

# HCCC Happenings

A publication of the Communications Department



## HUDSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOUNDATION 28TH ANNUAL GALA CELEBRATED THE COLLEGE'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY



### In this issue

HCCC Welcomes  
Alumna, Educator,  
and Community  
Activist Lissa Santiago  
to the Board of  
Trustees



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HCCC President  
Dr. Christopher  
Reber Named  
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Executive of the Year



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Celebrate New  
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## From the Editor's Desk

*HCCC Happenings is on the College's website at <http://www.hccc.edu>*

Items for the February newsletter are due by Friday, January 9, 2026

Please send your news items, comments and suggestions to:

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## HUDSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOUNDATION 28TH ANNUAL GALA CELEBRATED THE COLLEGE'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

**H**udson County Community College (HCCC) marked 50 years of preparing students for success and building strong partnerships with business and community leaders at the HCCC Foundation's 28th Annual Gala, held on Thursday, December 4, 2025, at the College's Culinary Conference Center in Jersey City. The event celebrated five decades of educational progress and featured exceptional cuisine and desserts prepared by HCCC Culinary Arts chef-profs and students.

During the evening, the Foundation presented its 2025 Distinguished Service Award to Provident Bank and to Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey.

Founded in 1974, HCCC has grown from a one-building college into one of New Jersey's largest and most comprehensive community colleges, serving Hudson County across three modern locations. Established in 1997, the HCCC Foundation continues to advance student success through scholarships, program funding, and support services.



*School of Business, Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management faculty members Sharon Daughtry (left) and Robert Hamer.*



*HCCC President Dr. Christopher Reber (right) with Cynthia Baumgartner (left) and Harrison Mayor James A. Fife.*



*Pictured from left: Konstantin Yusipov, First Vice President, Provident Bank; Dr. Christopher Reber, President of Hudson County Community College; Ronnie Sevilla, Chair of the HCCC Foundation Board of Directors; Nicole Bouknight Johnson, Vice President for Advancement and Communications and Executive Director, HCCC Foundation; and John Fuller, Senior Director, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey.*



*Pictured from left: Ronnie Sevilla, Chair of the HCCC Foundation Board of Directors; Nicole Bouknight Johnson, Vice President for Advancement and Communications and Executive Director, HCCC Foundation; Dr. Ara Karakashian, Dean of Business, Culinary Arts, and Hospitality Management; Chef Marissa P. Lontoc, Instructor, Table Service; Chef Jasmine Pasqua; and Chef Courtney Payne, Assistant Professor, Culinary Arts.*

*Chef Gary Bensky, Assistant Professor, Culinary Arts (right) with Culinary Arts Institute students.*



*A captivating performance artist added energy and artistry to the evening, delighting Gala guests with a memorable and engaging presentation that enhanced the celebration.*

**ON THE COVER:** Highlights from the Hudson County Community College Foundation Gala on December 4, celebrating community, partnership, and 50 years of student success.

## HUDSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE WELCOMES ALUMNA, EDUCATOR, AND COMMUNITY ACTIVIST LISSA SANTIAGO TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES



*Long-time Jersey City resident and educator Lissa M. Santiago (third from left) has been appointed to the Hudson County Community College Board of Trustees. Santiago is pictured at the Board's Nov. 25, 2025 meeting with, from left, Trustee Roberta Kenny; Vice Chair Edward DeFazio; Chair Jeanette Peña; 2025-26 Student Alumni Representative Joanne Rivera; and HCCC President Dr. Christopher Reber.*

**T**he Hudson County Community College (HCCC) Board of Trustees has appointed Lissa M. Santiago to a four-year term on the College's governing body. A long-time Jersey City resident, educator, and HCCC alumna, Ms. Santiago was sworn in on November 25, 2025. She succeeds Dr. Joseph V. Doria, Jr., who served on the Board since 2019 and contributed to the Finance and Personnel committees.

HCCC Trustee Chair Jeanette Peña welcomed Ms. Santiago, noting her extensive record as a Jersey City teacher, school administrator, and community advocate. "We look forward to collaborating with her in furthering our mission," Peña said. She also thanked Dr. Doria for his dedication to education and public service.

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## HCCC PRESIDENT DR. CHRISTOPHER REBER NAMED NJBIA 2025 EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR



*Dr. Reber (third from right) is pictured with, from left: Dr. Yeurys Pujols, Vice President for Institutional Engagement and Excellence; Patricia Clay, Associate Vice President and Chief Information Officer; Lori Margolin, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives, Continuing Education and Workforce Development; Michele Siekerka, Esq., NJBIA President and CEO; Dr. Lisa Dougherty, Senior Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment; and John Urgola, Associate Vice President for Institutional Research and Planning.*

**C**ongratulations to Dr. Christopher Reber, HCCC President, whom New Jersey Business Magazine honored on Dec. 3 with the New Jersey Business & Industry Association (NJBIA) 2025 Executive of the Year Award. This award recognizes outstanding leadership, vision, passion, and positive impact on businesses and communities in the Garden State.

## NEWS FROM HUDSON COUNTY EXECUTIVE CRAIG GUY



**County Executive Craig Guy Highlights 2025 Accomplishments, Welcomes Reverend Frances Snelling Teabout to HCCC Board of Trustees**

**W**elcome to 2026! We hope that you had a safe and joyous holiday season and wish you nothing but the best in the new year.

As we reflect on the past year, Hudson County Executive Craig Guy is proud of his administration's work in delivering services and creating opportunities for residents. Below is a list of just some of the County's accomplishments in 2025:

In January, County Executive Guy launched Hudson County's Vision Zero Action Plan, which included a commitment to end traffic deaths on county roads by 2034. The Vision Zero Task Force was hard at work making our streets safer throughout the year. Efforts included developing a shared use path on the 14th Street Viaduct in Hoboken, announcing a bus rapid transit study on JFK Boulevard, installing traffic calming measures in East Newark, Guttenberg, and Secaucus, and calling for increased PATH service during weekends, weeknights, and midday weekdays.

Later that month, County Executive Guy announced the formation of the County's first-ever LGBTQ+ Advisory Task Force. Comprised of 16 Hudson County residents, the Task Force advises the administration on making Hudson County a more inclusive, equitable, and supportive environment for the County's LGBTQ+ community.

In an effort to address food security, County Executive Guy announced \$1.8 million to bring a client choice food pantry to Hoboken in March. The funds will allow the Hoboken Community Center to bring a 5,000 square foot client choice pantry to Hoboken to service Hudson County communities and provide groceries, meats and other proteins, fresh fruits and vegetables, personal care items and pet supplies.

In May, County Executive Guy celebrated the 20-year anniversary of the Open Space Trust Fund, announcing \$11.7 million in awards throughout all 12 Hudson County municipalities. The Open Space Trust Fund allows municipalities to invest in green space upgrades and improvements in local parks and recreational areas.

In June, County Executive Guy was proud to nominate Reverend Dr. Frances Snelling Teabout for the HCCC Board of Trustees. Reverend Dr. Snelling Teabout serves as the Director of Mission for New Community Corporation of Newark, a nonprofit organization and one of the largest community development corporations in the United States. She is also Founder and Pastor of Open Door Worship Center in Jersey City, and an Adjunct Professor at Fairleigh Dickinson University Petrocelli Center for Continuing Education.

In September, County Executive Guy successfully hosted the 4th Annual Strides for Safety 5K Against Gun Violence. Strides for Safety is an opportunity for people to come together for an important cause – to run or walk to raise awareness and end gun violence in Hudson County and the nation. Strides for Safety had more than 500 registered attendees and 30 volunteers.

In October, County Executive Guy joined with local officials to officially open the Hudson County Schools of Technology Craig Guy

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# MILESTONES

Congratulations to the following on their anniversaries with Hudson County Community College!

## FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES

One Year

*Steffi Jane Montenegro*

*Kevin Shah*

*Yadeline Tineo*

*Amanda Velez*

*Abihail Yisrael*

Five Years

*Dan Brookes*

*Inez Cruz*

10 Years

*Saba Daud*

*Chastity Farrell*

*Faiza Fayyaz*

*Michelle Vitale*

20 Years

*Michael Ferlise*

*Yeurys Pujols*

25 Years

*Raffaella Pernice*

## PART-TIME EMPLOYEES

One Year

*Alexander Arellanes*

*Kenneth Castro*

*Miguel Cruz*

*Jack Engdall*

*Elaine Gonzalez*

*Latonja Jennings*

*Sharmaine Judge*

*Azhane McDaniel*

*Mayte Molina*

*Jules Rose*

*Kenia Sandoval*

Five Years

*Mira Domadiya*

*Hydah Kilonzo*

## THE HIH WELLNESS SPOTLIGHT

### Fitness & Nutrition: Rest & Recharge

Start the new year by prioritizing your well-being! January's wellness theme focuses on the importance of balancing fitness, nutrition, and rest to help you recharge both physically and mentally. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle isn't just about exercise—it's also about fueling your body with nutritious choices and giving yourself time to recover.

To support you on this journey, we've curated a collection of resources including engaging YouTube videos and practical articles. These materials offer tips on creating sustainable fitness routines, making smart nutritional decisions, and understanding why rest is essential for overall health.

Take a moment to explore these resources and discover simple ways to feel energized and refreshed throughout the year!

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOSJX9Ajsvw>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mt7hZWa8zZ4>

<https://news.va.gov/89211/live-whole-health-73-time-rest-rest-recharge-part-healthy-routine/>

<https://eap.lucethealth.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Article-When-does-dieting-become-unhealthy.pdf>

[https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/pdf/Physical\\_Fitness\\_Glossary%2C\\_Wellness\\_Toolkit.pdf](https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/pdf/Physical_Fitness_Glossary%2C_Wellness_Toolkit.pdf)

<https://www.who.int/initiatives/behealthy/healthy-diet>

## EMPLOYEE PERKS

### Employee Assistance Program

<https://eap.ndbh.com> (company code: HCCC)

### National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development

<https://www.nisod.org>

### LinkedIn Learning

<https://library.hccc.edu/linkedinelearning>

### Working Advantage

<https://hccc.savings.workingadvantage.com/home>

*This is an exciting time to work at HCCC. Come join an award-winning institution!*

For Recruitment and Job Opportunities visit:

<https://www.schooljobs.com/careers/hccc>

## HUDSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# 2026 TEACHING & LEARNING SYMPOSIUM

**Friday, February 27, 2026**

**9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.**

Culinary Conference Center  
161 Newkirk Street, Scott Ring Room  
Jersey City, NJ

Breakfast and Lunch will be served

All are welcome!

Specialized student sessions (a.m. & p.m.)

9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Lunch 12:30 – 1:30

Registration required

SCAN QR CODE  
TO REGISTER



Watch your email  
for important  
announcements!

For more information, contact  
Center for Teaching, Learning and Innovation  
ctli@hccc.edu  
201-360-4775



# HUDSON HEADLINERS!

Tune into — <https://www.hccc.edu/news-media/headliners/index.html>  
Watch for news about the next Hudson Headliners!



## HUDSON COUNTY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM RECOGNITION RECEPTION



The County of Hudson and Hudson County Community College joined in recognizing HCCC students who participated in and completed the Hudson County Internship Program, a partnership supported by Citizens Bank.

Hudson County Community College proudly hosted its Hudson County Internship Program Reception on December 2, 2025, the celebration honored the achievements of the 2025 student internship cohort and the countywide network of partners who make this initiative possible. The event welcomed 50 attendees, including 20 HCCC student interns, 20 business hosts, and representatives from SRL Enterprise LLC, the Hudson County Improvement Authority (HCIA), the Hudson County Economic Development Corporation (HCEDC), and the Office of the Hudson County Executive. Their presence underscored the shared commitment to strengthening workforce pathways and expanding economic mobility for residents throughout Hudson County.

Since Spring 2025, the program has placed 44 students across the County—including 30 from HCCC and 14 from Stevens Institute of Technology and New Jersey City University—with an impressive 93.3% completion rate among HCCC participants. Students were matched with 27 local businesses across multiple industries, and the program has already resulted in seven HCCC interns transitioning into long-term employment. These outcomes highlight the growing strength of HCCC's experiential learning model and its alignment with regional workforce needs.

A significant part of this program's success stems from the collaborative leadership of SRL Enterprise LLC, a workforce development organization that partners with HCCC to build internship pipelines, support employer engagement, and design student-centered career readiness experiences. Their coordination ensures high-quality placements and meaningful outcomes for both students and employers.

The Hudson County Improvement Authority (HCIA) plays a critical role in the county's infrastructure, sustainability planning, and community development efforts. Their partnership with HCCC supports pathways

related to environmental stewardship, public services, and county operations—sectors where interns gain invaluable hands-on exposure.

Similarly, the Hudson County Economic Development Corporation (HCEDC) serves as a vital engine for local business growth, entrepreneurship, and economic expansion across the region. Their involvement connects students to businesses that are shaping the economic future of Hudson County, while also supporting employers who are invested in developing early-career local talent.

At the center of these partnerships is Dr. Machli Joseph, Director of Perkins CTE Programs, Academic Affairs at HCCC, who serves as the program's Partnership Engagement Lead. Dr. Joseph's leadership in aligning HCCC's efforts with SRL Enterprise LLC, HCIA, and HCEDC created a seamless, highly collaborative process that elevates, expands, and strengthens internship opportunities for students across the County. This cross-sector coordination has improved program efficiency, deepened employer engagement, and enhanced the overall impact of the internship experience on student success.

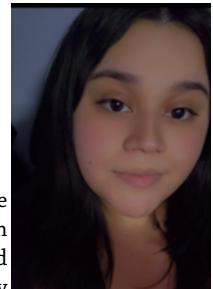
The reception also included remarks from County Executive Craig Guy, whose leadership reflects the County's long-standing commitment to inclusive workforce development. Under his administration, Hudson County has strengthened small business support, expanded job pathways, and deepened collaborations with higher education partners like HCCC to ensure residents have equitable access to meaningful career opportunities.

Together, these partners—SRL Enterprise LLC, HCIA, HCEDC, and the Office of the County Executive—form the backbone of a growing ecosystem that connects classroom learning to countywide impact. Their combined efforts enhance student success, strengthen employer capacity, and reinforce Hudson County Community College's mission to serve as a gateway to education, opportunity, and upward mobility for all.

### STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

#### Lisette Diaz, Fall 2025 Intern

"This fall, I had the opportunity to intern with Express Employment, and it pushed me out of my comfort zone in the best way. Being trusted to lead interviews and take on real responsibility helped me gain confidence, communication skills, and a stronger sense of independence. I'm especially grateful for my supervisor, Deidra, whose support helped me grow without ever feeling discouraged. Helping people secure jobs has reaffirmed my passion for becoming a social worker. I'm thankful to HCIA and to the internship team for creating opportunities that truly prepare students like me for our future careers."



### HCCC MARKS MILESTONE WITH BOLD NEW BANNERS



Hudson County Community College North Hudson Campus Executive Director Dr. Joseph Caniglia and HCCC President Dr. Christopher Reber stand in front of the North Hudson Campus, where new 50th Anniversary banners are proudly displayed. Similar banners can be seen throughout Journal Square as the College celebrates this historic milestone. Special thanks to Tara Lyn Dugan from Communications for designing HCCC's 50th Anniversary banners and commemorative anniversary logo.

# Foundation Art Collection

The Hudson County Community College Foundation Art Collection of 2,100+ works is installed in the public areas of campus buildings. The entire College is an educational art museum. This Collection reveals aspects of America's and New Jersey's rich artistic and cultural history from the Hudson River School period to today. In recent years, the College's acquisition efforts have focused on strengthening its American and New Jersey modern and contemporary collections.

Each month, this page in *HCCC Happenings* provides updates on artists whose works are in the Collection, and new additions to the Collection.

## DONOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to President Emeritus Dr. Glen Gabert and his husband Gregory Ratcliff for the generous donation of framed paintings, prints, books, and U.S. historical presidential memorabilia.

Thank you to the folks at Bruce Teleky, Inc. for the donation of posters for art-student projects.

Thank you to Nancy Stein and Edward McDermott for the donation of lovely works on paper.

Thank you to Clifford Brooks for the archival material about artist Johanna Vogelsang.

Thank you to Martha Posner for donating three of her inspiring and haunting mixed-media works.

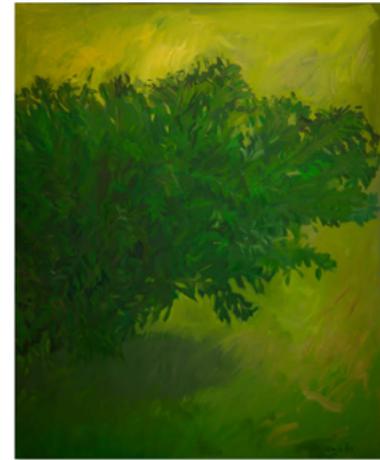
## ARTIST NEWS

Rest in peace **Frank Gehry**, who died in December at the age of 96. On campus, he is known as the creator of the marvelous and strange cardboard "Wiggle Chair" on view in the North Hudson Campus lobby. Gehry made wiggle chairs as part of an experiment in creating affordable, interesting furniture out of simple materials. If you like that chair, take a look at some of his amazing architecture: Frank Gehry's most iconic work - in pictures ([https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0qlgx275jq0?mc\\_eid=e82b1ae71f&mc\\_eid=c1337f3b6d](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0qlgx275jq0?mc_eid=e82b1ae71f&mc_eid=c1337f3b6d))

**Kerry James Marshall**'s work is temporarily removed from the walls of 2 Enos Place while the construction workers forge a new entrance to the building from the Center for Student Success under construction. In the meantime, please enjoy this short video Marshall made for the Royal Academy of Arts called, "How to Use Black Paint" where he talks about the many shades of black he uses in his most famous pictures: *How to Use Black Paint* | Kerry James Marshall (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNnl9bLyTUA&t=71s>)

**Daniel Buren**, whose work is on exhibit at the North Hudson library, is having a show at Galerie Mennour in Paris, France. If you'd like to see the show, and can't get to Paris, here's a quick, fun look at the installation: Daniel Buren's new solo show at Mennour (<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/8Kv4eISKNOU>)

If you enjoy the warm serenity of **Cornelia Foss**'s large, green, nature painting on the 2nd floor of 870 Bergen Avenue (the Cundari building), you might be surprised to learn that with her family, she made a dramatic, dangerous escape from Nazi Germany in 1939. (They went to the United States where her father had secured a job.) According to *The New York Times*, Foss's more recent work has addressed a variety of topics including, "paintings of the innocent victims of American drone strikes," and the "Little Red" pictures. Foss's exhibit last month, called "Little Red," included a series of paintings that allude to the children's story, "Little Red Rid-



*Cornelia Foss, Untitled (1995), painting on canvas, 50" x 40".*

ing Hood" and more personal matters. **Cornelia Foss - Little Red - Exhibitions - Hirsch & Adler** (<https://www.hirschlandadler.com/exhibitions/cornelia-foss?view=slider#2>) *The New York Times* profiled the 94 year old artist. For more information, check it out: *In Her 90s, a Painter Finally Confronts Her Nazi Trauma - The New York Times* ([https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/04/nyregion/cornelia-foss-little-red-nazi.html?unlocked\\_article\\_code=1.608.SLf\\_3LdZ8KQ0woEb&smid=url-share](https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/04/nyregion/cornelia-foss-little-red-nazi.html?unlocked_article_code=1.608.SLf_3LdZ8KQ0woEb&smid=url-share))

**We welcome anecdotes and information about how the Foundation Art Collection benefits our community. If you have enjoyed using the Art Collection in your teaching, your studies, or your everyday life, please let us know! Contact [ASiegel@hccc.edu](mailto:ASiegel@hccc.edu) and tell us the story of how the Art Collection works for you.**

To make a monetary gift in support of the Foundation Art Collection, please contact Nicole Bouknight Johnson at (201) 360-4069 or [nicolebjohnson@hccc.edu](mailto:nicolebjohnson@hccc.edu).

To donate artwork, find detailed information here: [www.hccc.edu/community/arts/foundation-art-collection/index.html](http://www.hccc.edu/community/arts/foundation-art-collection/index.html).

Explore the Foundation Art Collection using our new online searchable tools! Go to [www.hccc.edu/community/arts/foundation-art-collection/category-collection-search.html](http://www.hccc.edu/community/arts/foundation-art-collection/category-collection-search.html).

## FALL 2025 LEARNING COMMUNITY DAY PRESENTATIONS

**O**n Monday, Nov. 24, 2025, Hudson County Community College hosted its semiannual Learning Community Day in the Student Center. Students enrolled in Fall 2025 Learning Community courses presented posters and delivered oral presentations highlighting their collaborative academic work. Learning Communities connect two or more courses around a shared theme, with faculty coordinating assignments, class activities, and field experiences. This structure helps students explore meaningful connections between different disciplines and deepen their understanding through integrated learning.



OFFICE OF  
**CULTURAL AFFAIRS**  
presents



### Fifty Years of Excellence at Hudson County Community College

Hudson County Community College (HCCC), in partnership with the Museum of Jersey City History, proudly presents "Fifty Years of Excellence." The exhibition celebrates the College's half-century anniversary by offering a historical look back, with many "then and now" moments.

Over the years, HCCC's mission and reputation strengthened as an affordable public institution providing quality educational services to community members. Once nicknamed the "College Without Walls," HCCC helped transform Journal Square into a viable learning neighborhood with the support of local officials and residents alike. This success enabled the expansion of the College's county-wide presence with the opening of additional locations in Secaucus and Union City. Today, the College's motto, "Hudson is Home," echoes loudly throughout the County.

Special highlights include student honors, faculty achievements, and award-winning programs. For those who attended HCCC for a semester or an associate degree, one can

rekindle fond memories through student newsletters, yearbooks, and HCCC ephemera. For those interested in local history, the exhibit showcases the city's intricate past through media features, architectural plans, and timeless photographs of Journal Square.

The artifacts on display serve as a heartfelt thank you to all who believed in, supported, and attended this dynamic institution in an area of constant change over the past five decades.

The Hudson County Community College Office of Cultural Affairs expressed its gratitude to all who assisted in gathering information and objects for this exhibition. Special thanks to the HCCC President's Office, the HCCC Library Archive, community members, HCCC staff and faculty, dedicated students and alumni, the Jersey City Free Public Library New Jersey Room, and the Museum of Jersey City History for making this possible.

The exhibit is located at the Museum of Jersey City History, 298 Academy Street, and open through March 7, 2026.

### HCCC RECOGNIZES DECEMBER GRADUATES AT SPECIAL RECEPTION



**O**n Monday, Dec. 15 and Tuesday, Dec. 16, Hudson County Community College celebrated the dedication and perseverance of its December graduates at a Graduate Reception held in the Scott Ring Room of the Culinary Conference Center. College leaders and student speakers shared powerful reflections on resilience, applauding graduates for overcoming challenges and reaching this milestone. Graduates were also invited to return for HCCC's May 2026 Commencement, continuing a proud tradition of celebration and achievement.

### CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT GRADUATE EARNS PROFESSIONAL POSITION

**C**ongratulations to Yassine Bilga, a recent graduate of Hudson County Community College's (HCCC) Construction Management Program, who has secured a Construction Inspector/Manager position with Dewberry Engineers Inc., a leading engineering firm in the New York/New Jersey region.

The professional success of our students reflects the strong quality of education and preparation provided by the program.



### LITERARY CAFE JANUARY PICK:

*Small Things Like These*  
by Claire Keegan

It is 1985 in a small Irish town. During the weeks leading up to Christmas, Bill Furlong, a coal merchant and family man, faces his busiest season. Early one morning, while delivering an order to the local convent, Bill makes a discovery which forces him to confront both his past and the complicit silences of a town controlled by the church.

Already an international bestseller, *Small Things Like These* is a deeply affecting story of hope, quiet heroism, and empathy from one of our most critically lauded and iconic writers.

Next meeting - Thursday, Feb. 5 at 2 p.m.  
Open to all HCCC students, staff, faculty and community members.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=X3KnydgkwEa-3PkxwnMvbieNFKJxTX-VOpbPe7G1HCnxUQ1laT1JFVEczOUxMWkpw-MUo1T0tQUURZTi4u>

E-book and audiobook copies of the book are available for loan to HCCC students and faculty.  
Copies can be checked out through <https://hccc.overdrive.com>.

### HONORS STUDENTS PRESENT RESEARCH AT FALL SHOWCASE



**O**n Thursday, Dec. 4, Hudson County Community College hosted its Fall Honors Showcase, where Honors students delivered live and video presentations highlighting their research and creative work. Students shared papers and digitally designed posters developed in their Honors courses, demonstrating high-level scholarship, interdisciplinary thinking, and strong academic engagement. The event celebrated the dedication and achievement of HCCC's Honors community.

## PHI THETA KAPPA HONOR SOCIETY NEWS



Stephane Zayas is an Early College student. He will graduate from HCCC in May and from his high school in June. He became a member of Phi Theta Kappa in June. This photo was taken at the Phi Theta Kappa induction on November 24. His mother, Dr. Lisette Kimbere attended.

Dr. Kimbere became a member of Phi Theta Kappa in February 2005. She graduated from the registered nursing program and continued her college education as she worked as a nurse. She is now a nurse practitioner with a doctorate at Mount Sinai Medical Center.



Hudson County Community College celebrated its newest Phi Theta Kappa inductees on Monday, Nov. 24, honoring students for their academic excellence and leadership.

## HCCC WELCOMES ALUMNA, EDUCATOR, AND COMMUNITY ACTIVIST LISSA SANTIAGO TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

*Continued from page 3*

Dr. Doria's distinguished career began on the Bayonne Board of Education and spanned multiple leadership roles, including New Jersey Assemblyman, Mayor of Bayonne, and New Jersey State Senator. He also served as Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs and chaired or held membership in several statewide agencies focused on housing, redevelopment, and affordable living.

Ms. Santiago brings a deep commitment to children, education, and community empowerment. As a Puerto Rican immigrant who arrived in the United States at age 17, she comes from a multigenerational family of educators. She earned an associate degree in Childcare Education from HCCC and began her career as an elementary teacher in Jersey City Public Schools. She advanced to administrative roles, serving as assistant principal at Frank R. Conwell Middle School #4, Franklin Williams Middle School #7, and currently Martin Luther King, Jr. School #11. She also served as

acting principal at James F. Murray Public School #38. Ms. Santiago holds a master's degree in Bilingual/Bicultural/ESL Urban Studies from Seton Hall University and a master's in Administration, Curriculum, and Instruction from New Jersey City University.

Her community work includes decades of service to underprivileged families, seniors, and children, as well as involvement in alcohol and drug abuse programs. Through the Lissa Santiago Foundation, she leads holiday food drives, backpack and school supply giveaways, health fairs, and toy drives in collaboration with local organizations.

The HCCC Board of Trustees includes 10 voting members—eight appointed by the County and at least two by the Governor—along with the College President as a non-voting ex-officio member and one student representative. Trustees oversee the College's performance, statutory compliance, and service to students and the community.

## Hudson County Community College cares about you and wants to help.

Are you experiencing stress, depression, or anxiety?

Difficulty adjusting to the College environment?

Dealing with mental health and wellness?



Please complete the General Concern Form

Click here: <https://tinyurl.com/HCCC-Care> or scan the QR code. The form is NOT monitored 24/7.

A member of the CARE team will respond to your request during regular business hours.

If you need immediate help call or text 988 or visit <https://988lifeline.org>

## STEM STUDENTS EXPLORE LIBERTY SCIENCE CENTER



**O**n Friday, Dec. 5, 12 HCCC students spent an exciting and educational afternoon at Liberty Science Center. The trip was organized by the HCCC Chemistry Club and the HCCC Environmental Club, led by their presidents Kymani Marshall and Abderrahman Yakhoub Madina. Dr. Fatma Tat serves as the advisor for both clubs.

Students explored interactive exhibits, enjoyed hands-on science demonstrations, and even built new friendships along the way. The event offered a fun and memorable STEM learning experience outside the classroom.

## SAINT PETER'S UNIVERSITY JOINS HUDSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE CONNECT PROGRAM

Two historic Hudson County institutions of higher education formalized a new partnership on Tuesday, Dec. 2, signing an agreement that establishes Saint Peter's University as an official partner of the CONNECT program at Hudson County Community College (HCCC). Saint Peter's University President Dr. Hubert Benitez and HCCC President Dr. Christopher Reber signed the agreement, and were joined by administrators and staff who helped develop the partnership.

HCCC launched the CONNECT program two years ago to create a seamless transfer pathway for students pursuing a bachelor's degree. The program offers dual enrollment and structured academic support designed to help students graduate on time while reducing costs. More than 200 students currently participate. Leaders from both institutions finalized the Saint Peter's partnership in just four months, reflecting a shared commitment to expanding access and opportunity.

Through the agreement, Saint Peter's University will offer 16 academic programs to CONNECT students, including accounting, biology, business administration, criminal justice, cybersecurity, education, and psychology. Six of the programs also include graduate degree opportunities. In addition, Saint Peter's faculty will teach select third-year courses on the HCCC campus.

Dr. Lisa Dougherty, Senior Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment, opened the



*Dr. Christopher Reber (left), President of Hudson County Community College, and Dr. Hubert Benitez, President of Saint Peter's University, sign an agreement establishing the University as an official partner of the CONNECT program at HCCC.*

signing ceremony by highlighting the program's student-centered design. Alexandra Ruiz, Admissions and Enrollment Specialist at Saint Peter's University, will serve as the CONNECT liaison and transfer success coach.

Beyond academics, CONNECT students may participate in Saint Peter's athletics, use campus facilities such as the library, and attend University events, further reinforcing their dual identity.

Guillermo de Veyga, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at Saint Peter's University, emphasized the importance of choice and inclusion.

Dr. Reber underscored the shared mission driving the partnership. "So much more is

possible when we work together, as institutions, as colleagues, around a single common value," he said. "Why are all of us doing this work in higher education? It's because of our students. We are all united by a commitment, providing life changing opportunities for our students."

Dr. Benitez closed by addressing students directly and reflecting on Saint Peter's Jesuit values. After describing the institution's emphasis on "care for the whole person," he said, "It is values-based education. For the students in the room, I say this, and I say it with all confidence, every single student, I believe, feels at Saint Peter's, it is home. 'Hudson is Home' for Hudson County Community College; Hudson is home for Saint Peter's University."

### NEWS FROM HUDSON COUNTY EXECUTIVE CRAIG GUY

*Continued from page 3*

Center at Bayonne High School. The new vocational school will serve approximately 400 students in grades 9 through 12 from across Hudson County's 12 municipalities, offering career-focused programs in Mechanical, Construction, Finance, Medical/Clinical, Criminal Justice, Digital Communications, Electrical, Plumbing, Carpentry, and Cosmetology, alongside core academic classes aligned with New Jersey standards.

And in December, County Executive Guy announced the Hudson County Affordable Housing Initiative. This ambitious plan will bring hundreds of new affordable housing units to Jersey City on county-owned land.

County Executive Guy is excited about these efforts and what is to come.

### HOLIDAY HANGOUT WITH PROFESSORS



On Tuesday evening, Dec. 9, the Professional Association's Student-Faculty Relations Committee, with the Student Government Association (SGA), hosted a Holiday Hangout that brought students and faculty together for informal conversation and connection. The event created a welcoming space for engagement beyond the classroom. The Office of Student Life and Leadership provided a variety of refreshments.

Instructor Raffi Manjikian and SGA President Rifaya Dubash Khajamohideen introduced the program. Throughout the evening, participants discussed a range of academic and institutional topics, including course delivery

and instructional modalities, the role of artificial intelligence in education, civic engagement, and strategies to support student success. Faculty participants included Michael Ferlise, Dr. Sirhan Abdullah, Heather Connors, Dr. Christopher Cody, Saliha Yagoubi, Dr. Benedetto Youssef, Inez Cruz, Dr. Josue Perez, Sonia Anastasi, and Dr. Jihan Nakhla.

With 65 attendees, the Holiday Hangout was a clear success. Students expressed strong interest in future events, and organizers look forward to continuing this collaborative initiative.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT NEWS

### HCCC Celebrates Graduates of the Turner School of Construction Management



Hudson County Community College and the Jersey City Office of Diversity and Inclusion celebrated the initial cohort of the Turner School of Construction Management Program on Dec. 2.



*Community and Citizenship Coordinator, Turner Construction, Ashlee Sullivan, Director of the Jersey City Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Dr. Floyd Jeter, Vice President for Strategic Initiative, Continuing Education, and Workforce Development, HCCC, Lori Margolin, and Vice President, Community and Citizenship, Turner Construction, Dexter Hendricks*

Hudson County Community College (HCCC), in partnership with Turner Construction and the Jersey City Office of Diversity and Inclusion, proudly celebrated the graduation of 24 students (representing 22 small construction businesses) on Tuesday, December 2.

The Turner School of Construction Management (TSCM), which began in 1969, is one of the oldest and most prestigious education and community outreach initiatives in the commercial construction industry. The

TSCM provides small and diverse construction businesses the opportunity to participate in free training which fosters long-term relationships, the creation of networks, and the knowledge to position companies to win work. The eight-week program began on Tuesday, Oct. 7.

Classes included topics such as Project Safety, Surety, Insurance & Bonding, Project Estimating, Project Planning & Scheduling, Construction Finance & Cost, Contract Risk Management, Managing Human Capital, and Lean/Sustainability.

### Holiday Cookies & Treats Class



*Smiles all around as participants wrap up a hands-on Holiday Cookies & Treats workshop at HCCC*



*Guests work side-by-side measuring and preparing ingredients as they begin their holiday cookie dough*

On December 6, HCCC's CEWD hosted their annual festive and interactive Holiday Cookies & Treats Class. Guests were guided through a hands-on cookie making experience featuring classic seasonal flavors and creative decorating techniques. Attendees explored

holiday-inspired spices, practiced shaping and designing a variety of cookies, and learned tips to achieve consistent, bakery quality results at home. Interested in more? Keep an eye out for more culinary classes coming in 2026!

### CONTINUING EDUCATION UPCOMING PROGRAMS

#### JANUARY

##### CANNABIS HEALTH & SAFETY ONLINE COURSE (ONLINE)

January 23, 2026 to March 13, 2026 | Price: \$525  
<https://tinyurl.com/5n93x2y8>

##### Certificates in Construction Management CONSTRUCTION PROJECT PLANNING AND CONTROL (REMOTE)

January 23, 2026 to May 15, 2026 | 6:30 p.m. to 10:15 p.m. (Fridays) | Price: \$600  
<https://tinyurl.com/yzaubpnp>

##### CONSTRUCTION PROCEDURES, MATERIALS, AND TESTING (REMOTE/IN-PERSON LAB)

January 27, 2026 to May 14, 2026  
6:30 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. (Tuesdays (Lecture Remote) and Thursdays (In-Person Lab) | Price: \$1,200  
<https://tinyurl.com/yzaubpnp>

##### INTRODUCTION TO ENGINEERING SCIENCE AND CALCULATIONS (IN-PERSON)

January 28, 2026 to May 13, 2026  
5:30 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. (Wednesdays) | Price: \$735  
<https://tinyurl.com/yzaubpnp>

##### CONSTRUCTION CODES (REMOTE)

January 26, 2026 to May 18, 2026  
6:30 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. (Mondays) | Price: \$600  
<https://tinyurl.com/yzaubpnp>

##### CANNABIS COMPLIANCE COURSE (ONLINE)

January 23, 2026 to March 13, 2026 | Price: \$525  
<https://tinyurl.com/yjm7fbfs>

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

**School of Continuing Education  
and Workforce Development**

161 Newkirk Street, Room E504, Jersey City, NJ 07306  
(201) 360-4224/5358 | [CE@hccc.edu](mailto:CE@hccc.edu)

**OUR UPCOMING JANUARY CULINARY CLASSES INCLUDE:**  
**Pasta & Wine; Bread Making Class; Gourmet Pizza Making & Wine; and A Taste of New Orleans!**

**For more information, send an email to [ce@hccc.edu](mailto:ce@hccc.edu) and join the mailing list.**

# ALUMNI CORNER

## Martina Nevado

HCCC Class of 2019, Associate of Fine Arts, Studio Arts

Tina is the founder and CEO of Tina & Kid's Creations ([www.tkcreations101.com](http://www.tkcreations101.com)).

### What brought you to HCCC?

One reason I chose HCCC was accessibility. My children were young; I didn't drive, and the train brought me right here. Additionally, the Continuing Education program caught my attention because it offered fashion design classes. I wanted a place where I could earn my degree but also come back later to expand my skills. Moreover, the campus offers resources that make learning inclusive for students from different backgrounds and with diverse needs.

### How did you become interested in art?

Since I can remember, I've been interested in arts and crafts. From a young age, I designed and created my own toys and garments. At age 11, I made my first dress entirely by hand. I used a screwdriver and a hammer to make toy chairs and tables for my dolls. Once, I made an entire Monopoly game because I couldn't buy it. My friend lent me his game, and I spent the afternoon drawing and painting my Monopoly set. My grandmother taught me how to crochet.

### Tell us about your artwork being featured internationally.

Everything happened quickly. I obtained my AFA because I wanted to be an art teacher. However, a semester before graduating, I was invited to exhibit two of my works at the Rotunda Gallery of Jersey City Hall in 2018, and I was selling my first work at the Students Exhibition in 2019. Then invitations from other galleries arrived. The Zhou B Art Center is a popular gallery in Chicago showcasing contemporary art from renowned artists, and I was amazed to be accepted there. Then came exhibitions in the Dominican Republic and France. It was an incredible experience that I shared with my granddaughter, who also exhibited at the Carrousel Du Louvre in Paris. I am also happy that one of my pieces is in permanent exhibition in the Veterans Room at HCCC's Student Center.

### What were some of your favorite classes at HCCC?

My favorite classes were Dimensional Design and Drawing. I love sculptures, assemblies, collages, and creating my own techniques. From Professor Jon Rappleye, I learned that there is a whole world of materials beyond pencil and paper for drawing. I enjoyed all the techniques I learned in his class. Dimensional Design with Professor Jason Minami was the class that truly captivated me. With the techniques I learned, I began a career in three-dimensional art. Laurie Riccadona and Katie Newoduski were also excellent teachers. Under their guidance, I was invited to exhibit at the Rotunda Gallery. Both

are incredible artists who also inspired me in my work.

### What inspired you to start Tina & Kids Creations? Tell us about Tina & Kids Creations.

While at HCCC, I decided to follow my passion for the arts by starting a mobile art school. By bringing the art workshops to them, I wanted to provide an environment where students of all ages can explore their creativity, learn new techniques, and build confidence in their artistic abilities. The training I received at HCCC gave me the skills and confidence to achieve my goal. Tina & Kids' Creations (TKC) was born to build communities through art, and to nurture and care for children's talent. Nothing is more unfair than a child being unable to attend a class because they can't afford the price or because it is too far away. We provide in-person and virtual interactive workshops in culinary, fashion design, and visual art areas, designed to foster creativity and productivity in children and adults. Do not underestimate children, inspire and support them, and they will amaze you.

### Why is it important to teach the next generation of children to sew and cook?

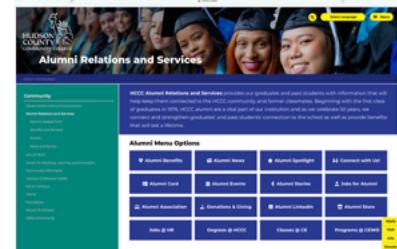
I always tell my students, 'It doesn't matter what you choose to be in life; learning to cook and sew increases your creativity.' In any profession, there is a need for skilled, focused, and creative people. Children develop great concentration when they sew and become sustainable. Instead of throwing things away, they learn to repair them. Learning to cook gives them independence. They learn math through the weighing and measuring of ingredients. It's important to teach the next generation these skills because they foster independence, creativity, problem solving, and sustainability. Above all, in modern life, this is when we most need to reconnect as humanity. Cooking and sewing teach children to respect and preserve their roots and traditions.

### Any other favorite memories of HCCC you'd like to share?

One of my greatest memories was the Fashion Design classes I took in the Continuing Education Program in 2006. My teacher, Mrs. C, who became my role model, mentor, and friend, taught me much of what I now teach in my workshops. After these classes, I presented two successful fashion shows in NJ and NY. I hope to one day follow in her footsteps by teaching others what she taught me.



## What's New?



### Updated Alumni Web Pages:

Explore the updates and stay connected—visit the pages here: <https://www.hccc.edu/community/alumni-services/index.html>

## Alumni Benefits:



With an Alumni Card, you can take advantage of exclusive benefits and stay connected to the HCCC community! Details here: <https://www.hccc.edu/community/alumni-services/index.html>

## Alumni Giving:



You can sponsor events, students, or classes, or make an annual contribution at a level that works for you. Every gift, no matter the size, makes a difference.

Giving is easy—visit <https://www.hccc.edu/community/foundation/index.html#ways-to-give> to make your impact today!



The Alumni Association has launched its new Instagram page!

Follow us at  
**@hccc\_alumni**

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 Secaucus, NJ 07094  
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Invest in the education  
 of an HCCC student by  
 making your gift of any  
 amount today.



## 50 FACES OF ALUMNI:

As part of the 50th Anniversary of Hudson County Community College, we introduce and celebrate our 50 Faces of Alumni: Fifty and Forward. This campaign focuses on the importance of Alumni to the College, the workforce, and community by highlighting 50 Alumni in various fields, levels of achievement, and from different backgrounds who have studied at the College. "50 Faces" can be seen online at <https://www.hccc.edu/community/alumni-services/50-faces/index.html>

### 50 Faces of Alumni

*"Hudson was the base for everything I am today—it was the first step that made it all possible."*

**BLADIMIR QUITO**  
 Vice Consul of Queens for the Government of Ecuador  
 Class of 2010  
 HCCC A.S Criminal Justice

Bladimir Quito currently serves as the Vice Consul of Queens for the Government of Ecuador, continuing a long-standing career in diplomacy and community service

### 50 Faces of Alumni

*"My Hudson experience was excellent; it helped build the self-discipline and motivation to thrive in any environment."*

**Martin Okoro**  
 Smart Technologies Specialist at Veolia  
 Class of 2023  
 Environmental Science, A.S.

Martin Okoro is a Smart Technologies Specialist at Veolia, the world's largest water services firm, and a proud graduate of Hudson County Community College, Class of 2023.

## Alumni Association 2026 Alumni Meetings

- Tuesday, January 27, 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, April 7, 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, July 7, 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, September 15, 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

## Alumni Association Events:

*The new Alumni Association Board is planning four events in 2026.*

### March

Alumni Association Broadway Show  
 Networking Event

### May

Alumni Association BBQ Networking  
 Event at Liberty State Park

### April

Alumni Job Fair in collaboration  
 with Career Services & Community  
 Education and Workforce Development

### November

Alumni Winter Market  
 Showcasing Alumni businesses

## HCCC Alumni: Get Involved!

**Join, socialize, and network!**  
 For information about the College's  
 Alumni Association and membership  
 benefits, please email [alumni@hccc.edu](mailto:alumni@hccc.edu).



## COLLEGE EVENTS CALENDAR

For the most up-to-date information, please visit <https://www.hccc.edu/calendar>.  
 Hudson County Community College reserves the right to modify the calendar as necessary.

