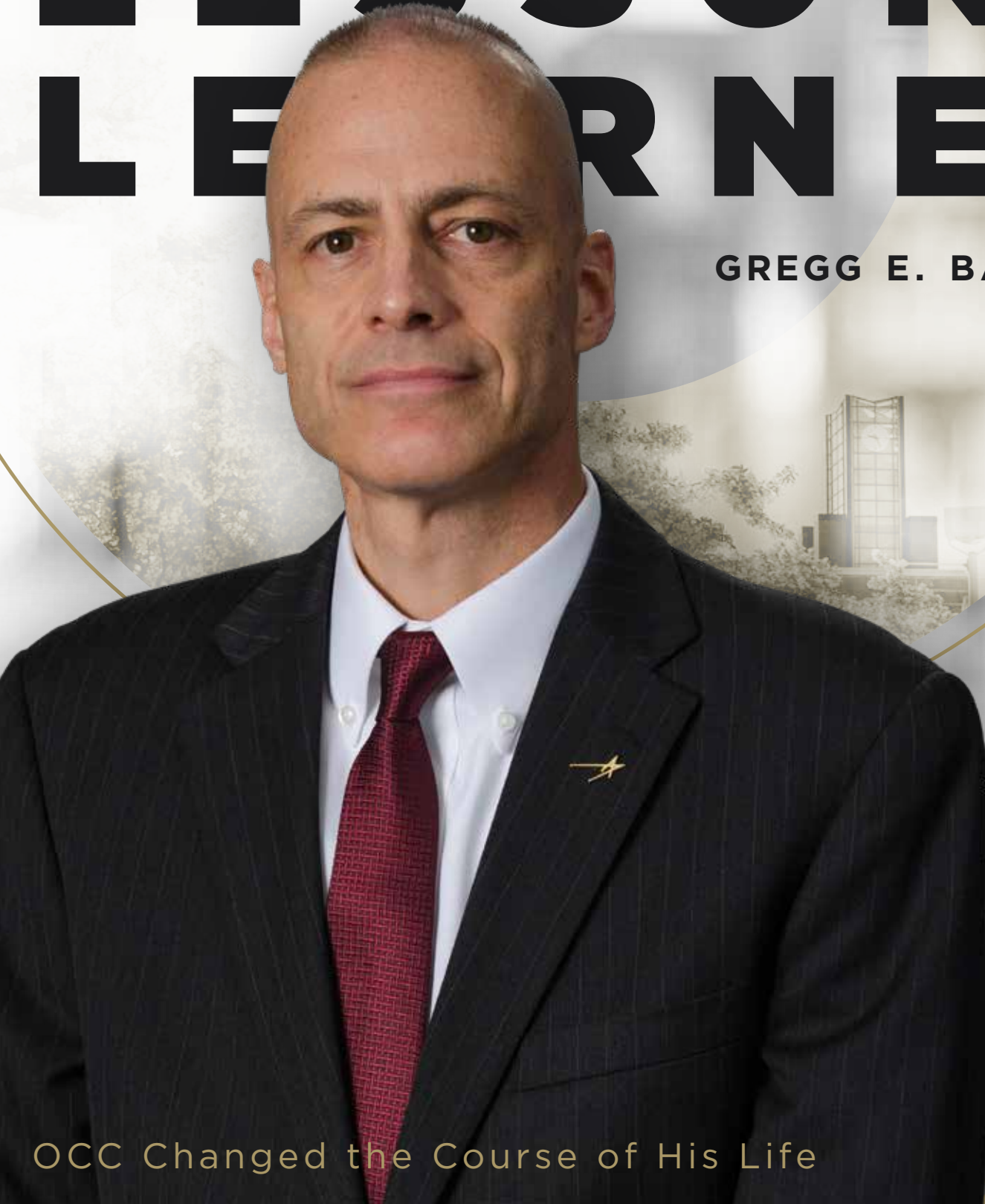


OCEAN VIEWS

A Magazine for Ocean County College Alumni, Our College Family and the Community
Summer - Fall 2021 • Vol. XV: No. 2

LESSONS LEARNED

GREGG E. BAUER '83



OCC Changed the Course of His Life



Summer - Fall 2021
Vol. XV: No. 2

A magazine for Ocean County College alumni, our College family and the community

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CONTENTS

OCEAN NEWS

3 - 7

Veteran Center of Excellence

OCC Freezes Tuition

New Apps Help Students

Counseling Center Connection

PTK Kudos

New Student Enrollment Building

Commencement 2021

CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT

8 - 9

Pilot Programs in Addictions Counseling

Model a New Approach

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

10 - 11

Changing the Course of His Life

Gregg E. Bauer '83

OCC FOUNDATION

12 - 15

Finding New Ways to Help

New scholarships, programs support the Foundation's mission

Scholarship Celebration

ROBERT J. NOVINS

PLANETARIUM

16 - 17

The Sky's the Thing

Audiences continue to flock to an OCC jewel

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

18 - 19

Multilingual Student from Ukraine

Achieves Success at OCC

Solomiia Spirydon '20

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

20 - 21

Paying it Forward — Naturally!

Three recent grads help each other succeed

BARNEGAT BAY

PARTNERSHIP

22

BBP Aids Valuable Ecosystem

Research and education around coastal wetlands

ATHLETICS

23

Student-Athletes Find Ways to Stay Ready





Grant Helps OCC Establish Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success

Ocean County College has received a \$444,130 three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education to establish the Ocean County College Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success (OCC-CEVS).

The highly competitive grant was awarded to only 12 institutions of higher education nationwide, out of hundreds of applicants, and will open vast opportunities for veteran students at OCC. It will be directed by Ryan Luurtsema, assistant director of Veteran and Military Services and a U.S. Army veteran.

“At Ocean County College, we have an established Veteran and Military Resource Center (VMRC) and are proud to have earned the designation Military Friendly from VIQTOY Media, meaning we provide the best education support resources possible for veterans and military connected students,” says Luurtsema.

OCC-EVS will coordinate comprehensive support services for veteran students in departments such as Admissions, Registration, Financial Aid, Academic and Career Advising, Counseling, Disability Services and Veterans’ Benefits. Additional services such as outreach and recruitment, financial aid, supportive instructional services such as tutoring,

admissions/transfer help, personal, academic and career counseling also will be provided. The Center will hold events to ease the sometimes-challenging transition to campus life, including veteran student support group meetings, academic advising and admissions counseling sessions with military bases and National Guard units and gatherings for OCC alumni.

“Signing the discharge papers is only a first step in transitioning out of the military,” says Luurtsema. “It is a lifelong process, and we are here to help guide that experience.”

To learn more, watch episodes of “Veteran Voices,” a new platform developed by the VMRC for local and community organizations that provide advocacy for New Jersey veterans.

In the first episode, Luurtsema meets with Dan Lombard and James Corbett of Project Refit (<https://www.facebook.com/projectrefitus/>), an organization dedicated to combating symptoms of isolation and loneliness among military service members, veterans and first responders.

Visit https://youtu.be/ELH6wcKV_S4?t=1 #MyOcean #VeteranVoices #Veterans #VeteranSupport #ProjectRefit

Tuition Frozen for 2022

Ocean County College has announced it will not increase student tuition and fees this academic year, maintaining costs at their FY2021 level — the first New Jersey community college to make such an announcement. Tuition will remain at \$175 per credit for the 2022 fiscal year. The College Board of Trustees adopted the resolution at its January 28th meeting.

Last year, OCC bundled the cost of books and electronic course materials, as well as college and student fees, with tuition. The freeze on the all-inclusive tuition rate is another effort to keep OCC affordable and assist students in reaching their educational goals — especially important as families struggle with the economic challenges brought on by the pandemic.

“We are pleased to be able to offer this benefit to our students and our community, especially during this time of financial stress for so many,” said Dr. Jon H. Larson, OCC President. “The College has carefully managed its resources and our students will reap the benefits of that fiscal responsibility.”



“ We are proud to have earned the designation Military Friendly. ”
 - Ryan Luurtsema, assistant director of Veteran and Military Services

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OCEAN COUNTY COLLEGE

Handshake & CircleIn!

Two new apps were launched in late 2020 — valuable tools to help students and the entire OCC community.

CircleIn helps students get organized and study with their classmates in a digital community while offering them the chance to earn rewards by helping one another.

Once a student is logged into CircleIn — on a computer or via mobile app — they can share notes, chat, create and review flashcards, generate quizzes, get help from tutors and more. The more often students study and collaborate with their classmates, the more points they can earn toward prizes.

Handshake is a new career management tool that allows students and alumni to connect with potential employers and industry professionals. It simplifies the search for jobs, volunteer opportunities, internships and apprenticeships. Participants create profiles, upload resumes, cover letters and other documents, making them visible to hundreds of potential employers from industry, nonprofits, corporations and small businesses — from Ocean County and around the world. They also have access to a variety of virtual career fairs.

Handshake is free for employers as well, and according to its website, www.joinhandshake.com, more than 500,000 employers are active users of the platform.

“Handshake is a career development tool that will assist our students and alumni as they reach for their career goals by providing direct communication with employers of all kinds across the country,” says Dr. Gerald Racioppi, vice president of Student Affairs. “Ocean County College is the first community college in New Jersey to add this advanced employment system, giving our students access to many opportunities that they may not have seen otherwise.”

Handshake will enhance the services provided by the [Career Services Department](#) at OCC, which provides career counseling, coaching, assessments and interviewing advice as well as help with writing resumes and cover letters and setting up professional profiles on various career-related platforms such as LinkedIn.

Counseling Center Provides Human Connection

In addition to its overall wellness programming, OCC’s Counseling Center counselingservices@ocean.edu is a free and confidential service for students. Staff members assess their needs and provide direct support services or referrals to community mental health providers for free or low-cost services. Similar services for faculty and staff are offered through the

Human Resources Department.

A range of programs and services — substance abuse recovery support, suicide prevention, domestic and sexual violence, for example — focus on helping students emotionally and academically, and counselors are trained to work with clients in person or remotely.

The campus community is a place where everyone is responsible for one another. One way to look out for each other is through CARE reporting. Anyone who

suspects that a student is struggling with academics, home life, health issues or addiction issues, can submit a CARE report to <https://www.ocean.edu/about-us/campus-life/care-team>. Once a report is filed, a member of the CARE Team reaches out to the student. Students often express gratitude that someone was paying attention and cared enough to reach out for help on their behalf.

Visit www.ocean.edu/counseling or call 732-255-0386 for more information.



PTK Kudos

Congratulations to Jennifer Fazio, director of Student Life, who was named a Phi Theta Kappa Distinguished Administrator for 2021, one of only 26 in the country.

“I am truly honored by this recognition, which is significant to me because it comes from our students,” says Fazio. “I have always said that everything we do in the Student Life Department is all about putting our students first, and it makes me proud to know that they know that we mean it! Our students’ success is our number one priority and we are here to make sure that they have the opportunity to learn and grow beyond the classroom at OCC.”

The Distinguished College Administrator awards are presented to college vice presidents, deans or directors who have shown strong support of student success on their campus by recognizing academic achievement, leadership and service among high-achieving students. Phi Theta Kappa is the premier honor society recognizing the academic achievement of students at associate degree-granting colleges and helping them to grow as scholars and leaders. The Society is made up of more than 3.5 million members and nearly 1,300 chapters in 11 nations, with approximately 240,000 active members in the nation’s colleges. Learn more at www.ptk.org.



photos: James Godish/Taylor

NEW STUDENT ENROLLMENT BUILDING OPENS



Construction on the new, 16,000-square-foot Student Enrollment Building was completed on the campus mall in June 2021. This building now serves as a hub for all admissions-related activities and is a one-stop-shop for Enrollment Services, Student Advising, Registration and Records, the Cashiers Office and Financial Aid. New technology helps students as they navigate the streamlined enrollment process, and staff offices are just steps away when help is needed.

The energy-efficient and ADA compliant building was designed by Design Resources Group Architects, AIA, Inc., and built by Catel, Inc. contractors.

services to help them on their educational path here and beyond. It is our pleasure to greet and serve the students.”

“While our beautiful campus closed during the pandemic in accordance with state health and safety mandates, construction continued on the new Student Enrollment Building at Ocean County College,” said OCC President Dr. Jon H. Larson. “We are now open to new and returning students. Here they can access a wide array of



Welcome Back!

The campus readied for the return of students, faculty and staff in several ways to meet regulations around COVID-19 mitigation. UV disinfection lighting was installed on all HVAC equipment, which helps eliminate the circulation of airborne viruses. Hands-free receptacles were added to all restrooms, and social distancing protocols were posted in all public spaces. Additional benches were installed around campus to allow for improved socially-distanced seating options.

The College is equipping many classrooms with video and audio technology to support hybrid instruction with funding provided by the CARES Act. This equipment will consist of a presenter tracking camera, speakers and microphones to allow local and remote students to participate in any classroom discussion, and a confidence monitor allowing the instructor to see any students participating from an off-campus location. Classes will continue to leverage Webex to facilitate delivery and two-way class participation.



“ While our beautiful campus closed during the pandemic ... construction continued ... ” - Dr. Jon H. Larson, OCC President

COMMENCEMENT



After a year in which Commencement, along with many other events, was held virtually, OCC's 54th Commencement was held on the Gateway Building Mall with students, friends, family and members of the College community in attendance during the last week of May.



Students' accomplishments were celebrated in three different ceremonies: The Nursing Pinning Ceremony led the week on May 25, the Awards Ceremony followed the next day, and OCC's Commencement 2021 was held on May 27. About 1,400 individuals were graduated and join the ranks of OCC's more than 48,000 alumni.

OCC's Pilot Programs in Addictions Counseling Model a New Approach

Ocean County College is taking the initiative to train students and help law enforcement meet the needs of our community.

The Addictions Counseling Certificate of Completion program at Ocean County College provides a solid first step for students who want to become a drug and alcohol counselor and provides the mandatory core courses for them to earn their New Jersey credentials.

To become a state-certified counselor, students need 270 education hours, all of which are encompassed in the program, where they take six, three-credit courses.

“Students get two things at the same time — the education hours and the credits, which set them well on their way to an associate degree,” says Patty Gianotti, Ph.D., college lecturer II, Addictions Counseling.

“They have such a sense of accomplishment when they complete this program.”



Entering a Growing Field

According to the New Jersey Department of Human Services, the state (like much of the country) is in a “behavioral health and addiction counselor workforce crisis.” The need for counselors in this field is projected to grow 31% by 2022 — faster than the average for all occupations.

https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dmhas/initiatives/workforce/FAQs_Becoming_LCADC_CADC.pdf

“OCC is at the forefront in providing the highest quality training for professionals in this field at a time when they are most needed,” says Rosann Bar, Ph.D., dean of the School of Business and Social Sciences.

The Alcohol and Drug Counselor Committee of the New Jersey State Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners offers two different credentials to substance abuse counselors practicing in the state. The first, the Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CADC), allows an individual to practice under supervision, and the Licensed Clinical Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LCADC) allows the holder to practice independently.





Innovative Addictions Counseling Programs

In addition to the state-mandated educational requirements, students working toward the CADC credential must complete 3,000 supervised hours in a clinical setting. They complete these hours independently by acquiring paid, or volunteer, trainee positions in a treatment program. While pursuing their clinical field experience, students may opt to enroll in OCC's degree apprenticeship program, which is part of the College's movement toward increasing its work-based and experiential learning opportunities.

Currently, the Ocean County College Foundation has established a scholarship for those who desire the additional academic and field support provided through this course during their clinical training period.

"It is our hope that the financial help for this pilot program will build a base and act as a template for a dynamic for credit apprenticeship model across disciplines at OCC — to become embedded at the College," says Kenneth Malagiere, executive director of the Foundation. "It also will create valuable partnership opportunities for OCC with area addiction and recovery organizations.

Earlier this year, OCC was awarded the GAINS (Growing Apprenticeships

in Nontraditional Sectors) Grant from the N.J. Department of Labor, which seeks to increase availability of trainee positions for students and establish a reasonable rate of pay for student trainees.

"The grant reimburses employer partners 50% of the apprentice's hourly rate, which creates an incentive for employers to hire our students. This increases clinical training opportunities, and builds relationships with local programs so we may assist them in finding positions in the field," says Bar.

Another initiative is the Michael Camillus Project, a joint program between OCC, Ocean Mental Health Services and the Ocean County Prosecutor's Office, funded by the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General through Operation Helping Hand. Renee White, an OCC alumna and supervising assistant prosecutor in the Prosecutor's Office Special Offender's Unit, developed the idea to enroll members of law enforcement in addictions studies courses.

"She wondered how we might make police officers more sensitive to people in the community and their needs ... how we can further educate them, giving them a better skill set to manage situations where addictions are part of the situation," says Bar.

White enrolled 14 members of law

enforcement into the first of six courses that began in January. Through this sequence of courses, the officers acquire hands-on skills for dealing with people on the streets, with the goal of preventing escalation of certain situations when drugs and/or alcohol are involved.

Bar further explained that the law enforcement officers in this cohort complete the same courses and have the same responsibilities as all OCC students. She adds, "We are excited about this model program and have already had positive feedback from the participating officers. This pilot program takes police training to another level.

OCC is working on an articulation agreement for a 3+1 program that would allow Addiction Counseling students to stay at OCC for their third year of school and then complete the last year of their bachelor's degree in Human Services at Southern New Hampshire University. The College anticipates that its 3+1 certificate program in Advanced and Continuous Studies will receive state approval in the coming months.

As OCC develops more partnerships with addictions treatment and counseling centers, and continues to build its reputation for its addictions programming, Bar believes this program will become a model for other schools and police departments.



“OCC is at the forefront in providing the highest quality training for professionals in this field at a time when they are most needed.”

- Rosann Bar, Ph.D., dean of the School of Business and Social Sciences

GREGG E. BAUER '83

Changing the Course of His Life

Gregg Bauer's OCC experience taught him a great many life lessons that he carried with him while building a successful career.

Gregg Bauer's ah-ha! moment was memorable in its simplicity and for changing the course of his life.

On the first day of his first class at Ocean County College in the fall of 1981, Bauer attended an Econ 101 lecture in the Planetarium. He mentions the pleasure he took in the simple fact that he was allowed to bring his coffee to class.

"High school had felt like jail to me," says Bauer. "But college was the opposite. I was sitting there that day, listening to this very smart man talk about economics, and I realized, for the first time, that it was all on me.

The self-described "not-great student" felt as if he was pushed through high school by teachers who just wanted him to graduate and go, but during his first class at OCC, he had this educational epiphany. "For whatever reason, I realized it was all me. No one was going to push me through anything in college. And I knew that, for the rest of my life, my success would be determined by how much effort I put into it — or didn't, he remembers. "I realized that and I brought my A-game from that day on." He earned A's in most classes at OCC and graduated as a Liberal Arts major with a 3.81 GPA.

Born and reared in Rochester, New York, Bauer moved to Toms River with his mother and older sister just before he began high school at Toms River North, shortly after his parents divorce. And soon after that, when his father passed away, his mom needed to find a job; she became a secretary at OCC and worked there for 25 years. As the child of an OCC employee, Bauer received the crucial tuition assistance that made attending college a reality for him instead of just a dream.

Bauer had already known about the College, because "it is part of the Toms River zeitgeist." Bauer worked throughout high school and college at the Hess gas station on Hooper Avenue to pay for his books and incidentals. As a marginal student with no direction, he had felt untethered and says he just figured out what to do on his own after high school.

As a "typical young boy of the '70s," Bauer played football and had his sights set on joining the NFL, or becoming a cop, or joining the military. As an avid reader who was drawn to books about the military, over time, he grew deeply interested in military intelligence. That interest was reinforced by the nightly television news reports during the Vietnam War. He was fascinated by those broadcasts.

"Why are we there? What are we doing? What is the bigger global context? I always had a hunger to understand geopolitics," he says. He satisfied his hunger by enrolling in Trenton



State College (now The State College of New Jersey) in the political science program with an emphasis on public administration, which was focused on helping its graduates find careers in government.

“My career goals were being shaped then, but politics intrigued me, mainly because I didn’t understand it,” he says. “I was a good researcher and writer, so political science seemed to be a natural fit to satisfy my geopolitical curiosity and match my skills.” At that point, Bauer figured he would help run a political campaign and leverage that into an internship and a job on Capitol Hill.

Although that plan didn’t pan out, his natural expertise in writing, communication and business and his fascination with military intelligence encouraged Bauer to enroll in the master’s program at Georgetown University’s Walsh School of Foreign Service, where he earned his degree in National Security Studies. By then, he had already interned for New Jersey Governor Tom Kean as a writer, producing policy papers on the environment and lots of general correspondence. He also had worked for two years as an Intelligence Analyst for the New Jersey State Police in West Trenton. That job didn’t hold his interest and he yearned for more excitement, so he applied to the Aviation Officer Candidate School (AOCS) in Pensacola, Florida, was commissioned as an ensign and sent to serve on the USS Midway during the first Gulf War, from October 1990 to March 1991.

When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, Bauer was attached to the helicopter squadron aboard the aircraft carrier, whose home port was Yokosuka, Japan, and whose responsibilities were Special Operations Forces support. The job was twofold: combat search and rescue (picking up downed airmen) and inserting Navy SEALs onto oil platforms, for example, to secure the platforms for Kuwait.

Bauer served on active duty from 1988-91 and spent most of the rest of his career in the Navy Reserves, retiring in 2008 with the rank of commander.

Enrolling at Georgetown felt like the next right step for him. “I was trading on my intel experience, and was in the Naval

Reserves,” he says. “I also was in business as a defense contractor supporting sometimes classified programs, so I felt Georgetown’s program fit very nicely at that point. And it still does.

WORKING HARD

Bauer’s time at OCC was a blur — his full class schedule and job filled any free time, leaving none for athletics or clubs. And he remembers it all as a great time in his life. “How different would my life be if I hadn’t gone to OCC?” he wonders. “I kept my nose to the grindstone, worked and studied, then transitioned to Trenton.

He is grateful for his OCC degree in the liberal arts that gave him the opportunity to test a variety of subjects. Business was one of his favorite classes, and although he doesn’t remember the instructor’s name, the teacher’s mantra, “There is no free lunch in business,” stuck with Bauer. “He was an older gentleman, retired from a long and successful business career and he repeated that saying often,” he says. “And he was right. You have to work hard for what you get.

That work ethic, illuminated and reinforced at Ocean County College, has served Bauer well. Now the Vice President of Lockheed Martin’s Undersea Warfare & Integration Programs market segment within the Rotary and Mission Systems business area, he leads the corporation’s \$1.7 billion business that includes submarine, surface ship and surveillance sonar programs, submarine imaging and integration, maritime patrol mission system, unmanned undersea vehicle and torpedo and the Australian future submarine programs.

He also is the General Manager of Lockheed Martin’s Manassas Operations, which includes a 13-acre, seven-building complex in Northern Virginia housing 1,300 employees across multiple open and closed engineering, production, integration, test and operations spaces. Bauer currently serves as Deputy Chair of the National Defense Industrial Association’s Undersea Warfare Division Executive Board and is a member of the George Mason University SciTech Advisory Board.

And he credits OCC with helping him hone the drive to be No. 1 at whatever he does.



“That day [at OCC] shaped me for my entire career.

Today, Bauer continues to read a lot — his answer to “What book are you reading?” *You Cannot Be Serious*, by tennis great John McEnroe. When he’s not working, Bauer loves to run. He and his wife, Carolyn, run in the annual Army Ten-Miler race throughout northern Virginia and the streets of Washington, D.C.

She is a CPA who holds an MBA and recently started her dream job with the Navy as CFO for the nonprofit Navy and Marine Corps Relief Society. The couple lives in Maryland and has three children, each of whom is an engineer. “I am not a degreed engineer and neither is my wife, so go figure,” he says. Samantha, the eldest, is a software engineer in San Diego; Travis, a civil engineer, just earned his wings and is a naval flight officer; and the youngest, Mollie, is a sophomore majoring in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Virginia.

EDITOR’S NOTE:

Shortly after this article was written, Lockheed Martin announced a reorganization that resulted in Bauer being promoted from vice president of the undersea warfare business to vice president and general manager of Lockheed’s C6ISR business. Said Bauer, “I am humbled by this opportunity, and I am grateful for the kick-start I received from OCC — without which, none of this is possible.”



“ I knew that, for the rest of my life, my success would be determined by how much effort I put into it — or didn’t. I realized that and I brought my A-game from that day on. ... How different would my life be if I hadn’t gone to OCC? ”

- Gregg E. Bauer

OCC FOUNDATION FINDING WAYS TO HELP

The Foundation's mission thrives through new scholarships and programs.

The Ocean County College Foundation has always been a stalwart supporter of the College, providing more than 50 years of service to OCC and the students it serves.

Founded for and dedicated to the growth and development of the College through scholarships, endowments, capital campaigns and special projects, the Foundation has expanded its outreach over time. Today, it partners with community leaders in business, industry, education and government to reach a common goal to provide quality, affordable education to OCC students and to prepare them for successful futures.

When the pandemic closed the campus, the Foundation joined with Student Life to help students facing food insecurity by providing meals and “crisis boxes” via the Helping Hands Food Pantry. Students with other emergency needs were also able to apply for assistance from the Foundation’s Student Emergency Relief Fund (SERF). However, as the months passed, the Foundation felt it could still do more. It was then that the OCC Foundation and its Board of Trustees pledged \$1 million in overall scholarship support, increasing funding by 40% for overall financial support for scholarships, grants and special programs for the 2020-2021 academic year.

“The Foundation Board rose to the call of the time. And it’s trying to meet students where they are in terms of financial support, thinking outside the box so we can really make an impact,” says Ken Malagiere, executive director of the OCC Foundation. “For the last several years, our focus has been back to the mission: to impact the lives of the students of Ocean County, and our Board is doing just that.”

During the fall 2020 semester, it became apparent that some students were having trouble meeting their financial obligations, and the Foundation and Student Affairs Department joined forces to create a 50% match program — an additional Foundation scholarship for struggling students in the amount of 50% of their outstanding tuition. This campaign was targeted to students who wanted to register for the spring 2021 semester, but couldn’t because they carried balances on their student accounts.

“This scholarship does not have to be paid back. The student is required to pay the remaining 50% balance of their tuition or establish a payment plan with the College,” explains Casey Mundry, Foundation trustee and Fund Distribution Chair. She also assists with the allocation of available funds for distribution to scholarships, awards and special projects.



Students were required to have a GPA above 2.0 and a completed 2020-21 FAFSA to be eligible. If approved, the students would agree to register for spring courses.

“A number of students benefited from that match. It was a quick application, and the students did not need to be previous scholarship recipients. It allowed them to continue their education without disruption,” says Malagiere.

“While the Foundation provides numerous opportunities for students to receive scholarship support, the Board chair, fellow Board members, and the executive team at the Foundation felt we should take the opportunity to expand our offerings. Because of the hard work and dedication of all our supporters, our endowment is able to provide support, and now we will have this in perpetuity.”



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Another new scholarship will allow 10 students to be fully enrolled in OCC's new Addictions Counseling program, with the Foundation covering 50% of the tuition, complementing a new grant from the N.J. Department of Labor. This grant, the GAINS (Growing Apprenticeships in Nontraditional Sectors) Grant will focus on moving students through the apprenticeship in Addictions Counseling, as registered with the Department of Labor. The grant will reimburse employer partners 50% of the apprentice's hourly rate and allows OCC the support to build a base for the Ocean County College Apprenticeships — a dynamic, for-credit apprenticeship model — to become embedded at the College. This process will be replicated in additional disciplines across the institution in the future.

"This pilot course will create valuable partnership opportunities for OCC with all the organizations that are focused on addictions and recovery," says Malagiere.

The Foundation also continues to support students who want to enter the health care field. Each semester, up to 20 scholarships of \$2,500 are awarded to Workforce and Professional Education students entering the workforce as medical assistants and medical office personnel. This scholarship covers more than half of their tuition and fees and is funded by the H. Hovnanian Foundation Endowment for the Health Sciences.

The Foundation even offers scholarship support to Ocean County high school students who want to get a head start on their college degrees. The Jump Start

program allows students the opportunity to earn college credits while in high school to increase their preparedness for college and reduce financial barriers.

"Distribution of funds to these programs has helped thousands of individuals, impacting them in many positive ways," says Mundry. "The Foundation supports students financially to provide opportunities they would not have had otherwise."

"Higher education and the climate in which our students learn and thrive continues to evolve. The Ocean County College Foundation stands ready to adapt and enhance its initiatives and funding to ensure the OCC experience is at the forefront of education and opportunities for our community," adds Malagiere.

SCHOLARSHIP CELEBRATION SUCCESS



RAISED \$175,000

The OCC Foundation's Annual Scholarship Celebration was held outdoors on the campus mall on Friday, June 18. More than 200 supporters attended the event that honored Henry A. Jackson, Ed.D., executive director of Academic Success, Teresa (Tracy) Walsh, Ph.D., MSN, RN, dean of Nursing and Health Sciences, and the 220 Club of Ocean County, which is dedicated to enriching our community by supporting the families of law enforcement, fire and EMS personnel in the event of their death or injury.

Since 1965, the OCC Foundation has provided support for thousands of deserving students, and has awarded over \$16.5 million in direct scholarship and special program support. Despite the many efforts by the College to provide a quality, affordable education, many students still require financial assistance. Thanks to OCC's generous supporters, the Scholarship Celebration raised \$175,000 this year, allowing even more students to realize their goal of educational success.

TWO COMMUNITY MEMBERS JOIN THE OCC FOUNDATION BOARD.....

Ricky Moore graduated from OCC in 1985 with an A.S. in Computer Science. After earning his bachelor's degree in the same subject from Stockton State, he worked as a contractor for the Department of the Navy as an Operations Manager with Hewlett Packard. In 2017, Moore began his position as Information Technology Specialist, doing cybersecurity as a Navy civilian.

"Michael York asked me to join the OCC Foundation Board, and I said yes to the opportunity to be more involved and utilize that involvement to help others," says Moore, whose mother graduated from OCC in 1968 with a Nursing degree.

Moore also is a board member for Court Appointed Special Advocates of Ocean County (CASA), in which volunteers work with foster children and families as advocates within the foster system. He felt his involvement with the two boards would complement each other. "I'll have the opportunity to know firsthand how the College is growing and can share the information with the kids in the CASA program, especially those who are aging out of the system."

Moore will work on the Fund Distribution and the Community and Public Relations committees.

Although **Ethan Rosen** did not attend OCC, he has many family members and friends who have, and he knows what a positive impact the College has had on their lives. In addition, his grandfather, Zev, and father, David, also served on the OCC Foundation Board.

After graduating from Stockton University with a major in Business Administration and a concentration in Management, Rosen joined his family's business, Good Friend Electric.

"I'm very proud to represent the 4th generation in Good Friend Electric," says Rosen, who learned by doing as he worked his way through all areas of the business while growing up. In 1949 Ethan's great-grandfather, Irving Rosen, purchased the business and today Ethan Rosen is the company's Sales and Operations Manager, overseeing the daily operations of all six locations.

The family's roots are deeply planted in Ocean County and they have always been active in the Toms River community. "Giving back is something that's been ingrained in me," says Rosen, who also is a trustee of the 21 Plus Foundation, Inc., a nonprofit that provides housing and education for developmentally disabled adults.

Rosen is looking forward to being a part of the OCC Foundation. "Serving on the OCC Foundation Board will be a great learning experience, and the Board's work is so important, providing help for so many students."

SAVE THE DATE!

BLAUVELT SPEAKER SERIES

PRESENTED BY

OCEAN
COUNTY COLLEGE
FOUNDATION




MISTY COPELAND
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16
11 a.m. - VIRTUAL



The first African American female principal with American Ballet Theatre wrote a middle-grade book celebrating Black ballerinas, saying, "This is my bow to them!"




DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6
6:30 p.m. - IN-PERSON
Presidential Historian and Pulitzer Prize-winning Author


ANNA DEAVERE SMITH
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21
11 a.m. - IN-PERSON

An actress, playwright, teacher, and author.
Her most recent original work, *Notes from the Field*, looks at the vulnerability of youth, the criminal justice system, and contemporary activism.



ERIC O'NEILL
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9
11 a.m. - VIRTUAL

Author, public speaker and security expert presents keynotes internationally about espionage and national security



KY'S THE THING

The Robert J. Novins Planetarium met 2020's challenges head-on, creating a successful new virtual approach.

Since it was opened in 1974, OCC's Robert J. Novins Planetarium has attracted audiences from near and far for its full dome shows and sky talks, school and group programs, birthday parties and special events.

Shortly after taking the reins as Planetarium Manager in February 2019, Cara Muscio and her team launched a new program, *The Novins Academy Presents: The Astronomical World of Harry Potter*. Exactly one year later, this immersive theater experience was just one part of the facility's most successful month, in which it sold out various public events, including the always-popular Valentine's Day shows.

"It is great to know that we are a valued part of the community and people really do want to have the experience," says Muscio.

"I had been on the job for one super-successful year when the pandemic hit," says Muscio. "There always is an element of uncertainty in the live environment — unexpected elements — but this was something entirely different. We weren't sure how we would adapt that live experience to a virtual one. It was a challenging time."

She adds that the dome is the main attraction. "Seeing the stars, the sky, and lasers all around. I assumed that was what brought people in."

She and her team soon learned that people are hungry for knowledge about science and the stars, for astronomy. They wanted the experience even if they weren't inside the dome. During the pandemic, the Planetarium experienced great success with its virtual content, and even had several events go viral, with tickets being purchased from as far away as the UK, Germany, Canada and India.





LASERFEST EVENTS

Laser Tribute
Featuring artists no longer with us from the 1970s through today

Laser Vinyl
Featuring Arena Rock from the 1970s and '80s

Laser Retro
Featuring '80s Pop and New Wave

Laser X
Featuring Alternative '90s Rock (*Language warning)

PUBLIC SHOWS: FRIDAY NIGHTS AND ALL DAY SATURDAYS



One World, One Sky
Big Bird's Adventure



Stars In My Backyard
Live Skytalk for Families



Space Movie
Schedule changes weekly



Wonders of the Seasonal Sky
Live Skytalk



Laser Show
Schedule changes weekly

Visit tickets.ocean.edu for a complete list of upcoming events

THEMES ARE ALWAYS BIG

Programming themes have always been popular, and as the Planetarium developed as a place where individuals, families and groups could go to create a special experience, the immersive live events became increasingly so. Aside from the Star Talks (which can be done virtually), live events include the Valentine's Day P.J. event for families where everyone came in their pajamas, made constellation valentines and heard star stories in the dome show afterward. Date Night for that same holiday also was popular. Romantic lighting, decorations and decadent desserts were followed by a Sky Talk based on the mythological love stories of the constellations.

"The laser shows done by decades — the '80s retro show, prom, and others — were turned into costumed events which were all wildly successful," says Muscio. "Laser Queen sold out every showing last year, and we are excited to debut Rocketman, featuring Elton John songs, when we reopen. We upgraded our laser software to create more of our own laser shows too."

The Planetarium underwent a major renovation in 2010, with the addition of a German-produced Zeiss optomechanical planetarium projector and a 360-degree digital video system, to combine a brilliant night sky with movies and other visual effects. A laser light system and surround-sound audio were also installed at that time. The former (outdoor) lobby was enclosed to create a welcoming atrium. Exhibit space was also enhanced, which the staff uses to create displays such as the Apollo landings. Three or four times a year, the Astronomical Society of Toms River hosts a star party for the public at the College.

"Whether the audience is the public, K-12, or college students, in the dome or at home, our goal — especially this year — is to inspire wonder and curiosity and help folks Keep Lookin' Up! using science, art and education to achieve that is our greatest contribution to the community," adds Muscio.

Visit <https://www.ocean.edu/planetarium/>



“It is great to know that we are a valued part of the community and people really do want to have the experience.” - Cara Muscio, Planetarium Manager

Solomiia Spyrudon '20

Multilingual Student from Ukraine Achieves Success at OCC

The College's Office of Student Support Services helped her forge her path.

When Solomiia Spyrudon, 23, learned about Ocean County College's Office of Student Support Services (SSS) and all it had to offer, she was immediately interested and decided to find out more.

A simple lunch break chat with another student was about to change her life.

"She told me that SSS could help me in many ways," says Spyrudon. "I became interested and decided to learn more. Why not? In Ukraine, there are no such services."

The mission of SSS is to assist and encourage first-generation college students, low-income college students and/or college students with disabilities through completion of either an associate degree or a certificate. The environment provided for these students is holistic, inclusive and collaborative, and the program immerses students in a challenging and engaging experience.

"We embolden students to be self-motivated, seek out solutions to whatever they see as barriers and develop a positive mindset," says Megan Miskin, director of Student Support Services.

WINNING THE LOTTERY

Spyrudon is a first-generation student whose family moved to the United States in 2018 when they won the "green card lottery" in her home country, in which a limited number of these documents allowing residents to relocate to the United States are handed out in a lottery system.

She had traveled before but says that being a resident is much different than being a tourist. "We were lucky [to get the cards] and decided to take the opportunity," she says. The family knew she wouldn't receive the excellent education she craved in Ukraine, and so they packed up and moved, despite knowing no one in the U.S.

Spyrudon and her parents settled in Lakewood and she set her sights on Ocean County College. Besides the fact that it was the closest school to their home, it also had a broader curriculum with more options. Spyrudon is multilingual — fluent in English, Russian and Ukrainian and speaks some German and Spanish — and wanted to use her language skills in a career, maybe as a translator or working with Homeland Security. She also wanted to take language classes and two were required for her major, General Studies (Social Sciences).

BECOMING A TRAILBLAZER

The more Spyrudon learned about SSS, the better it sounded, and she decided to follow through with the application and interview. Although nervous, she says the staff put her at ease and, although it was the first time she had ever been interviewed for anything, she excelled. Once accepted into the program, she became a work-study student in the SSS office, where the work helped increase her comfort level. The chance to assist other students looking for support offered her an opportunity to communicate in English and helped her open up.

Trailblazers, a leadership program run through OCC's Office of Student Life, was foundational, and Spyrudon flourished. "The workshops in Trailblazers helped me define who I am, what I want and how to achieve it," she says. "Now I feel comfortable and glad that I can inspire others."

Spyrudon graduated in December 2020 with a perfect 4.0 GPA and as a member of Phi Theta Kappa. She currently attends Jersey City University, where she is majoring in National Security Studies.

"Besides the academic help and the day trips that we took (to New York City, Boston and Cape May, where the ziplining experience helped her overcome her fear of heights), I gained confidence and SSS became like my family," says Spyrudon.

Encouraging students and watching them grow as Spyrudon did, is "what it's all about," according to Miskin. "Seeing Solomiia blossom since she's been with us is wonderful. She is so open and loves to learn and connect with people. She will go far in whatever she chooses to do next."



Solomiia Spyrudon, right, and her mother during the 2019 Phi Theta Kappa induction ceremony.

A woman with reddish-brown hair, wearing a grey t-shirt and black pants with a white stripe, is ziplining through a dense forest. She is holding onto a rope and is positioned on a wooden log that serves as a platform. The background is filled with lush green foliage.

PROVIDES STUDENT SUPPORT

OCC's Student Support Services (SSS) go.ocean.edu/SSS is part of a federal TRIO program, a group of outreach and student services programs for students from various, identified disadvantaged backgrounds, funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

TRIO was first administered on campus in 2010 and last year, OCC was awarded nearly \$1.3 million, funding the program through 2025. Besides supporting low-income or first-generation students, the program also aids students with disabilities by providing one-on-one professional tutoring, intensive advising, success coaching and a connection to a supportive community.

"We serve our students with the goal of helping them complete an associate degree with the plan of transferring to a four-year school," says Miskin. She leads three full-time staff members, two part-timers and on-call professional tutors. Each accepted student gets their own adviser, an academic coach and one-on-one professional tutoring to help identify their barriers and create an attainable goal.

"Students can meet with SSS staff to review anything going on in the classroom or at home," adds Miskin. "Lots of students don't know what they don't know and don't know how to ask questions. Any way we can provide support to our students to help them be successful is what we strive to do."

“ Now I feel comfortable and glad that I can inspire others. ”

- Solomiia Spyrudon

Solomiia Spyrudon masters the ropes course on an SSS trip to Cape May.

PAYING IT FORWARD

Three recent OCC alumni help each other succeed in careers and life.

JOE MERCADANTE

Pay it Forward, Give Back, Pass it On ... all are expressions for what OCC alumni do naturally, and describe how three specific recent graduates have helped each other succeed.

When Joe Mercadante graduated from OCC in 2006, he almost immediately opened his own marketing firm. Even though he enjoyed studying Criminal Justice, the self-proclaimed “hands-on learner” picked up the experience he needed while working with another marketing business during his OCC tenure.

“I had a very good experience at OCC,” says Mercadante.

“Even though I’ve never been the scholastic type, I enjoyed my coursework, the vibrant campus and the real-world experience the professors brought to my classes.”

Initially, his business, Unleash Group, Inc., worked with a variety of clients, but in 2008, Mercadante decided he wanted to make his business as recession-resistant as possible, and realized that the medical professionals among his clients were not seeing the same downturn from the recession as some of his other clients. So, since 2009/2010, his niche business, catering to the marketing needs of doctors and hospitals, has been booming.

“The medical field will always be needed and it will always need marketing help,” he says. Unleash Group provides mostly digital services for its clients — websites, landing pages, social media campaigns — with some print work.

When Kim Malony, director of Alumni and Advancement, reached out as OCC launched the first Local Alumni Network event, Mercadante agreed to participate

“OCC believes our alumni population — a group nearly 50,000 strong — is one of the College’s finest assets,” says Malony. “It is our priority to keep our alumni engaged, not only with the College, but with one another.”

During the 2019 event, Mercadante met Laura Wagner who was involved with a nearby nonprofit, Ocean’s Harbor House. She explained that the youth shelter needed some website help, and Mercadante again offered his assistance.

“*The more we, as a local business community, can provide opportunity to others and involve OCC students in our industry, the more we serve everyone.***”** - Joe Mercadante



Joe Mercadante



Lisa Wit



Laura Wagner

NATURALLY!

LAURA WAGNER

Wagner graduated from OCC in 2008 and continued her studies at Kean University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in marketing. Today, she teaches management and marketing at both institutions as an adjunct and works with local organizations doing strategic planning and web design through her business, Meraki Services, LLC.

“I love teaching at both schools and I encourage my students to network whenever possible. Getting the degree is just a piece of the puzzle; networking is everything, and connections help across the board. It feels so good when I connect students and they help each other out,” Wagner adds.

Her in-classroom encouragement really works: Wagner invited Lisa Wit, a former student at Ocean and Kean, to join her at the local alumni networking event in February 2020, and as luck and opportunity would have it, Mercadante was looking for a part-time employee.

LISA WIT

“When I met Lisa, I liked the idea of her being local and being an OCC graduate,” he says. He hired Wit for that position, which she quickly mastered, and she has been working full-time with Mercadante and his team as Client Services Manager, managing a team of eight, for more than a year.

“You rarely meet someone who learns as quickly as Lisa,” says Mercadante. “This is all tech-based thinking and isn't easy to learn. She is programming HTML and encrypting website traffic, creating monthly reports, and doing some graphic design and content edits ... serious things that she picked right up.”

For her part, Wit loves working with the Unleash team and is grateful that she changed her major while at Kean Ocean from Business Administration to Marketing, where Wagner became somewhat of a mentor. **“I'm interested in attending even more events and getting more involved,”** she says. **“Networking is so important ... as a way to meet people and learn about the community.”**

“The more we, as a local business community, can provide opportunity to others and involve OCC students in our industry, and give them the tools to succeed, the more we serve everyone,” adds Mercadante.

“OCC's Alumni Network is an incredible resource and we hope our alumni take advantage of all it has to offer” says Malony. “Whether an alum is interested in networking, professional development and career services, continuing education, arts and entertainment, or helping current students on their educational journeys, the opportunities are limitless. Once a Viking, always a Viking!”

To learn about ways to get involved with the OCC Alumni Network, email occalumni@ocean.edu.

“*It feels so good when I connect students and they help each other out.*” - Laura Wagner



EDUCATION AND OUTREACH



A volunteer takes part in Paddle for the Edge

Valuable Ecosystem Gaining Recognition

The Barnegat Bay Partnership researches coastal wetlands and educates the public.

Historically misunderstood coastal wetlands now get the recognition they deserve as a unique and valuable ecosystem, home to a diverse array of plant and animal life. In its dozen years at OCC, the Barnegat Bay Partnership (BBP) has gathered mass amounts of data to educate the public and local natural resource managers and policy makers on how best to protect and enhance the region's wetlands.

"We are one of 28 national estuary programs whose mission is to improve the quality of estuaries of national importance," says Martha Maxwell-Doyle, BBP's project coordinator. Their data forms the baseline on which subsequent research about the impacts of climate change and sea level rise on our coastal wetlands is based. This information is being used to inform decisions to "protect, mitigate and enhance coastal wetlands."

"All our work is done from an applied research standpoint — to address scientific knowledge gaps about what is happening to this critical ecosystem," says Maxwell-Doyle.

Coastal wetlands mitigate flooding and storm surges, provide a nursery habitat for fish and other wildlife and keep water clean. Long-term monitoring includes measuring elevation, vegetation, water quality and accretion rates that are used to spot trends. The team collects data three times a year and conducts other studies to answer specific management questions.

BBP also works with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services and other partners to map and assess the islands in the Barnegat Bay. Ongoing, rapid sea level rise has outpaced the islands' ability to sustain, and erosion is always a danger; as the islands wash away, the mainland is less protected and habitats disappear.

"This initiative will help to prioritize the islands for restoration activities by determining how best to use dredged material to increase elevation in the face of sea level rise. Restoration will enhance existing habitats and stabilize the edges," explains Emily Pirl, BBP's wetlands field specialist



BBP field tech Raquel Rotem



Field Specialist Emily Pirl

BBP field techs, Robert Cacara and Raquel Rotem



Paddle for the Edge

The BBP's citizen science program, Paddle for the Edge, involves hundreds of volunteers who kayak around the marshes and take photos, gathering data on their phones. The bay is 42 miles long with hundreds of miles of shoreline. Over the past six years, more than 400 volunteers have paddled a total of 125 miles of shoreline and collected data at 6,568 locations. This information helps to assess current shoreline conditions and identify potential shoreline restoration areas.

"Anyone who likes to paddle can join us and be a citizen scientist," says Pirl. Participants not only collect valuable data, but they also educate others about the value of healthy wetlands.

"Prior to Hurricane Sandy, many people thought wetlands were just a breeding ground for mosquitoes or a place to go duck hunting. But since then, people have learned of their benefits and importance," adds Maxwell-Doyle.

Read more about the Barnegat Bay Partnership, its wetlands monitoring program and Paddle for the Edge at <https://www.barnegatbaypartnership.org>.

STAY READY SO
YOU DON'T HAVE
TO GET READY

OCC student-athletes continued to work out and stay in shape throughout the pandemic.

After three years as a varsity basketball player at Toms River High School South, Nickerson “Nick” Jean-Louis couldn’t wait to get to OCC and play as a Viking in 2020. The 6-foot guard can’t remember a time that he didn’t play basketball.

Jean-Louis initiated contact with Patrick Boylan, head men’s basketball coach, and both were hopeful the season would begin last fall. Unfortunately, the pandemic dashed their hopes through spring 2021. The eager student-athlete used the downtime to work out, succeed in his remote classes and plan his future, compiling a list of four-year schools that match his needs.

“I’ve been working out like crazy,” says Jean-Louis, “training myself six days a week, several hours each day, doing skills work and playing ball at the park ... defensive drills, shooting and more. I wanted to be ready. As they say, ‘Stay ready so you don’t have to get ready.’”

The 18-year-old also did sprints in the sand near his Toms River home, lifted, and did body weight and resistance-band workouts. “I also filled a bag of sand and did squats with that,” he says. “I have no idea how much it weighed. I just know it was heavy.”



Nickerson Jean-Louis

At Lacey Township High School, Ocskasy played point guard and third base, and chose OCC in part to continue her athletic career. She will earn her liberal arts degree in 2022 and plans to continue on to Mercer County Community College to earn her mortuary science certification. The self-described “planner” visited a funeral home and discussed her career goals with a local mortician whose two sons followed the same career path, and she has remained focused on that goal.

During the pandemic, Ocskasy ran on a treadmill, followed weekly weight, cardio and ab workouts and ate healthy foods. She did basketball drills at her house, but didn’t really have anyone to practice softball skills with.

“In the beginning, it was hard to get motivated,” she explains. “I’m not a fan of working out ... practice is different. You don’t think about the running, it’s just a game, and it’s fun.” But once she found she had “put on a few pounds” she pushed harder. “Now I’m back in shape and confident. Working out helps your health and appearance and helps mentally.”

OCC’s Athletics program plans a return to the courts, fields and an overall normal environment for the fall semester. Ilene Cohen, executive director of Athletics says, “I, as well as the staff, coaches and student-athletes are looking forward to the fall season to begin on our campus. We are all ready to get back to playing and having the full college experience as a student-athlete. Let’s Go Vikings!”

Staying in Shape for Two Sports

Self-motivation also is a large part of life for sophomore Haley Ocskasy, who plays basketball and softball.

“She is committed, determined and tenacious,” says Karen Strittmatter, head softball coach. “She knows what she wants and goes after it. Playing two sports and keeping her academics up — she has to work hard and stay on a schedule.”

Darnell Williams, head women’s basketball coach, agrees that his player has “amazing drive and passion for the game. She put together a workout plan for herself and she worked hard to maintain [her skills],” he says.



Haley Ocskasy



Staying Motivated

With enough self-motivation for a gym-full of players, Jean-Louis spreads his energy around, inspiring teammates and coaches alike.

“When I talk to people who have no motivation, I say, ‘What’s your why?’” Keeping a goal in mind — in his case, getting his bachelor’s degree, playing professionally, and then becoming a coach or a trainer — works wonders.

Jean-Louis considers himself a leader, and Boylan agrees.

“We have stressed to our student-athletes that they should continue to work out on their own, and Nick is someone I’ve never doubted,” says Boylan. “We FaceTime and I follow up to be sure he (and all the players) are working out safely. Nick pushes himself hard. We want to be in our stride once practice starts.”

Both men are more-than ready to take on the long basketball season.

“Nick is already a leader for us. I rely on him to hold himself and his teammates accountable.”



Nickerson Jean-Louis



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