



VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1 WINTER 2025

# Heart of Hudson



HUDSON COUNTY  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A publication of the Hudson County Community College Foundation

FOUNDATION



## HCCC's Hudson Scholars Thrive with Donor Support

*Hudson Scholars Graduates at the 2024 Commencement Ceremony - Red Bull Arena, Harrison, NJ*



## Welcome to the first issue of *Heart of Hudson!*

We're excited to share this new way to highlight the work of the HCCC Foundation and the incredible impact it has on our community. In this issue, you'll discover the rich history of our founding, meet our Foundation Chair, and learn about the people and programs we proudly support.



Through stories of donor generosity, an inspiring spotlight on a scholarship recipient, and an overview of our endowment, you'll see how we're growing and making a difference. You'll also find ways to get involved, make a gift, and join us in shaping a brighter future.

We hope *Heart of Hudson* leaves you inspired, informed, and proud to be part of the HCCC family. Together, we're building a stronger community!

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



## Who We Serve

HCCC serves one of the most culturally diverse areas of the United States, and our students come from all walks of life, including...

- Student parents striving to create better futures for their families,
- Traditionally underrepresented students breaking through systemic barriers.
- Adult learners adapting to a rapidly changing workforce.
- Veterans transitioning to civilian life after serving our nation.
- Recent immigrants pursuing their piece of the American dream.
- First-generation college students, ... and everyone in between!

One thing all these talented and resilient students have in common is that many of them just need a helping hand to cross the finish line and achieve their dream of graduation.

That's why the HCCC Foundation works tirelessly to secure funding for scholarships that support these talented and deserving students—all thanks to you, our generous donors!

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

**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.**



## Meet Hudson County Community College Foundation Chair Ronnie Sevilla

Ronnie Sevilla took over as Chair of the Hudson County Community College Foundation this year, but he's not new to serving others or to the value of education. Sevilla steps into the leading role of Foundation Chair after serving as Treasurer and as a dedicated member of the Foundation Board for nearly a decade. He is currently the Vice President and a Cash Management and Sales Officer at Spencer Savings Bank.

There are many ways that Sevilla could choose to serve the community, so why the HCCC Foundation?

Sevilla holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Rutgers University and earned an Executive MBA from Rutgers Business School. His experience in business school played a large part in forming his views about the importance of education. Sevilla states, "Look at me, I went back to school later in life. I loved the experience, and I'm a better person for it. I want everyone to have the opportunity to experience the life-changing effect of a college education."

The New Foundation Chair is also a strong believer that education creates social and economic mobility in the community, pointing out that "Education is the gift that keeps on giving; it's intergenerational. A college education helps people to break the cycle and empowers them to have more control over their future."

HCCC President Dr. Christopher Reber states, "The HCCC Foundation is in good hands with Ronnie Sevilla, who will build on its strong legacy and add to its proud history as this exciting new chapter begins. We are honored to have him as Foundation Chair."

# HCCC's Hudson Scholars Thrive with Donor Support



A \$100,000 Signature Grant from Provident Bank Foundation (PBF) made a profound impact on the lives of over 400 HCCC students who participated in the award-winning Hudson Scholars program and are now graduates.

The Hudson Scholars Program expands access to educational opportunities for Hudson County students and significantly improves the academic outcomes these students achieve. "The Hudson Scholars program is groundbreaking," says Samantha Plotino, Executive Director of The Provident Bank Foundation, "and we believe it to be the ideal model for community colleges nationwide to abate the challenges that might delay or prevent students from graduating."

Developed under the visionary leadership of HCCC President Dr. Christopher Reber, the award-winning Hudson Scholars Program expands academic access and drives student success through a unique combination of proactive academic advisement, financial stipends, high-impact educational experiences, and early academic intervention. Students

can use these monthly stipends to pay for needs beyond tuition including books and transportation to and from classes.

*"... HCCC gave me the opportunity. Hudson Scholars gives you a lot of confidence in yourself and makes you realize nothing is impossible..."*

Many students enrolled in Hudson Scholars face significant barriers to academic success, whether it's navigating financial challenges, working to put themselves through college, family responsibilities, or food and housing insecurity. In the fall of 2023, when PBF began its support of the program, 34% of HCCC students were adult learners, 55% identified as Hispanic or Latino, and 88% self-identified as non-white. Over three-quarters of first-time, full-time HCCC students place into English as a Second Language (ESL), Developmental English, or Developmental Math courses, and 80% qualify for Federal financial aid.

The results are a testament to the program's effectiveness. 21% of Fall 2021 Hudson Scholars graduated within two years, over triple the number from 2018-2020. Hudson Scholars has made its greatest impact on students from traditionally underrepresented communities.

Students like Nina appreciated the belief and support from their advisors, which expanded their horizons and pushed them to go beyond what they previously thought they were capable of. This belief and support led to significant academic and personal growth for students like Nina, who reflected that "Being here gave me a lot of opportunities to better myself and express myself more. I was able to explore more things and become more involved on campus. I recently became Student Government President. I never expected to be in this position, but HCCC gave me the opportunity. Hudson Scholars gives you a lot of confidence in yourself and makes you realize nothing is impossible. My advisor has been a great mentor for me – whenever I felt like I was on the verge of failing, he made me realize I could succeed."

*Continued on page 4*

## Endowed Funds at HCCC

Newly established endowed funds are essential as they provide secure, perpetual funding streams for vital student scholarships, independent of public or government support.

**Did you know** that the Hudson County Community College Foundation...



**Actively manages over \$2,000,000 in endowed scholarship funds**



**Over 90% of donations directly fund scholarships or student-focused programs, ensuring maximum benefit to our students**



**Maintains and grows the Foundation Art Collection which contains nearly 2,000 works of art**

**Established 15 scholarship endowments**



**Awarded scholarships to more than 150 students this academic year**



## HCCC's Hudson Scholars Thrive with Donor Support

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The one-on-one personalized level of academic support helped these Hudson Scholars succeed and achieve their academic goals. This would not have been possible without the generous financial support of PBF and other donors. HCCC President Dr. Christopher Reber stated, "The Provident Bank Foundation's commitment to expanding access to education and fostering student success aligns perfectly with our mission at HCCC, and we are thankful for their trust and partnership in transforming the lives of so many in our community."

## Making an Impact

*Hudson County Community College is more than an educational institution; it is a vibrant community that supports personal growth and professional development. As a first-generation Egyptian immigrant, I found a second home in HCCC, where I discovered the transformative power of education alongside the warmth of community. I experienced a culture of support and belonging by being surrounded by individuals who encourage and uplift one another. HCCC has always been more than a place to study or work; it has been a safe space where I felt included and empowered. It will always hold a special place in my heart.*



*Being part of this community has given me the confidence to chase my dreams and made me feel at home. My advice to everyone is to believe in yourself and your path – every step brings you closer to your goals. To my mother, your belief in me is my greatest strength, and I am forever grateful to my HCCC family for allowing me to pursue opportunities I never thought possible in shaping my journey.*

**– Marolla Youakim**  
HCCC Foundation Scholarship Recipient



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**It's not too late to make a powerful impact in 2024 on the lives of HCCC students by donating to the HCCC Foundation 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, 162-168 Sip Avenue, 2nd 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.

**Appreciated Stock:** Don't forget, you can also make a gift of appreciated stock, which may be an attractive option as the stock market set record highs in 2024.

**To find out more about any of these options, please contact us at [foundation@hccc.edu](mailto:foundation@hccc.edu).**

