



VOLUME 1, ISSUE 4, FALL/WINTER 2025

# Heart of Hudson

A publication of the Hudson County Community College Foundation



## Infusion of New Talent into the Foundation Board



New Board members (from left, standing) Ceallaigh Lorenz-Talleyrand, Daniela Sarbu, and Seema Shah join the HCCC Foundation Board. Seated, from left, are HCCC Foundation Board Chair Ronnie Sevilla, HCCC VP for Advancement and Communications and Executive Director of the HCCC Foundation Nicole B. Johnson, and HCCC President Dr. Christopher Reber.

## Letter from the Vice President

### Dear Friends and Supporters,

The 28th Annual Foundation Gala, held on December 4th, was a tremendous success and will make a major impact in the year ahead. Together, we raised nearly \$250,000 to directly support student scholarships and endowments—an incredible testament to the generosity and commitment of our community. This year's Gala was especially meaningful as we celebrated Hudson County Community College's 50th anniversary and honored Provident Bank and Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield, longtime supporters of the Foundation and partners in our mission to provide students with access to a life-changing education.

The Gala was a magnificent evening, and it's just one of the many ways we unite throughout the year to support our students and to celebrate

together. We invite you to stay connected in the months ahead for more opportunities to make a difference, support our students, and enjoy being part of our vibrant HCCC community.

On behalf of the Foundation and the entire HCCC community, I extend my warmest wishes to you and your loved ones for a joyful holiday season and a bright, fulfilling new year!

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

<https://www.hccc.edu/50th/index.html>



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.

## Dynamic New Appointees Strengthen Foundation Board

The HCCC Foundation welcomes valuable new leadership as three distinguished professionals join its ranks. Daniela Sarbu, Seema Shah, and Ceallaigh Lorenz-Talleyrand bring diverse backgrounds, extensive experience, and renewed energy to the Foundation's longstanding mission of providing all students the opportunity to acquire a college education and to enjoy the lifelong benefits of this education. The latest additions to the Board represent sectors including economic development, primary education, and health and wellness. They look forward to building on the achievements of current and past members while bringing fresh perspectives and contributing to the Foundation's ongoing legacy of success in exciting ways. Notably, they are the first new additions to the Foundation Board since 2020.

Seema Shah is the Founder and Principal of Urban Strategies & Solutions LLC, an advisory practice focused on workforce initiatives designed for sustainable, scalable, and culturally-sensitive urban solutions. She is developing a plan for the ON-RAMP Center in New York's Capital Region, which seeks to connect diverse and skilled New Yorkers with careers in dynamic, high-growth advanced manufacturing industries. She previously built an 85,000 square-foot, \$7 million education and tech hub called Civic Hall, in the heart of New York City's Union Square. Some of her previous roles include Head of Innovation Policy Unit and Lead AI Researcher at the New York State Department of Financial Services, and Head of Innovation Initiatives at LaGuardia Community College. Seema states that "I'm beyond honored to join the HCCC Foundation Board and to support the mission of Hudson County Community College — ensuring every student has access to a quality college education and the opportunities it



**Seema Shah**



**Daniela Sarbu**



**Ceallaigh Lorenz-Talleyrand**

brings. I look forward to working alongside my fellow board members to expand scholarship support, foster innovation, and help students thrive both in the classroom and beyond."

Daniela Sarbu is an entrepreneur and founder of the Waldo International School, a leading independent school in Jersey City known for its commitment to academic excellence and global learning. Daniela is deeply engaged in the local community, serving on the Board of Trustees for the University of Phoenix, Jersey City Campus, and the Board of the Youth Foundation in Jersey City. Daniela says, "I'm honored to join the Hudson County Community College Foundation Board. Education has always been at the heart of my work, and I believe every child, young adult, and adult deserves access to opportunity, no matter their background. Hudson County Community College plays a vital role in empowering students and strengthening our community, and I'm excited to support its mission of transforming lives through education and expanding access to learning opportunities right here in Jersey City."

Meanwhile, Ceallaigh Lorenz-Talleyrand is an educator, innovator, and entrepreneur in the health and wellness space. She is the founder and owner of Salvation Wellness and Rx3. She is passionate about empowering the next generation of wellness entrepreneurs

and is helping to advance cancer research with the Jersey City Medical Center. Her work has been featured in Business Insider, Inc.com, and a variety of industry publications. She is a frequent speaker at technology and wellness events, including HCCC's Girls in Technology Symposium. On joining the Foundation Board, Ceallaigh states "As a proud community college graduate, I know firsthand how life-changing access and opportunity can be. Scholarships helped me achieve my dreams and brought me to where I am today. Serving on the Hudson County Community College Board is a true honor and a full-circle moment. It's my honor to give back and help create those same opportunities for future students."

Together, these dynamic new additions to the Board, Daniela Sarbu; Seema Shah; and Ceallaigh Lorenz-Talleyrand bring a shared passion for education, innovation, and community engagement that will further strengthen the HCCC Foundation's mission. Their efforts will help expand scholarship opportunities, foster new partnerships, and drive continued growth, ensuring that HCCC remains a place that serves all who walk through its doors and where every student is given the opportunity to thrive and realize their potential.





## Meet Our Students: Anu Bisht

*HCCC students overcome significant challenges, have big dreams, and achieve amazing things.*

Many people don't know what they want to be when they grow up – Anu Bisht knew she wanted to be an accountant since the age of 15. Anu approached this goal with vigor. She completed her first year of higher education and passed the Chartered Accountant (CA) Foundation exam in her native India, but life then took an unexpected turn. Despite the promising start to her academic journey, she made the brave but challenging decision to leave an abusive home environment and drop out of college to financially support her younger siblings. Anu explained the motivation behind this difficult decision, stating, "I chose to prioritize them because I know what it feels like to go through life without support, and I did not want them to ever feel alone."

After she helped stabilize life for her siblings, she tried to return to school on multiple occasions. However, she dealt with unresolved mental health issues stemming from her difficult childhood, and then was dealt a major blow when a serious neurological illness left her both bedridden and legally blind for over a year.

Despite this incredible hardship, Anu refused to give up and wouldn't let her dream of pursuing a college education and becoming an accountant die. Anu underwent treatment and therapy and recalls, "Once I regained my physical and emotional strength, I felt ready to return to my dream of getting a higher education and set back out on the path I started years ago."

After discovering that community colleges were an option (which eased her concerns about returning to college as a nontraditional student), Anu found HCCC's accounting program and says she "immediately felt like this was the right place to restart my journey. I enrolled in Fall 2024 as an Accounting major, ready to finally pursue the dream I have carried with me since I was 15. HCCC has truly become a second home for me. While I am not a religious person, every time I walk through the doors of this campus, I hear temple bells go off in my head."

Anu knew she was in the right place as soon as she set foot on campus, remembering that "Even before I began classes here, my first interaction with Ms. Royal Ross from Enrollment made a tremendous impact. She guided me through a campus tour and introduced me to the many available resources. In that moment, I felt a genuine sense of belonging, not just to the college, but to the

community behind it." She also credits her academic advisors, Lewis Livesay and June Liu, with helping to set the foundation for her success here.

Anu is now an Accounting major and working hard towards her goal of one day becoming a CPA – "Earning my Associate's degree at HCCC is the first and most important step in my CPA journey."

So what's next for Anu after HCCC? She plans to transfer to a four-year university, stating that "My dream is to attend the NYU Stern School of Business and earn a Bachelor's degree in Business with a concentration in Accounting, along with a track in either Business Analytics or Corporate Finance." After completing her degree, she "plans to enter the workforce full-time, ideally in the finance or investment banking sector. I also intend to pursue a Master's degree in Finance with a minor in Economics from Columbia University or Harvard University, to build a strong and well-rounded foundation for a long-term career in corporate accounting and finance." This summer, Anu will take another significant step toward her goals — and her dream school — as she begins an internship with Harvard University's Education Design Lab.

While Anu's journey has been extraordinary and her spirit is indefatigable, her determination and resilience reflect the spirit of many HCCC students who face obstacles on their paths to higher education.

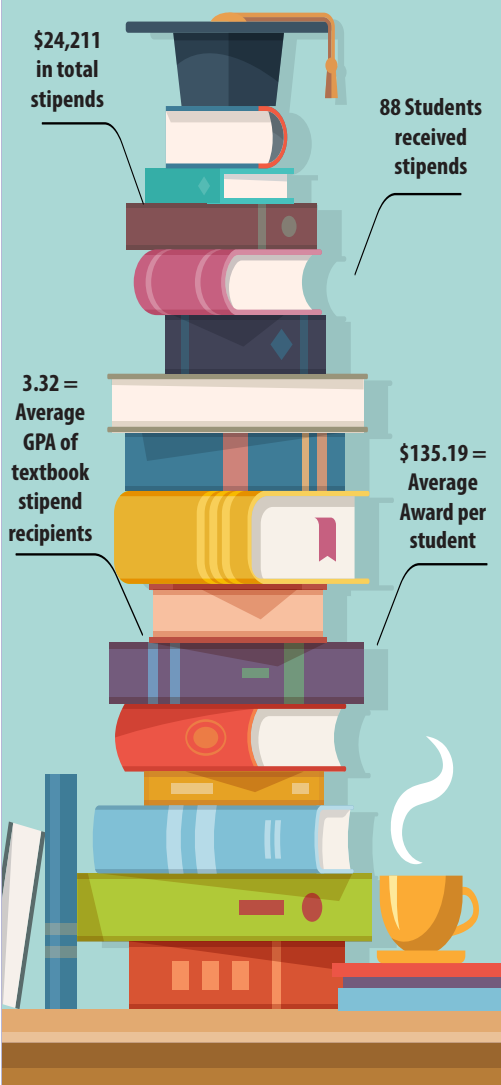
With a bit of support, students like Anu can overcome challenges and continue pursuing their dreams — transforming not only their own futures but also the communities around them. A gift to the Hudson Foundation can help provide scholarships and textbook stipends for more students like Anu. This semester, Anu was the recipient of a textbook stipend from the Hudson Foundation. Anu expressed her gratitude, stating, "I am extremely grateful to the Foundation for this support. The scholarship eased my financial burden and enabled me to secure a resource that I can reference throughout my academic and professional path. This assistance reaffirmed for me that HCCC is deeply committed to supporting its students' success."

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## Did You Know?

The Hudson Foundation helps to ease the financial burdens students face by providing them with textbook stipends they can use to acquire course materials. Anu Bisht used a textbook stipend to purchase a physical textbook for her Intermediate Accounting I course, explaining that it is a valuable resource she will use throughout her accounting journey.

**During the Fall '25 semester, the Foundation awarded...**



# 50th Anniversary Highlights



Members of the HCCC community help launch the yearlong celebration at the 50th Anniversary Kickoff event.



West New York salsa dancers at our first-ever Homecoming Block Party and Open House.



The Fifty Years of Excellence exhibit at the Museum of Jersey City History opened on November 7 and will run through March 7, 2026.



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## Foundation Executive Committee

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Ronnie Sevilla, Chair  
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Stacy Gemma, Trustee Liaison  
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### Foundation Board Members

Natalie Brathwaite  
John M. Burns, Jr.  
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Ceallaigh Lorenz-Talleyrand  
Steven Mullen  
Kevin O'Connor  
Michelle E. Richardson  
Tony Rico  
Daniela Elena Sarbu  
Seema Shah

**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](mailto:foundation@hccc.edu).**

