PRESIDENT'S REPORT

TO: **Members, OCC Board of Trustees**

FROM: **Pamela Monaco, Ph.D.**
President

SUBJECT: **Items of Interest for the November 5, 2026, Board Meeting**

DATE: **October 29, 2026**

Presentations

- Helping Hands, OCC's campus food pantry, has continued to grow since its opening in 2018. With the help of many students, faculty, and staff, what started as a small pantry in a small club room has grown to a classroom on the ground floor of the library. The pantry welcomed over 1,200 students during the 2025-2026 academic year, which equated to over 7,700 visits. At Thursday's Board meeting, Assistant Director of Student Life Michelle Youngs and Helping Hands Coordinator Rachel Hess will be joined by several Helping Hands student volunteers to provide an update on the happenings in the food pantry.

- Dr. Joseph Konopka, Part-Time Instructor and Special Project Liaison, worked on a research project that examined how instructional design functions are organized and supported across community colleges. The goal was to identify scalable best practices that can strengthen teaching, faculty support, and student learning at Ocean County College. The project included an environmental scan, analysis of organizational structures and job descriptions, and case studies of peer institutions to better understand effective instructional design models. The project gathered input from OCC instructional designers, faculty, and academic deans to assess current practices, opportunities, and challenges. The findings can be used to develop a practical framework and recommendations for optimizing OCC's instructional design operations, staffing, workflows, and integration with faculty development and academic technology initiatives. Dr. Konopka will share his findings with you at Thursday's meeting.

Phi Theta Kappa

Phi Theta Kappa, the two-year college national honor society, recognizes student academic success and provides opportunities to develop professional and leadership skills, earn scholarships, explore career paths,

and expand goals. It is the largest honor society in American higher education, with more than 1.5 million members and 1,200 chapters.

Tau Iota, Ocean County College's chapter, has enjoyed great success throughout the years and received the society's highest honors, being named a REACH (Recognizing Excellence and Completion with Honors) Chapter, a Five-Star Chapter, and a Gold Chapter. Additionally, hundreds of OCC students have been individually honored for their PTK contributions.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the steadfast commitment and dedication of Tau Iota advisors. PTK sent a service pin for Mr. David Rickert, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Social Sciences, in recognition of his ten years serving as an advisor. Other PTK advisors are Dr. Jennifer Dellner, Professor of English and Literature; Ms. Caroline Showalter, Assistant Dean of the School of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics; and Mr. Paul Rizzo, Arts and Humanities Adjunct Faculty Member. They provide exceptional leadership and mentorship to Phi Theta Kappa students. Additionally, Ms. Jennifer Kane, Executive Director of Student Life, has been exceptionally helpful to the advisors and the PTK students.

Ocean County College Library

- The Ocean County College Library is a congressionally designated participant in the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP). The OCC Library is celebrating its 61st Anniversary as a U.S. Federal Depository Library for publications of the United States Government, 1966-2027.

  A congratulatory letter was received from Scott Matheson, U.S. Government Publishing Office Superintendent of Documents. To explore the FDLP resource holdings available through the OCC Library, please see https://ocean.libguides.com/govdocs.

Faculty and Staff Professional Development

- Mr. Bryan Zangrando, Senior Procurement Analyst, completed Cornell University's Procurement Strategy certificate program, a 60-hour professional development course covering purchasing, supplier management, inventory planning, cost analysis, negotiation, and contract management. Through the program, he expanded his knowledge of procurement best practices and developed practical skills in evaluating suppliers, managing inventory, controlling costs, and making informed purchasing decisions. The knowledge and skills gained through this program will help support the College's procurement activities and contribute to effective purchasing and contract management.

- To ensure high-quality care for Ocean County College students, the Counseling Center clinical staff completed two specialized advanced training programs, both funded via a grant from the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education:

  - Brainspotting Certification (Phase 1, 3 Day Intensive): Clinicians Enrolled were Ms. Darra Stack, LCSW; Ms. Kelly Petrolis, LPC; Ms. Aida Hernandez, LPC; Ms. Richelle Corbo, LPC; Ms. Alejandra Sanchez-Medina, and two graduate student interns.

  - Sex Offender Treatment Provider Certification Pathway: Clinicians Enrolled were Ms. Darra Stack, LCSW; and Ms. Kelly Petrolis, LPC.

- On October 6, 2026, Ms. Heather Richman, Student Support Coordinator of Access and Disability Services, participated in AHEAD Start Academy, a six-day online foundational program for early-career disability resource professionals. Sessions covered disability as a civil right, Section 504 and

ADA legal requirements, case law and settlement agreements, disability concepts, outreach and consultation, and professional self-care.

- Ms. Michelle Youngs and Ms. Rachel Hess represented OCC and its Helping Hands food pantry at the first national convening with Swipe out Hunger on October 14 and 15, 2026. This event brought together food pantry personnel from colleges and universities from throughout the country to connect, unite, and learn from each other. OCC Helping Hands is proud to stand with others in higher education as we work to meet the basic needs of students, faculty, and staff in our communities.

- Ms. Margaret Nally, MSN, RN, Skills Lab and Simulation Coordinator, attended a Simulation Conference on October 7, 2026, in Providence, New Jersey, sponsored by Laerdal Medical Company. The conference focused on the use of simulation to strengthen nursing practice.

Faculty and Staff Accomplishments/Honors/Publications

- On October 16, 2026, Ms. Sara Winchester, Executive Vice President of Finance and Administration, participated in a collaborative meeting with representatives from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, the Office of Assemblywoman Heather Simmons, and others to review the latest proposed amendments to the County College Contracts Law (A3427). Ocean County College and Middlesex College represented the community colleges on the call. The group reviewed the current draft of the legislation and expressed general satisfaction with the proposed revisions, which are expected to provide significant improvements and modernization to county college contracting processes. College representatives suggested only a few minor technical adjustments and deliberately avoided requesting major changes in order to maintain momentum for passage of the legislation.

  Participants thanked state officials and legislative staff for their extensive work on the proposal and conveyed the community colleges' strong support for the measure. Based on the positive tone of the discussion and the broad consensus among stakeholders, there is growing optimism that these long-sought reforms may advance successfully through the legislative process.

- Dr. Madison Peschock, College Lecturer II in English and Literature, was recently informed that her article titled "Arguing Writing and Murder, Oh My," was accepted for publication in The Arkansas English Journal. The Editor of the Journal specifically noted that Dr. Peschock's article was selected based on its contribution to the field of education. The Arkansas English Journal is a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) regional publication.

- Ms. Jenna Puglisi, Student Success Coordinator, has started an OCC Chapter of Her Campus. Co-advising the initiative is Christine Cryan, College Lecturer II in English. Her Campus is an international online magazine, with over 350 college chapters. Its mission is to empower female voices, though all students are welcome to join and submit for professional publication. The OCC Her Campus chapter aims to provide students with editing, writing, marketing, and leadership experience.

- Assistant Director of Student Life Michelle Youngs recently attended the American Association for Teaching and Curriculum (AATC) annual conference in Phoenix, Arizona. Ms. Youngs presented the research she has completed for her education doctorate dissertation in practice through Marymount University. Her study focuses on how the emotion of shame can affect social connections, and how utilizing elements of a pedagogy of vulnerability may help students initiate and maintain social connections on campus.

- Under the guidance and supervision of Physics and Chemistry Instructor Dr. Eugene de Silva, his physics student, Mujtaba Farooq, conducted a six-month research project involving a survey

investigating the use of artificial intelligence (AI) among students in higher education. The research explores AI adoption patterns, educational benefits, and concerns related to academic integrity. Dr. de Silva subsequently developed the research findings into a scholarly book chapter, with Mujtaba Farooq as a contributing coauthor.

Their coauthored book chapter, titled "Student Use of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: Adoption Patterns, Educational Benefits, and Academic Integrity Concerns," has been accepted for publication in the forthcoming book, *Driving Global Sustainability Through Educational Technologies*.

This collaborative research highlights OCC's commitment to faculty-student research partnerships, undergraduate research opportunities, and the exploration of emerging educational technologies. The project also contributes to a broader understanding of how artificial intelligence is influencing teaching, learning, and academic integrity in higher education.

Student Support Services and Activities

- OCC Advisors are currently reviewing and updating the academic plan for each student enrolled in the Student Success course in Fall 2026. This process includes ensuring the current plan is accurate and updating the Spring course plan in preparation for Spring registration. Advisors will be meeting with each section of the course in October and November.

- Advising activity for September 4 through October 15, 2026, was busy:

  - Current/Returning Student Walk-In Advising: 921
  - New Student Walk-In Advising: 103
  - New Student Advising Appointments: 1
  - Virtual Advising Appointments: 227
  - Inbox inquiries (September): 262

- The Enrollment Services teams had a total of 4,291 visits in the Student Enrollment Building during September. The average wait time was a little over 8 minutes. The most popular reasons for student visits included Enrollment Services (over 2,500 visits), Academic Advising (over 800 visits) and Financial Aid questions (245 visits).

- The Enrollment team completed over 4,000 calls in the month of September, including answering over 2,000 calls, completing 1,129 outgoing calls through the Recruit CRM, and returning almost 500 voicemails.

- The Office of Records and Registration completed 75 graduation audits in September for students hoping to graduate in December 2026.

- The Early College team hosted 12 registration days, in person, for high school students, including visits to OCVTS locations, Red Bank Catholic, Point Pleasant Beach, Pinelands, Lacey, and Toms River East and North High Schools.

- The students from Ambassador Christian Academy visited Ocean County College on October 2, 2026. They received a college tour, attended the transfer college fair, and were issued their student IDs. In total, 22 students participated.

- The Student Success team completed 58 visits to 31 face-to-face Student Success Seminars, meeting 875 students. The team discussed resources for new students and provided resource tours to the classes.

- The Student Success team launched Canvas Workshops this past month to assist students with how to use Canvas, login to their classes, and receive assistance at the start of the term. The first event on September 8, 2026, had 31 attendees; a second event was held on September 17, 2026.

- The Success team had two Scholarships chats in partnership with Academic Affairs and Transfer Services on September 22 and 23, 2026. The team was targeting potential Jack Kent Cooke applicants at OCC. There are 13 students currently working towards completing their applications.

- Student Success Coaches held Coffee with the Coaches on September 29, 2026. The coaches met with 40 students and were able to hear about class concerns, struggles, and wins, while, at the same time, developing new relationships.

- Through the month of September, there were 85 scans for Resource Rewards – a program where students earn 'credit' for visiting various support services across campus. This compares to 78 scans during the entire Fall 2025 semester, which is a significant increase.

- The Counseling Center reports the primary concerns presented by students during September 2026 related to stress, anxiety, emotional regulation/coping, summer academic demands, self-care, and interpersonal relationships. Compared to September 2025, there was a significant 35% increase in student appointments and student contacts this September:

    - Total Mental Health Counseling Sessions: 140 sessions (50–60 minutes each)
    - Case Management, Student Outreach, and Engagements**:** 148

- The Counseling Center hosted its annual Fresh Check Day suicide prevention event on September 24, 2026, attracting more than 200 students, 20 campus partners, and 20 community partners.

- On October 14, 2026, in recognition of National Suicide Prevention Month, the interactive mental health fair was held on OCC's campus featuring therapy dogs, wellness booths, a DJ, raffles, and community resources to promote mental health awareness, well-being, and suicide prevention. The event was supported by funding from the Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) grant.

- On September 2, 2026, the Counseling Center hosted an Open House for all faculty and staff. This event is being introduced as a new initiative, designed to bring faculty, staff, and campus partners together to connect, enjoy lunch, and explore student support resources. The event was a huge success with over 50+ faculty and staff attending. Everyone met the Counseling staff individually and toured the Center. The Counseling Center provided lunch for all attendees.

- On September 2, 2026, Counseling Center Director Richelle Corbo hosted a Teaching and Learning Institute Presentation on the topic of "Ethics of Dialogue in the Classroom: Navigating Difficult Conversations with Students."

- The Athletic department experienced an exciting Fall season, marked by outstanding performances from our student athletes:

    - The women's soccer team has been ranked in the national top ten most of the season and two student-athletes earned NJCAA Player of the Week recognition. The team is now going to compete at the National Championship tournament in upstate New York as the #6 team in the country. The team advanced with a 3- 2 win over Brookdale last Friday.

- The men's soccer team has been nationally-ranked, with 2 NJCAA Players of the Week this season. The team finished its season last Friday when, unfortunately, it came up short in the Region Championship vs Middlesex College.

- The women's volleyball team played in the Region semi-finals last week and lost a close match to Brookdale Community College.

- OCC's Cross-Country team ran in the Championship in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, this past weekend and had a few strong finishes from our runners.

- Financial Aid has been actively supporting Nursing students through the Pay It Forward Loan Program. In just under one month, the team spoke with more than 50 Nursing students and secured interest-free loans for 38 students, totaling $333,103. Financial Aid continues to conduct daily outreach to the Nursing community to ensure students are aware of this funding opportunity.

- The 2027–2028 FAFSA opened earlier than usual this year, and Financial Aid is pleased to announce that FAFSA workshops are now underway. Workshops are held every Wednesday from 5 to 7 p.m. in the Library Computer Lab and are open to both OCC students and the community.

- Throughout the month of September, staff from Access and Disability Services conducted 186 student meetings, 15 faculty meetings, and welcomed 60 new students to the start of the Fall 2026 semester. By the end of September, 416 students were enrolled in the Fall 2026 semester and considered eligible for Access and Disability services, compared with 372 students at the end of September 2025, representing a 12.3% year-over-year increase in enrollment.

- On October 6, 2026, the Office of Access and Disability Services co-hosted a National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) resource event in collaboration with the Ocean County Department of Human Services, Ocean County Library, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS), and Waters and Simms. More than 200 attendees visited 46 resource and employer tables located inside the Larson Student Center.

  I had the opportunity to welcome participants to the Annual DEAM Awards Ceremony, reaffirming Ocean County College's commitment to being a stigma-free campus and the message that Disability and Mental Health Matter - Every Mind. Every Body. Every Person**.**

  Ocean Count Commissioner Sam Ellenbogen presented a proclamation recognizing October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The ceremony also honored exemplary Ocean County employers and employees for their contributions to disability inclusion and employment.

- The Veterans and Military Resources Center (VMRC) was honored to provide the guest speaker for the September 11th remembrance ceremony, OCC alumnus Carmelo Hernandez, who shared his personal experience of that tragic day. Members of the Student Veterans Club also attended and helped plant flags in tribute to those who lost their lives.

- On September 15, 2026, VMRC staff and student workers hosted a resource table at the Grunin Center during the showing of *American Soldier*, providing the opportunity to connect with local veterans and share information about enrollment opportunities at OCC.

- On September 26, 2026, OCC's campus food pantry moved to a new, larger location in the Library Building, Room 013. This new location provides an expansion of offerings, to include more fresh food

and more culturally inclusive food. Many thanks to all of the Helping Hands volunteers who made this move possible.

- Student Life's annual Fall Fest took place on Wednesday, October 21, 2026. The campus community enjoyed live music by the "Foes of Fern," Fall treats, painting pumpkins, participating in club-led activities, and again meeting our friends from Out of Sight Alpacas.

Outreach to Students

- On October 18, 2026, over 50 students and faculty participated in the American Cancer Society "Making Strides Against Breast Cancer" walk in Point Pleasant Beach. The Nursing students of Ocean County College Team, led by Ana Nixon, President of the Ocean County College Student Nurse Organization (SNO), raised $1,370 to support the American Cancer Society Research Fund. Participation in the event was organized by members of the SNO.

- On October 21, 2026, graduating Nursing students attended a presentation sponsored by the New Jersey (NJ) Sharing Network. Ms. Amy Young, RN, Community Services Specialist from the NJ Sharing Network, discussed the vital role of the registered nurse in the organ and tissue donation process. This presentation is especially pertinent as it correlates to the curriculum covered within the final semester of the Nursing program.

- On October 21, 2026, Mr. Ryan Smith, BSN, RN, Assistant Nurse Manager for Heart and Vascular Services at Ocean University Medical Center and a graduate of Ocean County College, met with students who are completing the Nursing program this semester. Mr. Smith discussed his experiences as a male nurse and his journey in nursing from staff nurse to a position in nursing leadership at Hackensack Meridian Health.

- Ms. Donna Bonacorso, RN, MSN, NEA-BC, Chief Nursing Officer and Vice President for Patient Care Services, presented information to graduating students on October 21, 2026, regarding the Nurse Residency Program at Community Medical Center. Ms. Bonacorso discussed the application process as well as the schedule of events included in this year-long program.

- Adjunct Professor Robert Cincotta delivered the first in a series of personal finance workshops to approximately 60 students from two Student Success classes. The workshops are designed to address a gap in the School of Business and Social Sciences curriculum while helping students develop the financial knowledge and skills needed to navigate today's increasingly complex financial landscape. Following an evaluation of the initial workshops, the initiative may be expanded to offer free evening sessions to adults in the broader community.

- For October Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the Social Work and Addictions Counseling Club collected personal care items to donate to Ocean Partnership for Children's 7th Annual Domestic Violence Candlelight Vigil. On October 7, 2026, Social Work Program Chair Anais Mompoint attended the vigil with four students. The event honored the lives of those lost in Ocean County to Domestic Violence, while raising awareness on the impact of the social issue. The students in attendance were Jordan Schweitzer, Hadill Ibrahim, Jennifer Gagliardi, and Emma Riegert.

- On October 13, 2026, two social work students, Jack Shafto and Hadill Ibrahim, co-facilitated the Community Listening Circles through the Committee for Access and Belonging as part of their Honors by Contract project. The topic focused on Conflict Resolution and had a total of 15 participants (including 10 students and 5 employees). The additional students in attendance included Jordan

Schweitzer, Ameliah Leach, Tiffany Heline, Diego Garcia, Renée Feldbrand, Amy Davison, Destiny Colon, Eric Luna, and Jaelyn Sabey.

- On October 14, 2026, seven students enrolled in Human Behavior in the Social Environment attended the 2026 State of the Bay Symposium organized by the Barnegat Bay Partnership. The students learned about the key metrics and indicators of the Barnegat Bay Watershed, which coincides with the chapter on the impact of the Physical Environment on Human Behavior. The students in attendance were Jack Shafto, Jennifer Gagliardi, Anthony Denti, Matthew Stone, Julienne Smith, Makayla Drake, and Tiffany Celeste-Reitz.

Partnerships

- Hispanic Heritage Month, Encuentro Series - On September 15 and 22, 2026, in partnership with Alan Chirino, LPC, the Counseling Center hosted a four-part group discussion series creating a dedicated space for Latinx voices and topics, such as Machismo and Marianismo Gender Roles and "Hustle" Culture and Generational Work Ethics.

- On September 29, 2026, the Counseling Center partnered with the Ocean County Health Department to offer Opioid Overdose Education and Naloxone (Narcan) Training, equipping faculty, staff, and students with the knowledge to recognize signs of an opioid overdose and hands-on training in administering Naloxone.

- On September 18, 2026, through a partnership with the VA, Frontline Paper visited Ocean County College and provided student veterans with an opportunity to share their military experiences while creating artwork from recycled military uniforms transformed into paper.

- Student Life continued voter registration efforts into October during National Voter Education Week, thanks to our partnership with the local chapter of the League of Women Voters, who were on hand to help check voter registration status and help students make sure they are ready to vote in November. This led to the League speaking with 160 students and registering 25 confirmed new voters.

- Associate Director Jessica Zawerczuk established a promotional partnership between the Novins Planetarium and School of Rock – Brick. Through this collaboration, School of Rock families will receive a modest discount on laser shows featuring artists they study in their lessons.

- Ms. Victoria Buzcynski, Coordinator of Marketing and Sales, initiated a partnership between the Grunin Center and NewForm, a sober-living and recovery app that allows users to purchase tickets to sober activities. Since the Grunin Center does not serve alcohol, this partnership offers an exciting opportunity to reach a new audience. The Grunin Center is the first performing arts center to partner with NewForm.

Community Outreach

- The HUB's Instagram, under the expertise of Communications Coordinator Dante Lawson, saw an increase in traffic in the month of September. The account gained 40 new followers, and there were 3,231 unique viewers, an increase of over 14% from the prior month. The account had over 22,000 post views, which is also a large increase from the prior month.

- Student Life held its annual Flu Shot Clinic on Wednesday, October 7, 2026. Pharmacists from Stop and Shop were on hand in the Student Center to administer the shots to students, faculty, and staff.

- A Pre-Nursing Information Workshop was held on October 13, 2026. The workshop was held in person and remotely. These sessions are offered to students who intend to enter the Nursing Program. Mary Fennessy, MAS, Project Specialist Administrator, collaborated with representatives from the Advising Department as well as Registration and Records to provide key information regarding the Nursing program to prospective students. There were 25 attendees.

- During the 2026 Fall semester so far, the Tutoring Center has supported 552 unique students across 875 tutoring sessions. Both the STEM Center and Writing Center have been conducting in-class support sessions in MATH 166, ENGL 151, and ENGL 152. The STEM Center served 27 students in one session, while the Writing Center served 308 students across 19 sessions.

- To kick off the Fall semester, the Tutoring Center hosted a two-day tabling event outside of the Instructional Building on September 9 and 10, 2026, to welcome and engage with students while assisting them with their first-week needs. The event also marked the launch of the Tutoring Center's latest marketing campaign, "Connectioneering," featuring a nostalgic composition notebook theme. Students were invited to participate in interactive activities, including sharing song recommendations and creating personalized trading cards that highlighted their "study jam," semester goal, and superpower.

- The Writing Center is excited to continue one of its newest initiatives, Word of the Week. This initiative provides students across OCC with the opportunity to expand their academic vocabulary through a low-stakes, interactive activity. Each week, Writing Tutors post a new vocabulary term in the Writing Center's Canvas course, including its definition, part of speech, synonyms, antonyms, and an example sentence. Students are then invited to respond to a prompt designed to strengthen vocabulary and deepen comprehension. For each week that students participate, they receive an entry into a monthly raffle for a gift card. During September, we received 60 student responses, and our raffle winner was awarded a $25 gift card.

- The STEM Center is happy to launch its new student engagement initiative, Quantum Queries. Every week, students will have the opportunity to answer science- and math-based questions on the STEM Center's Canvas discussions page for a chance to be entered into a monthly raffle. For each week that students participate, they receive an entry into a monthly raffle for a gift card. So far, we have had 64 student replies, and our September winner has been awarded a $25 gift card.

- To celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, the Tutoring Center hosted four events spanning from September 15 to October 15, 2025:

    - September 15, 2026: To begin Hispanic Heritage Month, the Writing Center and its Peer Language Support Leaders invited the campus community to join them on the campus lawn for a photo opportunity. Participants were encouraged to dress in ways that reflected their cultural pride and have their photos taken.

    - September 30 to October 6, 2026: The STEM Center encouraged the campus community to participate in a translation of ancient numerical systems originating in the Americas, including written, spoken, and artistic expressions of language. One student was awarded a $25 gift card for their participation.

    - October 7, 2026: The Writing Center and its Peer Language Support Leaders invited the campus community to participate in a "Hunt for Knowledge" activity, highlighting the many significant historical and contemporary advancements and contributions of people and cultures of the Americas who are often referred to or identify as Hispanic or Latin. Through this activity,

participants had the opportunity to expand their knowledge while celebrating the diverse contributions of Hispanic and Latin communities. Two students were each awarded a $25 gift card for their participation.

- From October 12 to 15, 2026, the STEM Center invited the campus community to tackle a hands-on engineering challenge inspired by pre-colonial techniques developed in the Americas. Students could try to build the tallest freestanding tower with limited supplies, then measure it against the competition. Students then could post a photo of their towers to the STEM Center's Canvas page to join the leaderboard. Two students were awarded $25 gift cards for their effort and participation.

- On October 15, 2026, Ms. Maureen Conlon, adjunct professor in the School of Business and Social Sciences, accompanied students from her Small Business Management and Introduction to Business Administration classes to the New Jersey Digital Marketing Conference hosted by the Digital Marketing Agency, dblspc. Through her professional contact at dblspc, Ms. Conlon secured complimentary tickets for all attending students, providing them with valuable access to cutting-edge industry best practices and the opportunity to network with regional marketing professionals.

- Ms. Christine Pericone, Assistant Professor of Science and contact for the Honors by Contract Program, reported that Transfer Services and Honors by Contract hosted a "Research Connections: Meet Mentors, Build Your Future Workshop" on Thursday, October 15, 2026, in the Instructional Building.

  The format was slightly different from previous semesters where students would mingle freely in the lobby. This time, students were able to listen to short presentations from our Success Team and Ms. Pericone about research at OCC and the benefits of participating in Honors by Contract, which includes finding a mentor, scholarship monies, and building a resume. Light refreshments were served to the participants.

- On October 12, 2026, the Maker's Club and Dr. Frank Malatino, College Lecturer II in Physics, held a "Learn to Solder" workshop, at which students learned the basics of soldering and were able to take home with them a vibrating bug toy that they built during the workshop. Dr. Malatino and the Maker's Club President, Timothy "TJ" Vogel, were joined by approximately 10 students who participated in the workshop.

  Photos and videos from the event can be viewed here.

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- On October 5, 2026, Ms. Jaclyn Wood, Associate Director of Education and Community Engagement, announced the Grunin Center kicked off the 2026-2027 Schools 'n Stage series with Bobby Horton's Patriot Songs of the American Revolution. Over 350 students from six schools attended his performance and workshop. On October 28, 2026, Mariachi Herencia de México performed for over 700 students from twelve schools who attended their La Nueva Generacion musical performance.

- The Afternoon Recital series in partnership with the School of Arts and Humanities held the second classical recital this Fall by pianist Lyndon Ji on October 15, 2026. After the performance, OCC students enjoyed a master class with the artist.

- The Novins Planetarium has received the portable Planetarium, which will enable staff to go to certain schools for programming.

- The Novins Planetarium started working with Professor Pat Mc Dermott, Lecturer II in Elementary Education at Kean Ocean and Kean pre-service teachers this month on elementary education programming.

- Mr. Frankie Mennicucci, College Lecturer II in Mathematics, represented OCC at the three-day McGraw Hill ALEKS (Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces) Symposium in Boston, Massachusetts, from October 1 to 3, 2026. The symposium brought educators together to explore mathematics course design strategies and ways ALEKS can support student learning. Hearing about other educators' experiences and implementation approaches provided practical ideas to share with OCC colleagues and sparked excitement about exploring the potential of ALEKS at the college.



- Students enrolled in American Federal Government, State and Local Government, and Global Issues had the opportunity to participate in *The Game of Life: Civics Edition*, an interactive learning experience facilitated by Dr. Jim Campbell, Director of Student Success and Retention, and his team, along with Mr. Jason Ghibesi, College Lecturer II in Political Science. Designed specifically for Political Science, this unique version of the classic game introduced students to key concepts in civics, government, and civic engagement through hands-on participation and collaborative learning. The activity encouraged students to connect classroom lessons to real-world situations, think critically about the role of government, and explore the importance of active citizenship in a democratic society.

- This year's Constitution Day Commemoration event took place on September 17, 2026, featured a film screening of *The Words that Built America*. The film, originally presented by HBO, highlights the language of the United States' founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, and the Bill of Rights, as read by lawmakers and celebrities. The film was directed by acclaimed filmmaker Alexandra Pelosi. Students learned about bipartisanship by seeing people representing different political perspectives come together. The film showed how diverse voices united to focus on the importance of the nation's founding documents. This helped students appreciate unity despite differences. The film screening was hosted by Jason Ghibesi, College Lecturer II in Political Science. The event was sponsored by the Governmental Affairs Institute and the OCC Library.

- Dr. Dan Cassino, Executive Director of the Fairleigh Dickinson University Poll (FDU Poll), delivered an insightful analysis of recent polling data ahead of the upcoming mid-term elections. The event took

place on October 28, 2026, in the Gateway Lecture Hall. Attendees gained valuable perspectives on both the political landscape and the polling process. The session was facilitated by Mr. Jason Ghibesi and sponsored by the Governmental Affairs Institute.

- On October 12, 2026, Brick Township Mayor Lisa Crate visited Mr. Jason Ghibesi's State and Local Government class to discuss a day in the life of a mayor. Students gained firsthand insight into the issues and challenges facing Brick Township and had the opportunity to engage in a question-and-answer session with the mayor.

Community Events

- Ms. Calleigh Kearns, Interim Assistant Director of Recruitment, presented at Embrella's Passport to Education Conference on Saturday, September 19, 2026. This event is focused on helping potential students who are aging out of the foster care system learn about the educational opportunities available to them.

- The Recruitment team represented Ocean County College on October 1, 2026, at the Ocean County School Counselors Association College Fair. The team met with potential students from throughout the county and received over 70 leads from the event.

- On September 10, 2026, Executive Director of Early College Tracey Taylor presented to 70 families at the Central Regional Parent Information Session. Parents learned about how to register their students for dual-enrollment classes and the many opportunities OCC has available.

- Ocean County College participated in Toms River School District's Professional Development Day on September 21, 2026. The three presentations were:

  - Ms. Tracey Taylor and Ms. Madison Caldwell – Early College
  - Dr. Jim Campbell and Ms. Mariely Quinto-Sanchez – Five Things Students Wish They Knew Before Coming to College
  - Mr. Tim Landers – Business Pathways and the Business Academy

- Dr. Chris Brittain, Academic Administrator, presented at two different virtual Early College Information Sessions on September 23 and October 5, 2026. There were over 40 attendees between the two events.

- Several performances took place at the Grunin Center in October and early November. Two jazz performances featured guitarist John Pizzarelli on October 2, 2026, and vocalist Veronica Swift on October 15, 2026. Mr. Bobby Horton presented a folk concert on October 4, 2026, while Mariachi Herencia de México returned to the Grunin Center on October 27, 2026. On November 1, 2026, magician Davis Caserta captivated audiences with his show, *Haunted Illusions*.

- Planetarium staff have been actively filming content for the Climate ReadyNJ grant project in collaboration with the Barnegat Bay Partnership team.

- Director Cara Muscio partnered with JBJ Soul Kitchen to help out-of-town visitors continue celebrating their Chili Cook-Off by offering Laser Bon Jovi showings following the event on October 24, 2026.

- Grunin Center Associate Director Laura Westmoreland reports that the Grunin Center hosted several events for community organizations and OCC, including a training session for the Ocean County Prosecutor's Office on October 9, 2026, which also welcomed students from OCVTS's Law

Enforcement Academy and ALPS; an in-service day for OCVTS faculty on October 12, 2026; and the Barnegat Bay Partnership's 2026 State of the Bay Symposium on October 14, 2026.

- Tickets for the Grunin Center's Spring 2027 season will go on sale to the public on November 6, 2026, at noon, with a member presale running October 30 through November 5, 2026.

- Executive and Artistic Director Heidi Sheridan attended New Jersey Theater Alliance's Annual Summit, Creating Change 2026: *Community and Culture Shift,* held at the Vogel Theater of the Count Basie Center for the Arts on October 28, 2026.

New Grant Awards

- $499,980 Garrett Lee Smith Suicide Prevention: WAVES II Institutionalization Project grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA), a federal agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for the period of October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2030, for the purpose of strengthening student mental health, reduce suicide risk, and prevent substance use disorders by embedding a comprehensive, public health, evidence-based model into OCC culture, operations, partnerships, and student support systems.

- $36,936 College Readiness Now grant from the Office of the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education for the period October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027, for the purpose of a targeted College Readiness Now XIII initiative designed to strengthen readiness in mathematics, English, Student Success, and Career Exploration for high school students participating in free and reduced lunch programs, multi-lingual learners, and historically underserved students.

- $122,972 Community College Opportunity grant from the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education for the period October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027, for the purpose of addressing key student success gaps, hiring a part-time Career Advising Coordinator to establish a structured career framework and online platform; expanding Brainfuse online tutoring to 400 hours annually to bolster academic support in gateway courses; and hiring a part-time Financial Aid Coach to lead FAFSA completion workshops and provide personal financial clarity for students.

- $100,000 Center for Adult Transition grant for the period October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027, for the Adult Transition Center to provide student-centered, accessible services to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities so they feel safe and welcome on the OCC campus and empowered to succeed by offering a ten-week Exploration for Work and Career Readiness training course specifically for the adult transition program.

- $71,768 Inspire! Grants for Small Museums, Office of Museum Services, Institute of Museum and Library Science for the period September 1, 2026, through September 30, 2028, for the Planetarium to install six space-related exhibits that enable people of all ages to engage in experiential learning activities that enhance knowledge and align with the Planetarium's plans to become a science center hub for the region.

- $500,000 Youth Employment Activities grant from the Ocean County Department of Human Services for the period October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027, to create opportunities for career exploration, education services, skills development, and training for youth and young adults to improve their economic position.

- Faculty and lecturers from Ocean County College are participating in the New Jersey Council of County Colleges' AI-Ready Faculty Mini-Grant initiative to develop innovative approaches for integrating

artificial intelligence into teaching and learning. This initiative is part of a partnership between NJCCC and the NJ AI Hub, supported by funding from the NJ AI Hub's corporate partnership with Microsoft.

The response from faculty across the state was exceptional, with 133 applications for 100 available awards. Given this strong interest and the limited funding available, the review committee was unable to award mini-grants to all the faculty who applied. The review committee selected 40 faculty projects for awards in the first round (June 2026) and 60 in the second round (September 2026). We deeply appreciated the time, thought, and creativity that every applicant invested in developing a proposal.

The submissions reflected a thoughtful commitment to helping students develop AI literacy, use AI ethically and responsibly, and prepare for careers in an increasingly AI-enabled workforce. Their quality underscored the leadership of New Jersey community college faculty in advancing teaching and learning.

Ocean received 15% of the awards for the state. The following faculty members and lecturers from Ocean County College were selected for funding:

- Round One (June 2026):
    - Maureen Conlon, Associate Director of Web Services
    - Pamela Goldsmith, College Lecturer II in Health Management
    - Henry Jackson, College Lecturer II in Student Success
    - Justin Pfeifer, College Lecturer II in History
    - Jennie Piwowarczyk, Adjunct Faculty in Social Sciences
    - Gurmeet Singh, Adjunct Faculty in Computer Sciences
    - Kristyn Stout, College Lecturer II in English

- Round Two (September 2026):
    - Olufemi Ajimoko, e-Learning Adjunct Assistant Professor in Information Technology
    - Sharmistha Banerjee, College Lecturer II in Economics
    - Binh Dang, College Lecturer II in e-Learning Information Technology
    - Robert Farley, Adjunct Faculty in Humanities and Fine Arts
    - Jack Kelnhofer, College Lecturer II in e-Learning
    - Sharon Scrofine, College Lecturer II in Nursing
    - Jaishree Sharma, College Lecturer II in Business
    - Deborah Taranto, Adjunct Faculty, English and Literature

- Seven additional faculty members submitted strong proposals:
    - Patricia Carroll, Assistant Athletic Director
    - Jennifer Dellner, Professor of English
    - Fernando Garcia, College Lecturer II in Business
    - Heather Gass, Adjunct Faculty in Humanities and Fine Arts
    - Maria Hartwell, College Lecturer II in Chemistry
    - Anais Mompoint, College Lecturer II in Social Work
    - Elizabeth Melleby Welch, Adjunct Faculty in Humanities and Fine Arts

Each recipient will receive a $1,000 stipend, paid directly by NJCCC, to support the design, implementation, and assessment of AI-enhanced instructional activities in Fall 2026. Recipients will

also contribute information about their projects and share instructional materials through a repository of open educational resources that can benefit faculty across New Jersey.

Congratulations to the award recipients and all faculty who submitted proposals for their initiative and commitment to student success. We look forward to showcasing the innovative work emerging from this program throughout the academic year.

Ocean County Achievement Center Special Events and Outreach Attended

- September 12, 2026: Little Egg Harbor 2nd Annual Community Outreach Event
- September 21, 2026: Ocean County Mall Community Connections Tabling
- September 24, 2026: OCC Fresh Check Day

Adult Education, Civics, and Workforce Preparation (Title II)

- In program year July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026, the contracted number of students was 312; 386 enrolled, which exceeded the contracted amount by 25%, even with the program free from July until October.

- The program provided service to 297 GED and ESL students and 89 ESL with Training in FY26.

- Met Performance Outcome targets for Overall Measurable Skill Gains (MSG), Employment after Exit Quarter 2 and Quarter 4, Median Earnings and Credential Attainment at 67% for FY26.

- One of seven Title II programs to earn an A+ for NJ State Report Card by earning 5 of 5 on the measurable targets in FY26.

- Five students earned their high school diplomas in September 2026.

- The following were GED Subject Test results between September 1 to 30, 2026:

    - Four students passed reasoning/language arts
    - Five students passed science
    - Seven students passed math
    - Four students passed social studies
    - Fall Orientation held on September 28, 2026, for approximately 100 new ESL and 50 new GED students

Work Readiness Assistance Program (WRAP)

- Met with 11 young adults to discuss additional program information and eligibility requirements.
- One participant earned the NRFF Customer Service and Sales Credential.
- Since OCC was awarded the grant in 2018, WRAP has served 480 young adults of Ocean County with 95% of participants completing various opportunities in the program.

Security Report

In accordance with New Jersey Public Law 2015, Chapter 220, and College Policy #2332, Reporting of On-Campus and Fire Events, attached is the monthly statistics report of crimes, fires, and other emergencies on campus for the reporting period of September 19, 2026, through October 30, 2026.

REQUIRED REPORTING STATISTICS

Board of Trustees Meeting: Thurs, November 5, 2026

This report consists of all offenses defined as reportable crimes under the federal Jeanne Clery Act, fires, and other emergencies, which occurred on campus during the reporting period of 9/19/26 – 10/30/26.

1.) A count and classification of all criminal incidents (defined as reportable crimes under the federal Jeanne Clery Act) which occurred on campus and which were recorded by campus security, campus security authority (CSA) or local police departments.

DATE	CRIME	SUMMARY	STATUS
Occurred: 9/22/26 Reported: 9/22/26	Lewdness	Public Urination	Referred to Police Department
Occurred: 10/15/26 Reported: 10/15/26	Vandalism	Computer keyboards and Microphone damaged	Cleared – Closed
Occurred: 10/22/26 Reported: 10/22/26	Vandalism	Damaged toilet paper dispenser and lock mechanism in bathroom stall and graffiti.	Cleared – Closed

2.) A list of campus alerts, threats or emergencies which occurred on campus

DATE	ALERT/THREAT	SUMMARY	STATUS
Occurred: Reported:		Nothing to Report	
Occurred: Reported:			
Occurred: Reported:			

3.) A count and classification of all fire incidents which occurred on campus and which were recorded by campus security and local fire departments.

DATE	FIRE INCIDENT	SUMMARY	STATUS
Occurred: Reported:		Nothing to Report	
Occurred: Reported:			

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Thomas DeSimone