part of the HCCC community.

Later this year, the College will introduce its new intercollegiate athletics program while also preparing to open the Center for Student Success, an 11-story, 153,186-square-foot facility that will stand prominently in the Jersey City skyline and serve as a hub for learning, wellness, and student life.

This fall will mark a historic moment for HCCC as our men's and women's basketball teams take the court for the first time in decades. The College has already hired head coaches for both programs, and preparations are well underway for an exciting inaugural season. The return of intercollegiate athletics will enrich campus life, strengthen school spirit, and create new opportunities for leadership, teamwork, and personal growth for our students. Our athletics program will be housed in the new Center for Student Success, which will feature a full-size competition gymnasium, fitness center, walking track, athletic training facilities, black box theater, health science lab, classrooms, and expanded student support services. Together, these investments reflect our continued commitment to student success and to building a vibrant and welcoming college community.

There is much more to come in the months ahead, including the unveiling of our mascot and team name. I look forward to sharing these milestones with you as we continue celebrating our 50th Anniversary and shaping the future of Hudson County Community College.

Nicole B. Johnson, Vice President for Advancement and Communications and Executive Director of the HCCC Foundation



Founded in 1997, the Hudson County Community College Foundation is a 501(c)3 organization that exists solely to support the priorities of Hudson County Community College.

HCCC Professor Dr. Issam El-Achkar Gives Back, Supporting the Students Who Inspire Him

Hudson County Community College Mathematics and Electronic Engineering Professor Dr. Issam El-Achkar has positively impacted the lives of HCCC students for more than three decades. He is extending that impact through a personal gift to the HCCC Foundation that will help current students stay in school and create opportunities for future HCCC students.

Dr. El-Achkar is one of two recipients of the 2026 Philip Johnston Award for Excellence in Teaching. The award recognizes outstanding educators whose excellence in teaching has a lasting influence on the professional lives of their students.

In conjunction with earning this honor, Dr. El-Achkar generously donated half of the award's \$2,000 prize to the HCCC Foundation.

"When I learned I was nominated, I felt, if awarded, I should share the award with those who inspire me to do the job I love best," he said. "The idea of giving back is a reflection of those who supported my own academic journey."

For Dr. El-Achkar, the decision was deeply personal. "During my college years, receiving a scholarship completely changed my educational journey," he explains. "It was a turning point that allowed me to focus on my studies, pursue my passions, and ultimately achieve my career goals."

As a longtime professor at HCCC, Dr. El-Achkar has first-hand knowledge of the challenges many students face, as well as the significant impact that even a small gift can make.

"Professors witness the financial hardships their students face and see the immediate, transformative impact that small amounts of money can have on a student's ability to stay in school."

His decision to give back reflects a growing culture of generosity at Hudson County Community College, where faculty, alumni, and community supporters are helping ensure that today's students have the same opportunities that shaped their own educational journeys.

Honoring the Johnston Legacy

The Philip Johnston Award for Excellence in Teaching is named in honor of the late Philip Johnston, a devoted supporter of HCCC and its students who served as Chair of the HCCC Foundation Board from 2010 to 2012. First presented in 2013, the award continues today through the generosity of Mr. Johnston's children, Philip and Janine.

A Distinguished Career at HCCC

Dr. El-Achkar began teaching at HCCC



From left: Dr. Issam El-Achkar, with Dr. WeiDong Zhu, Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, Saint Peter's University.

as a Mathematics Instructor in 1992, earned tenure in 1996, and became a full Professor of Mathematics in 2000. Since 1993, he has also served as Coordinator of Electronics & Computer Engineering Technology.

He holds a Ph.D. in Applied Statistics from the Polytechnic University of New York, along with M.S. degrees in Systems Engineering and Applied Statistics from the same institution. He earned his Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from the New York Institute of Technology.

HCCC Foundation Endowment Builds a Permanent Legacy for Students

The Hudson County Community College Foundation is building something designed to last for generations.

In 2024, the Foundation established its first formal endowment structure. Today, that endowment has already grown to more than \$2.2 million, creating a permanent source of support for Hudson County Community College students and programs.

An endowment is a fund invested for the long term. The principal remains intact and continues to grow, while the income generated each year supports scholarships and key priorities at the College. These funds create reliable, sustainable resources that can benefit students not just today, but far into the future.

For institutions of higher education, endowments represent something more than financial resources. They provide stability, flexibility, and the ability to invest in new opportunities without relying solely on annual fundraising or external funding.

Endowment growth has become a central priority of the HCCC Foundation under the leadership of HCCC President Dr. Christopher Reber, Vice President for Advancement and Communications and Executive Director of the Foundation Nicole Johnson and Foundation Chair Ronnie Sevilla.

"This moment reflects a shared commitment across the College community to strengthening Hudson County Community College for the future," said Johnson. "Endowments allow institutions to think long term, invest strategically, and create opportunities that will benefit students for generations."

Foundation Chair Ronnie Sevilla emphasized the lasting value of this work.

"I am deeply passionate about growing the Foundation's endowment because it represents stability and sustainability for the College and our students," said Sevilla. "No matter what is happening in the economy or the world around us, the endowment is something the College and its students can rely on through thick and thin." The impact is already being felt. Since the Foundation began distributing endowment income in 2024, nearly \$100,000 has been awarded in scholarships to 102 HCCC students. While surpassing \$2 million represents an important milestone, Foundation leaders view it as the beginning of a much larger effort to build permanent philanthropic resources that will strengthen Hudson County Community College well into the future.

If you would like to learn more about establishing or supporting an endowment at HCCC, please contact the Foundation.

Did You Know?



\$2.2 Million
Current Endowment Value

\$99,520
**Scholarships Awarded from
Endowment Funds
Since 2024**

102
HCCC Students Supported

\$25,000
**Establishes a Named
Endowed Fund at HCCC**

*Donors may also contribute to existing
endowments to grow their impact.*

A Message from Craig Guy, Hudson County Executive

During my first two years as County Executive, we have made great efforts to provide services and create opportunities for every Hudson County resident. As a former Jersey City police officer and as County Executive, I have dedicated my life to public service. That means listening to our residents. We hear you, and we are doing everything we can to improve our community.

Hudson County has an affordable housing shortage. I recently released an ambitious plan to develop substantial affordable housing on county-owned land at four locations in Jersey City. We are working with the City of Jersey City to create a new redevelopment plan for 13 acres of surface parking lots at County Plaza to create at least 200 homes for Hudson County families.

From sending ICE agents into our county to cancelling funding for the Hudson Gateway Tunnel Project, the Trump Administration's actions are not acceptable, and Hudson is fighting back. I will always do what I can within my governmental power to ensure our communities are protected. I have signed executive orders banning federal immigration authorities from county-owned property and establishing the Safe Communities Committee.

Though times are tough, Hudson County is strong. I am confident that Hudson County's greatest strength is its people and the remarkable diversity of our communities. From every culture, language, and tradition, we are woven together into something stronger than any one of us alone. This diversity is not something we simply acknowledge – we are Hudson strong!



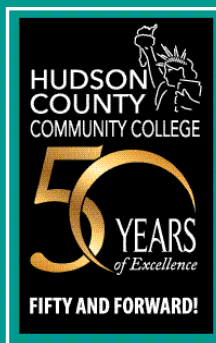
We are here to serve you.
**For any questions, comments,
or concerns, you can reach us
at 201-795-6200
or hcexecoffice@hcnj.us.**

The 50th Anniversary Celebration Continues!

As Hudson County Community College celebrates its 50th Anniversary, we reflect not only on the remarkable progress of the past five decades, but on the possibilities ahead. Every scholarship awarded, every partnership formed, and every opportunity created for our students carries this legacy forward. Together with our alumni, donors, faculty, staff, and community partners, we are building the next chapter of HCCC — one defined by access, excellence, and opportunity for generations to come.



For upcoming events, visit:
<https://www.hccc.edu/50th/index.html>



Hudson County Community College Foundation
24th Annual Golf Outing
Brooklake Country Club,
Florham Park, NJ
MONDAY, JUNE 22, 2026

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

8:30 a.m.	Check-in/Registration
9:00 a.m.	Full Breakfast
10:00 a.m.	Shotgun Start
3:00 p.m.	BBQ Luncheon, Open Bar and Awards

ALL GOLFERS WILL ENJOY:

- Round of golf on a private, championship caliber course
- Hot Buffet Breakfast | BBQ Luncheon with Open Bar
- On-course beverages (alcoholic and nonalcoholic) and light snacks
- Contest entries such as Longest Drive, Closest to the Pin
- HCCC-branded merchandise | Sleeve of golf balls

SCAN TO REGISTER:



Any questions, please contact:
foundation@hccc.edu



Foundation Executive Committee

Executive Committee

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Make a powerful impact on the lives of HCCC students by donating today.



There is no better investment than the one you make in a student's education.

Online: Give online quickly and conveniently via debit card, credit card, or PayPal at <https://www.hccc.edu/community/foundation/index.html>

Check: Send a check to the HCCC Foundation, 26 Journal Square, 14th Floor, Jersey City NJ 07306.

Endowment/Planned Giving: Start the conversation about making a legacy gift that will generate an impact for years to come.

Sponsorship: Sponsor dynamic events at HCCC to support great causes while connecting with over 50,000 students, alumni, faculty, staff, and community leaders.

To find out more about any of these options, please contact us at foundation@hccc.edu.

