



EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FUND (EOF) NEWSLETTER

A.S.A.P. FROM EOF DIRECTOR, LAURA F. RICKARDS

In moments of digital distraction, Instagram is my source for recipes, quips, and words of encouragement that I share freely. Recently, I read a new understanding and definition of A.S.A.P. that may help guide and center us when we experience angst, discomfort, or something that feels off. You will not read of a new way or discovery but possibly be reminded to make space for being.

The traditional meaning of the four letters is about speed, hurry, and a hint of something that should have been done. Perhaps something with a looming deadline that was forgotten, and there is a window of reprieve. These are certainly not the letters I want in the subject area of an email. What might be a new way of thinking?

A. As Slowly As Possible

What is the rush? Where are we going in such a frenzy? In our haste, we miss the simple gifts and pleasures of each day. The warmth of radiant sun, the blush from a breeze of fresh air, the caw of a bird, the silence. If we slow down, there is much we will realize, much to be grateful and give thanks for, even in our manic world. Breathe, open your eyes.

S. As Softly As Possible

In tone of voice, in criticism or feedback, in judgment, in assessment — can we respond with empathy and kindness? Can we accept that we are doing our best to manage and cope with our burdens, challenges, and pain? Can we hold onto the notion that much of our baggage is unseen? Can we be curious, ask more questions, and take time to see our brother or sister? We might see a reflection that looks much like ourselves. What surprise and delight awaits.

A. As Sustainably As Possible

Whether you believe in the effects of global warming or not, can we think about sustainability as awareness of the tension and balance between things we do now and possible future impact?

Consider your body. You eat clean and drink water. These behaviors support well-being and a chance of your sack of water, your body having the longest run possible.

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CONTINUED: A.S.A.P.

FROM EOF DIRECTOR, LAURA F. RICKARDS

Continued from page 1.

What can we do today that might make the space you are in better for someone else? Begin small. If the laundry is sorted by color (I do), it makes washing orderly and prevents colors from running. Ah, too basic? Think about your car. Regular maintenance means the lifespan of that vehicle can be extended, and mileage multiplied.

P. As Sincerely As Possible

Being the authentic you with dents, dings, scrapes, and badges is the first sincere action you can take. Being you is easier than pretending. Save fiction for reading.

Act with your best intentions and believe others are acting the same. Observe body language and listen to what is not being said. Bless everyone, and leave space for grace and exit. Make being offended a choice, not a reaction. Yes, simpler said than done.

Leave comparison to things, not people. Be the very best version of yourself — one day at a time.

Allow. Space. And. Pause.

We face demands on our time and attention that often exceed 24 hours. Work, family, relationship needs, self-care, growth, and actualization, will there ever be time enough? I complain – *one more thing*.

So, for our best lives, we need to limit sugar and fats, exercise, find time for meditation, declutter, stimulate our brains, floss, drink 60 liters of water, get fresh air, be engaged in something fun or recreational, save money, plan for retirement, limit screen time, drink less alcohol or not at all, refrain from or quit smoking, set boundaries, and practice gratitude. Exhausting.

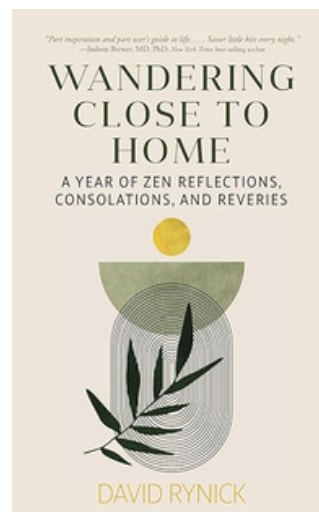
What then? Here is my short prescription.

- Uncover joy in spaces and places unexpected
- Be kind to yourself
- Recognize your imperfection – we are a work in progress – when you know better, you do better
- One day, one life – go for it
- Embrace the moment
- Laugh at yourself and in the company of others

Take some time now, get comfortable, and create space for lingering. Read about the successes of EOF@OCEAN scholars. No one rises without support. We are honored to have the privilege.

A final thought from my dear friend **David Rynick**, **Wandering Close to Home A Year of Zen Reflection, Consolation and Reveries** – (with permission)

Community Possibilities – *We come together to accomplish what we cannot do on our own. We come together to fulfill the deepest longings of our hearts. If we are able to bear the inevitable difficulty and confusion, then we can perhaps receive the blessings of connections that nourish us and make our lives rich and meaningful.*



ACADEMIC COACHING

Our academic coaching is designed to support scholars working toward degree completion. Coaching activities include working with students on time management, motivation, study skills, organization, goal setting, and test-taking. Using a holistic approach, we connect students with other resources as needs present. Our goal is to have scholars use coaching as another tool for success.

MEET OUR COACHES



Christine Cassidy
English



Jonas Weissbrod
*Math, Chemistry,
Statistics*

What EOF Scholars Have to Say About Academic Coaching

Christine was a lifesaver this semester. It's hard to always go in person, but being available via email truly helped me a lot. She responded quickly and always gave the best feedback and advice. She even did last-minute reviews of my work; she made herself available, and I truly appreciated it! – **Shamiya Gaines**

Jonas was extremely kind and engaging, he broke everything down in a way I understood, and I am grateful to have worked with him! – **Raylyn Tupper**

Christine is phenomenal, and I love about her is how approachable she is. – **Tonja Pacheco**

Jonas is very helpful and knows a lot about math and made me understand the problems better. – **Daniel Valente**

Christine was incredibly helpful with my English essay. She provided in depth feedback, offering suggestions to improve both my writing and grammar. Her guidance on better explaining my topic was especially valuable. – **Bridget Pezza**

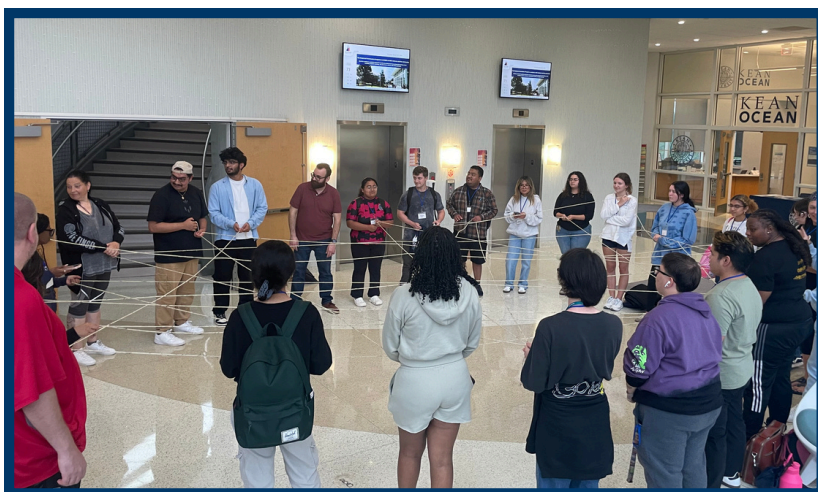
EOF@OCEAN: SUMMER 2024

EOF@OCEAN summer programs engaged scholars in self-discovery and growth, fostering reflection, exploration, and critical thinking. Workshops provided scholars meaningful opportunities to apply, analyze, and evaluate their learning inside and outside the classroom.

In the summer of 2024 we identified four cohorts: **R2** (second summer scholars), **Returning EOF**, **New to EOF**, and **New to OCEAN and EOF**. R2 scholars focused on personal branding, wealth sharing, and community building. They created websites to showcase their skills, designed gratitude jars to enhance emotional intelligence, and engaged in wellness practices to support their mental and physical well-being.

Returning EOF students and those **new to EOF** combined efforts for programming centered on self-efficacy, grit, and community building. Activities and reflective practices fostered confidence, perseverance, and resilience for academic success. Dr. Yesenia Madas, Vice President of Student Affairs at Brookdale Community College, led a workshop on self-efficacy.

New students concentrated on academic success, navigating campus resources, and building relationships with EOF staff and peers. They learned the expectations for English 151/152, developed citation and thesis writing skills with EOF Academic Coach Christine Cassidy, and explored campus resources to ensure they had the tools for success at OCEAN. Program activities also emphasized building connections within the OCEAN community through a meet-and-greet activity with upper administration.



SUMMER EOF@OCEAN RETURNING STUDENTS YEAR TWO (R2): ELIZABETH MACCHIONI

“Remember to wear athletic gear and pack your resume.” These were the guidelines I was provided with in the days leading up to the 2024 EOF Summer Program. I had no idea what the day could possibly bring, but I was eager to attend and find out. Being caught up in summer mode, I was slightly hesitant to partake in the program that day, as all I could think about was sleeping in. However, like one of the EOF principals’ states, I showed up to the program, in turn, showing up for myself.

The EOF summer program was a transformative experience, filled with opportunities to grow, learn, and connect. It was an exciting blend of meeting new faces and deepening bonds with familiar ones, creating a sense of community.

For me, one of the most impactful aspects of the program was learning about gratitude. We explored various ways to express appreciation, which culminated in an arts and crafts session where we learned a new artistic style and created gratitude jars. This activity was not just a creative outlet but a meaningful exercise in reflecting on what we are thankful for in our lives.

Our physical and mental health and wellness were also a priority during the program. We gained insights into maintaining a healthy lifestyle and were introduced to the school gym. For myself, it was the first time utilizing a public gym. This experience was initially daunting, but it ultimately helped me overcome my fear and gain confidence in this new environment.

Additionally, we ventured into the world of coding, learning the basics and setting up our own personal websites. This knowledge allowed us to enhance our LinkedIn profiles, setting us up for future career success. The skills we acquired in this area are invaluable as we prepare to enter the professional world.

Overall, the EOF summer program was an enriching experience that fostered personal growth, gratitude, and preparedness for future endeavors. It left us with a stronger sense of community, newfound confidence, and essential skills that will undoubtedly benefit us in our careers and beyond.



EOFPANJ FALL STUDENT DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE



On November 22nd, 2024, members of EOF@OCEAN traveled to the campus of the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) for the Educational Opportunity Fund Professional Association of New Jersey (EOFPANJ) Fall conference. The theme of the day was *EOF is Your Village: Elevate Your Future*, and our scholars actively participated throughout the day in student-led workshops such as *Stepping Out*, *Moving Forward: Embracing Your Growth Zone* and *Sneakers, Sports, Social Media & Success: Building Your Brand On & Off the Internet*.

Adding to the day's positive experience, EOF@OCEAN was proud to celebrate and support our recent graduate, Sadain Siddique, awarded the prestigious Arrigo O. Rogers Memorial Scholarship Award, which recognizes EOF students with remarkable leadership abilities and a strong commitment to serving others. Sadain is currently a Computer Science Major at NJIT.

4SHORE GAME NIGHT



On December 4th, 2024, a vibrant crew gathered as the *4Shore collective*, comprising OCEAN, Brookdale Community College, Georgian Court University, and Monmouth University, for an unforgettable game night at Brookdale's Student Life Center. More than thirty EOF students from across Monmouth and Ocean counties descended upon the campus, ready to connect and compete.

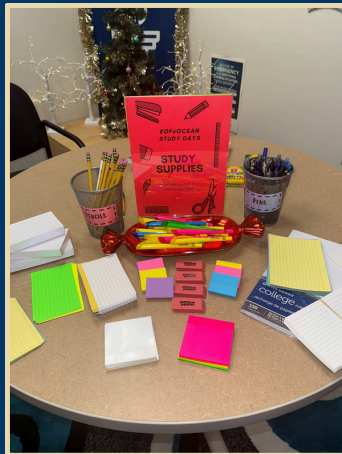
EOF-themed word searches provided fun, collaborative challenges, while icebreakers ensured everyone mingled and mixed, breaking down barriers and building bridges between students from different campuses. For our EOF@OCEAN scholars, the event was a powerful reminder of the expansive EOF community and network. We left Brookdale with full hearts, new friendships, and a renewed sense of belonging within the larger EOF family.

FALL WELCOME



In October, we hosted our annual Fall Welcome, a festive open house to gather with students and begin the new semester. The event embraced the spirit of autumn with seasonal treats and apple cider. Students enjoyed fall-themed crafts and participated in our Season of Gratitude Tree, where they shared what they were thankful for by adding handwritten leaves to the display. It was a wonderful opportunity for new and returning students to come together, celebrate the new semester, and experience the EOF@OCEAN community.

STUDY DAYS



EOF hosted four "Study Days" during the fall semester on December 4, 5, 10, and 11, providing students with a supportive and quiet space to prepare for finals. Students had access to study supplies and snacks to keep them refreshed and focused.

A relaxation room featured neck and back massage, soothing sounds, and calming fragrances to create a peaceful space for de-stressing. In-person and remote academic coaching support provided guidance and directions in review and test preparation. Dedicated study days helped scholars maintain motivation and be better prepared for exams.

PRESIDENT'S LIST - FALL 2024



These students have completed at least 12 credits with a C grade or above and have earned a semester grade point average of 3.5 or higher.

SCHOLAR	GPA	SCHOLAR	GPA
Batool Abdelmalak	4.0	Eutysha Mears	4.0
Christopher Altomare	3.54	Jacqueline Miranda Sanchez	3.6
Alexis Bajada	3.77	Tonja Pacheco	4.0
Elisabeth Burns	4.0	Bridgette Pezza	3.8
Jessica Campos	4.0	Daniel Quijano	3.87
Martha Contreras Martinez	3.88	Brianna Reid	3.8
Caitlin Cortes	4.0	Danna Reyes	3.81
Tara Covert	4.0	Matthew Rose	3.79
Shania Crump	3.75	Marco Ruiz	3.88
Viena Fuentes	3.5	Julia Sobol	4.0
Breanna Goida	3.54	David Tees	3.89
Khadira Johnson.....	3.65	Raylyn Tupper	3.68
Dawasia Jones.....	4.0	Bianca VanBerkle	3.54
Diana Lopez.....	3.88	Maryam Zaman	3.62
Mariah Macias.....	3.5	Areeba Zulkarnain	4.0
Itzel Mateos	4.0	Maria Zulkarnain	4.0

EOF CANVAS PARTICIPATION CHAMPIONS

We would like to recognize those scholars who have been actively using and participating in our EOF course shell. Our course shell outlines program requirements and helps students meet program goals and stay informed. Our top two scholars are:

1. Jessica Campos 593 Page Views
2. Eutysha Mears 576 Page Views

EOF ACADEMIC COACHING CHAMPIONS

We would like to recognize the scholars who have been the most active in utilizing EOF academic coaching this year. Our top two scholars are:

1. Sergio Vargas 3320 Minutes
2. Tyshawn Lloyd 2510 Minutes



EOF SCHOLARS ON CAMPUS

Meet the exceptional EOF scholars who are making an impact across campus through their involvement in clubs, honor societies, work-study, and more!



Erin Bolger Elizabeth

- Student Worker - Athletics
- Sustainability Club
- Photography Club
- National Society of Leadership and Success (NSLS)
- Lambda Alpha Epsilon



Khadira Johnson

- Criminal Justice Club
- Debate Team
- Lambda Alpha Epsilon
- Alpha Alpha Alpha
- Alpha Phi Theta
- Leadership Board, National Society of Leadership and Success (NSLS)



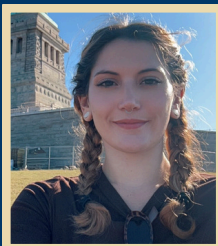
Areeba Zulkarnain

- President, PTK, Tau Iota
- All-State Academic Team, PTK
- Student Worker - Academic Affairs
- Alpha Beta Gamma
- Muslim Student Association
- NJ Stars Club



David Tees

- Student Worker - Student Life and Helping Hands
- Sigma Kappa Delta
- Honors by Contract



Elizabeth Macchioni

- Vice President/Co-Founder, Mental Health and Wellness Club
- Secretary, Environmental Sustainability Club
- History Club
- Dance Club
- Phi Theta Kappa
- Alpha Alpha Alpha



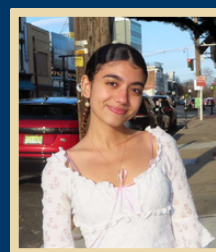
Itzel Mateos

- Accounting Club
- Phi Theta Kappa
- Alpha Alpha Alpha
- Volunteer Tax Preparer for OCC's IRS VITA Center
- Honors by Contract
- FBLA National Leadership Conference



Marco Ruiz

- President, Sustainability Club
- Vice President, Philosophy Club
- Student Worker - EOF & Science Lab
- Alpha Alpha Alpha
- Honors by Contract



Batool Abdelmalak

- Treasurer, Fashion Club
- Student Worker - The Hub
- Athlete - Cross Country



LEADERSHIP: 2025

BEING YOU IN A DIGITALLY EMPHASIZED, DISPARATE WORLD

2025 focused on three leadership skill areas: **Communication**, **Decision Making**, and **Relationship Building**. Two students and recent OCEAN graduates, with the support of the program director, used this thematic base to construct a three-day, two-night experience for 15 students. **Elizabeth Macchioni** and **Sadain Siddique** selected an assessment, created activities, made decisions about materials and handouts, recruited students, and assigned staff workshops to develop.

Our goal was to develop leaders to be aware of the pressures and expectations of our digital world as it bumps, knocks against, and sometimes crushes our sense of self and being.

Participants describe the value in attending:

The experience was a very big eye opener, very enlightening and encouraging. You engage yourself with everyone else and build great relationships and hear a diverse set of voices and really understand others perspectives, it's also fun and keeps your brain on its toes about tapping into your inner self.

I would talk about how genuine the conversations were and how we were all able to be in an emotional but comfortable space where it was easy to learn and grow.

Being invited to participate in the EOF@OCEAN Leadership Retreat was a transformative experience that will shape my overall character development for years to come.



Reflections from Johnsonburg: Marco Ruiz

LAKEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

EOF leadership is an opportunity to learn about yourself and others, while developing essential leadership skills. With the support of an exceptional team of advisors and directors, leadership becomes accessible and enjoyable, creating a comfortable environment for personal growth. I realized that what I am going through is something many others experience as well. Despite our differences, we all share the drive and dreams to be successful, along with the grit to achieve our goals.

As a first-generation college student who joined EOF in 2022, I felt lost and overwhelmed before becoming a part of this program. My GPA was low, and I doubted whether I would continue my college journey or graduate. However, the EOF advisors guided me and made me feel like a valued member of a community. Thanks to their support, I have received numerous opportunities and have been able to network and expand my connections.



EOFPANJ UNAPOLOGETICALLY US UNITY CONFERENCE



Pictured: Xia Garcia, Brooke Colon, Michele Gioxaris, Jacqueline Miranda Sanchez, Nancy Sanchez-Tochihuitl, Marco Ruiz

EOF students from across New Jersey gathered for the "Unapologetically US Unity Conference," a memorable three-day event hosted by the Educational Opportunity Fund Professional Association of New Jersey (EOFPANJ). Held in New Brunswick, this impactful weekend provided a wealth of knowledge, inspiration, and empowerment, bringing together EOF scholars from across the state to foster connection and inclusion.

Students attended a variety of workshops focused on communing and uplifting affinity groups, Men of Color, Women of Color, and LGBTQ+ populations, offering valuable resources and insights. The conference was a powerful reminder of the strength of our unique voices and experiences, and the ongoing work needed to create a more inclusive future for all. Five students from EOF@OCEAN proudly represented our institution.



*Attending the Unapologetically Us conference on diversity was an eye-opening experience that deepened my understanding of the power of inclusivity and the importance of celebrating all identities. I actively participated in workshops and discussions, sharing my experiences while learning from others' diverse perspectives. On the last night, I felt truly loved and heard as I shared my personal story about my life in a room full of strangers. It was a heartfelt moment and I was appreciative for the warm atmosphere that I was allowed to be vulnerable in. - **Brooke Colon***

*At the Unapologetically Us Conference, I learned a lot about myself and realized that what I am going through is something many others experience as well. Despite our differences, we all share the drive and dreams to be successful, along with the grit to achieve our goals. I attended a few workshops, and one of them highlighted how men's mental health is often not discussed enough. We should bring more attention to this issue and recognize that it's okay to be open about our challenges, regardless of gender, age, or other factors. Overall, this conference motivated me to start checking in on my health and well-being. It made me realize that I'm not alone and that it's okay to be who I am. - **Marco Ruiz***

VOICES OF EXPERIENCE: OCC COLLEAGUES REFLECT ON EOF JOURNEY

Cameron Scarano, Counseling Specialist

Where were you an EOF scholar?

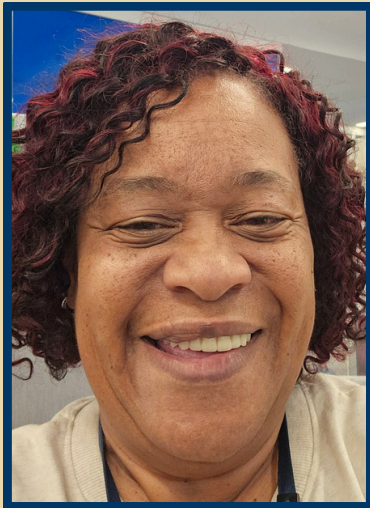
Ocean County College, 2013-2016

What was your EOF experience like?

I am thankful to have experienced what EOF provided and I gained life-long friends from the program. My advisor at the time was thorough, patient and conscientious of what I wanted here at OCC.

What wisdom would you share with an EOF@OCEAN scholar?

Study hard and beat the odds! College is tough but also rewarding for the opportunities that are ahead!



Celeste Jamerson, Registration Services Specialist

Where were you an EOF scholar?

Ocean County College, 2005-2009

What was your EOF experience like?

EOF was very helpful to me. At the time when I was attending, I was a single mother with four children. The meetings I had with my advisor really helped me to stay focused on my studies. She was able to help me find resources on campus to help with my classes. The extra funds also help.

What wisdom would you share with an EOF@OCEAN scholar?

Always ask questions. You never know who might have the answers.

Bridget Feneis, Assistant Professor of Mathematics

EOF Viking Scholarship Donor

Where were you an EOF scholar?

Richard Stockton State College (now Stockton University)



What was your EOF experience like?

Before my freshman year, I attended the summer program where we ran around the lake at 6AM, attended classes 8 – 4, and had tutoring sessions in the evenings. I loved the experience so much that I became a student tutor which ultimately led me to a career in teaching.

What wisdom would you share with an EOF@OCEAN scholar?

If I could offer one piece of advice, it would be to go the extra mile in your studies – be more than prepared for every test. And most importantly, aim to love what you do.



2025 EOF CHAMPION: PROFESSOR PAMELA BOGDAN

Pam Bogdan (Pamela) came to OCEAN in 2019, after more than 30 years of service to Bell Labs and AT&T, with a specific focus and charge to develop the Engineering and Industrial Technical programs to attract more students interested in careers in these areas.

A lifelong educator, she also worked at Brookdale Community College as an Adjunct Mathematics Instructor, teaching Statistics, College Algebra, and Pre-Calculus. Her pedagogical approach encouraged and supported students convinced math was not their subject. Pam earned an MS in Electronics Engineering from Georgia Institute of Technology, and a BS in Electronics Engineering from California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo. She holds a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt Certification signifying skills in leading complex projects, identifying and reducing waste, process enhancement, improving customer satisfaction, and mentoring.

She was awarded the President's Volunteer Service Award for five years, from 2013 to 2017.

Students have commented that Professor Bogdan is a wealth of knowledge and willing to share what she knows. She made it clear that she was accessible and encouraged students to take it upon themselves to seek her out for input and feedback.

Professor Bogdan and EOF Scholar, Sergio Vargas, recently co-authored on a paper and conference presentation that showcases the collaborative nature of how we all work together to support the success of our students.

P. A. M. Bogdan and S. Vargas, "WIP: Accelerating Growth of Non-Traditional Engineering Students Through a Holistic Ecosystem of Programs, Courses, Activities and Partnerships," 2024 IEEE Frontiers in Education Conference (FIE), Washington, DC, USA, 2024, pp. 1-5, doi: 10.1109/FIE61694.2024.10892829. keywords: {Industries;Oceans;Ecosystems;Collaboration;Engineering students;Engineering Education;Non-traditional Students;Experiential Learning;Career Skills;Work Readiness}



I am so honored to be named the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) Champion 2025. It is truly a privilege to be able to work with all of you and your students to support the NJ Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) and its vision of ensuring New Jersey becomes a national leader in providing access to higher education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. I look forward to our continued partnership and I congratulate you on all of the wonderful work that you do! - Professor Pamela Bogdan

ENGINEERING A BRIGHTER FUTURE: SERGIO VARGAS

GED GRADUATE

My journey at Ocean County College began over a year and a half ago, starting with GED preparation. With the unwavering support of my GED teacher, I transitioned into college, a step I was originally hesitant to pursue.

EOF@OCEAN quickly became my cornerstone. From the moment Michele interviewed me, I knew I had found my academic family. EOF fosters a nurturing environment where students from all backgrounds can thrive academically and personally, providing a space where I could truly discover my academic path. EOF provided not just support, but a network of role models who believed in my potential, laying a strong foundation for my success.

Driven by a passion for engineering, I found incredible opportunities at OCC. Meeting Professor Bogdan was pivotal; her mentorship opened doors I never imagined. Through the engineering department, I worked with NASA in Florida. I co-authored and published a research paper, "Accelerating Growth of Non-Traditional Engineering Students Through a Holistic Ecosystem of Programs, Courses, Activities and Partnerships," becoming the first author in my family. We presented our work in Washington, D.C. and I'm currently serving as the lead engineer for the LN2 project for the U.S. Air Force. With this experience, I plan to pursue aerospace engineering, specializing in propulsion to contribute to interstellar travel.

This trajectory highlights the power of OCC and EOF. Their approach to support and real-world skill development have been invaluable and I am immensely grateful for the opportunities. Without their guidance and support, this journey wouldn't have been possible. To my fellow students, don't let anyone tell you what you can't do. With hard work and the right team behind you, you've got this.



WIP: Accelerating Growth of Non-Traditional Engineering Students Through a Holistic Ecosystem of Programs, Courses, Activities and Partnerships

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Abstract—This Work In Progress (WIP) paper about the innovative practice for a complete ecosystem for non-traditional student success. This paper highlights the early successes of a student taking advantage of a robust program that combines, traditional support services, experiential learning in and out of the classroom and industry partnerships. This paper is written jointly from the perspective of the program chair and a student fully participating in the overall set of programs. It will highlight the significant acceleration of both skills and confidence that this student has experienced in their first year. His experience is helping to make a more robust set of pathways for students that will follow him. The paper will walk through the student's journey from completion of their GED at our community college, their initial year and project the future pathway beyond that initial year. The paper will show how the programs are designed and implemented by the people running them. It will provide highlights and insights from the student in terms of what worked well and potential improvements. Details are provided about support services such as the Ocean County College (OCC) EOF program which provides: a community of like learners, comprehensive service and support, private academic coaching, academic advising, a financial grant and continued eligibility at NJ senior institutions. Another support program: The Student Support Services (TRIO) at Ocean County College whose mission is to assist and encourage first-generation college students, income-eligible college students, and/or college students with disabilities through the completion of a credential. We operate in a holistic, inclusive, and collaborative environment while delivering services that will immerse students in a challenging and engaging student experience. TRIO embodies students to be self-driven; to discover their own barriers, seek out solutions, and develop a positive mindset in their journey toward success. This is complemented by an engineering degree program with a heavy emphasis on experiential learning where every course must dedicate a minimum of 10% of the grade to engineering project work. Finally, all of this is complemented with outreach, both from industry as well as students encouraging K-12 students to pursue STEM.

Keywords— Engineering Education; Non-traditional Students; Experiential Learning; Career Skills; Work Readiness (key words)

I. BACKGROUND

This paper provides a case study that aligns with the Inputs, Outputs and Short Term Outcomes of a cocurricular support model as shown in FIGURE 1 from [1]. Unlike [1], this Work In Progress begins with the student pursuing a non-traditional pathway starting with the Ocean County College (OCC) GED program then transitioning to the support services and academic programs ultimately leading to a career in engineering.

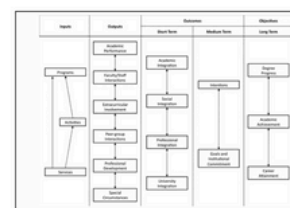


FIGURE 1 Model of Co-Curricular Support for Undergraduate Engineering Students [1]

To better understand the impact of this eco-system of programs



INTROSPECTION AND REFLECTION: ITZEL MATEOS

MURRY BERGTRAUM HIGH SCHOOL

When you meet someone new, you undergo the universal interview process. What is your name? Itzel Mateos. How old are you? 29. Where are you from? New York City. The big question, who are you? The person you are today is the culmination of your life. Who am I? This is my sincere answer; I do not know. Sometimes I feel no different than the little girl who was afraid to explore the world. The only difference is that today I have defined the elements in my life that encourage me to rise above the hand I've been dealt with.

My childhood was not traditional. Having been raised by a single parent, being shy and introverted, and moving frequently meant I spent most of my time alone. Yet I found solace in the uninterrupted, peaceful, silence of solitude. As a child, I had the freedom to roam my neighborhood, read and watch what piqued my interest; all the mail that arrived, the conversations and actions of others. I was a little detective, and my natural curiosity allowed me to piece things together quickly.

Ever the observant child, I learned to relieve the burden of my house. I watched my mother provide for me, so I learned to pay the bills for her. I learned that ordering food meant I had to open the door for a stranger, so I learned to cook instead. I learned that although I was my mother's duty, I was also her motivation. My mother's sacrifices and support inspire me to succeed, as I wish to honor everything, she did for me.

For many, this notion of filial duty is a foreign concept, a source of debate, the reason some cannot move forward. However, my life is not stagnant, everything I have accomplished has been a result of my efforts to honor everything my mother has done for me. By succeeding, I'm fulfilling my duty to her and showing my appreciation.

While I am grateful for the efforts made to provide and care for me, I did not always think this way. At some point, the innocence in which a child sees the world erodes, leaving openings for new desires, comparison and unfair resentment. As I age, I reflect on my life and the choices I have made, particularly during the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Today I may seem like a beacon of Zen, but it is nothing more than awareness of the mistakes I've made. So where does the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) fit into my life? One of my greatest goals as a teenager was to have my family see me graduate from college. Unfortunately, I prioritized other aspects of my life, which I deeply regret. Over a decade after graduating high school, I am halfway towards achieving this goal. EOF has helped me keep the vision alive; as it has provided me with the tools I needed to advance academically and professionally, putting me on a path of growth and determination.

Workshops taught me the power of resilience; how to overcome challenges and keep moving forward with strength and purpose. The program also emphasized the importance of self-advocacy and self-love, teaching me to believe in my own potential and fight for my future. Lastly, EOF provided a safe environment where people with similar experiences can come together, lifting each other up and boosting their ambition. All in all, my time at EOF provided skills and experiences that will remain with me forever.

In the end, we are nothing but a culmination of the experiences we have lived and as I reflect on everything, it seems I've learned enough to answer the question, who am I? Today I am a woman who has risen above resentment and is able to see the bigger picture. I am a resilient individual. I am a daughter who is thankful for the opportunity to grow and pursue things that will fulfil my duties and sense of satisfaction. Today I am an EOF graduate. This is who I am. Now, I've answered the question - so let's repeat the introduction. Hello! My name is Itzel. May I ask who you are...?



BRINGING BACK THE ARBORETUM: AREEBA ZULKARNAIN

BRICK TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

Last semester for Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), we had to complete an Honors In Action project. The theme was the Power of Stories, and we chose the sub-theme, Preserving Stories. This fit in perfectly with revitalizing the Arboretum.

We conducted research by interviewing staff, and interviewing Kristin Farfalla, Member of the Board of Trustees, Foundation, Ocean County College, and granddaughter of Joseph Citta who deeded the land for the creation of the Arboretum. and searched through the library databases and archives. We also made a video with the Radio Club members.

It has become a huge college-wide project now. We also met with two Ocean County College Foundations members, who said they would also support us. We have the support of the Sustainability Club, the Environmental Club, and the Makers Club.

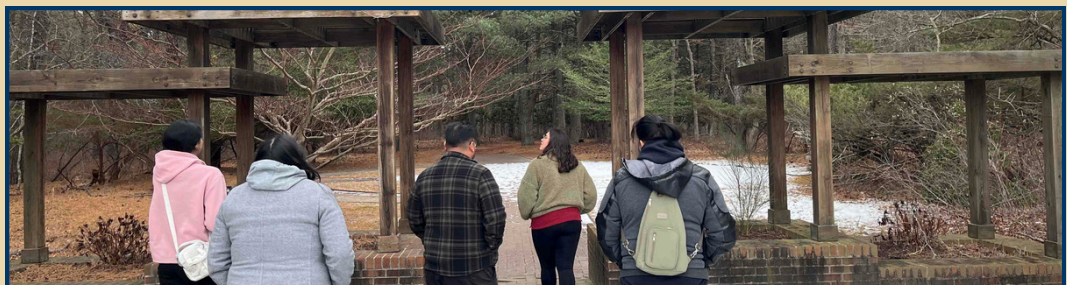
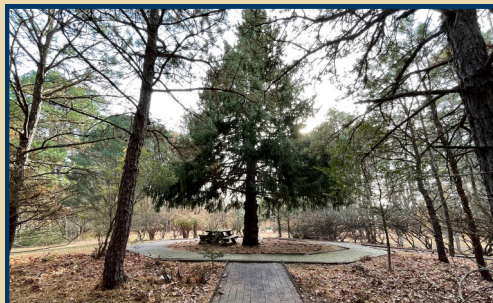
Our PTK members came with us on a cold November day for a tour. We took interested Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) students for a tour in the snow.

On April 29, 2025, Arboretum Day was held to celebrate and bring awareness to the project with tours and seed planting.

We hope to have your support through connecting us with resources, or advice on keeping the Arboretum project moving forward. It would be an amazing legacy to leave for students and ocean county residents.



**If you would like to help
save the Arboretum, you
can donate here:**



NURSING CONFESSIONS: WILSON CASTILLO ALVAREZ

TOMS RIVER HIGH SCHOOL EAST

My name is Wilson, and I am a graduate of the Ocean County College Nursing program. This message goes out to all of you who are considering majoring in nursing. Kudos to you because it honestly won't be as easy as you think it is unless you're Doogie Howser then of course, more power to you. Pride is the death of all of us, so don't be surprised if you suddenly don't start earning grades like you normally do.

Now this introduction and what I am about to say isn't to scare you off, it's to toughen you up for what's to come. You will be tested mentally and physically. Day and night you will devote yourself to the program and force yourself to adapt to every day that you wake up.

Some days are better than others, some make you just want to bury your head in a pillow and not get out of bed all day, but of course this all depends on the type of person you are. Stanley cups, Figs brand scrubs, gossip, bragging rights, picking up chicks or hooking up with your classmates (future co-workers by the way)...Isn't nursing. Nursing isn't an aesthetic, it isn't "Grey's Anatomy", it is an artform, it is devoting yourself to your patients, it is a science that has saved countless lives. This is a proving ground for yourself, not for others. You will be forced to work in many ways and mold to the ever changing social and professional hierarchy of the medical field. Please stick to who you are, please remember why or who you are doing this for.

Move, move, move. This is what nursing school is, your professors are your drill sergeants. You will be molded in their image while trying to hold on to the slivers of the mindset you came in with. You'll be broken down and built back up. I managed to succeed through pure grit. No matter what you're feeling. Keep walking towards your fears and each time that you do so, you'll find yourself becoming stronger and before you know it... You will have reached the finish line. Do it sad, do it mad, do it scared, do it happy, but most importantly, always do it with your patients in mind.

Q&A WITH WILSON:

Q: Your path to choosing Nursing. What inspired you to pursue this field and why is your specific interest in cardiac nursing?

I have family in healthcare, especially in the Marine Corps as corpsman. No one really inspired me to pursue this. Honestly, it all just fell into place somehow and I ended up doing the same. My specific interest in cardiac nursing stems from personal reasons that I do not wish to disclose but if you're really that curious, please make sure to get along with your parents and cherish every moment with them. Even while reading this newsletter, call them up or go and give them a big hug.



Q: What was your biggest misconception about nursing before you started the program?

I honestly thought that male nurses would be seen as creeps, but I am glad to see that I was proven wrong. I've come across some down to earth dudes as working nurses and within the program itself.

Q: What do you hope to accomplish in your career as a nurse?

Safety and happiness. Not only for myself but for my patients. No one wants to be in the hospital, no one wants to suffer and be estranged from family and friends.

Q: How has EOF supported you in your journey?

Laura, Jordan, and Michele. Please give them their flowers as they are wonderful people who truly want to see you succeed. From all the talks with Jordan and Michele when I needed them the most, to Laura being a beaming light of energy and contagious positivity that makes you feel like you can punch a wall through concrete. If you ever feel alone or in need of a pep talk, stop by and stay a while. It'll make a big difference.

FIRST PERSON: DAVID TEES

SOUTHERN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

My name is David Tees and since the Fall 2024 semester, I have been a scholar in the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF). It goes without saying that without the support of those involved in EOF and with the funds that EOF provides full-time students like me, I most likely would not be a part of OCC today.

I was born in 1982, so for your math majors, I am 42 years old as of this writing. I grew up in a working-class family, for the majority of my life, with a mother who battled health issues throughout her life and a father, technically stepfather, but I consider him to be my real father. I also have one brother and one sister. They instilled in me the toughness and attitude to continue moving forward despite the obstacles I have faced.

For the most part, my childhood was as normal as could be until back/spine problems messed up a lot of my plans, and depressive episodes followed. From August of 1999 to August of 2013, I had seven back operations that even a decade later, still prohibit me from doing things I have wanted to do in my life. Compounded by years of depression and other mental health issues, and a suicide attempt when I was 18, my late teens could be considered a magical joyride into the depths of darkness. Despite all of that, I am still here. While I cannot say I am completely recovered from my physical and mental health issues, I can confidently say that I have won more of those battles than I have lost, which is something I wish everybody who faces the same battles and issues can say in the end.

Fast forward or one year earlier to be exact. I am pursuing my associate's degree in history, and have earned a 3.893 GPA. I intend to transfer and earn my bachelor's degree in history, possibly with a minor in Philosophy. Ultimately, my goal is to return to OCC to teach.

There is one extra, but more personal reason, that I am also at OCC, which is that I want to be an awesome example for my nieces and nephews, I have two of each Jacob, Aubrey, Layla, and John. My philosophy in life is "one thing leads into the next" and when it comes to my family and the people I care about, those nieces and nephews are the next generation of my family, and I want to lead them, and others by example.

My journey to OCC began while working as a sales associate and later as a store manager at several GNC locations in New Jersey. After two years working there, I realized I did not want to spend the rest of my life behind a cash register. A friend at GNC encouraged me to enroll at OCC, and my life has improved ever since.

One of those things that have made my life better, in addition to the support of family and friends, is the people I interact with at the EOF office. No matter who you run into there, you will meet someone who is doing their darndest to help you during your journey at OCC.

The thing is though, while the people at EOF and the staff at OCC can be extremely helpful, you still must be proactive and rely on yourself to ensure that your time at OCC is a successful one. My EOF advisors and professor share that this is my strongest skill set – I am proactive and responsible for my experience and results.

My advice is to do what I call having a "fun serious" time at OCC. What that means is that every student should have all the fun they can at OCC, joining clubs, participating in events, developing friendships with other students, etc., and also be serious about what they are trying to accomplish at OCC, earning a degree, developing professional relationships with professors and others, learning all that they can during their time at OCC. There will be easy days, as well as hard ones, but if you stay proactive and take advantage of every opportunity college provides, while also getting the grades necessary to pass and move on to the next phase of your life, you will get the job done.

To share an example, besides being a student at OCC, I am also an FWS worker at OCC, which gives me the chance to earn a wage and be a bigger part of the campus. There is no doubt that if you have been in Helping Hands, the food pantry, or the Box Office during the last two semesters, then you have seen my jolly self.

If I could close and emphasize a final piece of advice, it would be this, take advantage of every opportunity while you are at OCC. Every day I see or hear students watching videos during a lecture, playing video games during a lecture, or using AI to do the work required instead of doing it themselves and other such stuff. Put the distractions away, focus on and do the work at hand, get any help you need, and get the best grades because one day, the fun will be over and real life will begin. Will you be the person who understands this message and takes advantage or will you be the one who waits 25 years after graduating high school and finally figures out what could have been realized?



RESILIENCE AND THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE: KHADIRA JOHNSON

GED GRADUATE

From the first moment I stepped onto the OCC campus, I felt excitement and trepidation—a flutter in my heart whispered, *Anything is possible*.

My two-year journey at Ocean County College has been nothing short of a roller coaster—filled with challenges that tested my resolve and triumphs that validated my dreams. Balancing a full-time job, being a mother of four, and carrying a 19-credit semester load pushed me to my limits. Yet each day I reminded myself as Franklin D. Roosevelt said, “The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today.” Those words became my anchor. On the toughest days, I whispered them into the silence of my car before heading to class. I carved them into my mind during exams. I held them close when life’s storms roared fiercest.

There were moments of quiet victories when I nailed an exam or presented a research project, and darker days when the weight of personal challenges threatened to pull me under. Yet here I stand, degree in hand, a living testament to the power of resilience and the unbreakable spirit within us all.

There were mornings when I woke before dawn, the soft hush of the world around me disturbed only by the hum of the coffee maker, as I prepared for another full day of classes, work, and mothering four beautiful children. The textbooks piled high on my kitchen table seemed to mock me at times—pages filled with case law and forensic methods that felt miles beyond my grasp. But each time doubt crept in, I remembered the encouraging voices that carried me forward.

When life’s obstacles threatened to derail my academic goals, the support of the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) team — particularly Jordan and Laura — became my anchor. Their unwavering encouragement and patience with my many questions and occasional shenanigans reaffirmed that perseverance is key. Thank you for your endless patience and gentle nudges of belief when I doubted myself the most. Your warmth and unwavering faith were the kindling that kept my flame alive.

Thanks also to my professors, Agresti and Kenneally, whose high expectations and constructive feedback pushed me to excel beyond what I thought possible —your challenging questions and relentless support pushed me through the barriers I never thought I could overcome. You saw my potential even when I only saw obstacles.

Through coursework, internships, and hands-on experiences, I discovered that criminal justice is not merely a career path, but a calling rooted in service and advocacy. The lessons I learned—both inside and outside the classroom—solidified my desire to seek justice for others.

Juggling motherhood, work, and a demanding academic schedule has been challenging, but I refused to let doubt define my future. My motto remains: *Never quit! Who will follow your dreams if you don’t?*

As I look ahead, I am filled with hope and purpose. Stockton University’s BA/MA program in forensic science and law awaits, and with it, the next chapter of my journey. One day soon, I will stand alongside a prosecutorial team, committed to using every ounce of my knowledge and strength to pursue justice for those who need it most —standing up for the voiceless and making a tangible difference in my community.

To anyone reading this who hesitates on the brink of their dreams, I say, never quit. Who will chase your tomorrow if you don’t chase it yourself? Let your doubts be the wind beneath your wings, not the shackles that hold you down. If I, a mother of four balancing the impossible, can do this, so can you. Here’s to the dreams that demand courage—and to the fierce resilience that carries us through.

Thank you to everyone who believed in me—my family, friends, instructors, and the OCC community. This achievement is as much yours as it is mine.



POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN ACTION: ERIN BOLGER ELIZABETH

BAYONNE HIGH SCHOOL

On March 19, 2025, EOF Scholar Erin Elizabeth participated in a State Assembly Budget Committee hearing at the Statehouse in Trenton, New Jersey. Alongside a group of students and administrators from OCEAN, Erin had the opportunity to speak before the committee, sharing her personal story and passionately advocating for increased funding for community colleges.

Good Morning Members of the Assembly Budget Committee. My name is Erin Bolger Elizabeth. I stand before you today as A student, A public servant for the Township of Brick, and living proof of what community college funding can do. Ocean County College has given me my life back. When I first returned to school, I thought I would earn my associate degree and be done. I had no idea this journey would transform me, opening doors I never imagined possible. This wasn't my first attempt at higher education. Years ago, I attended the University of Hartford. I had to step away because I didn't have financial support and couldn't take on student loans. But here I am today—stronger, more confident, and ready to take on the next chapter of my education and career. As a single mother with no one to lean on but myself working full-time, parenting and going to school is difficult.

But financial aid made it possible. Without it, I would not have been able to attend college—not OCC – not anywhere. It has been the foundation of my education, allowing me to pursue a better future for myself and my family. It hasn't just helped me—it has also helped my daughter, Blair Bolger, earn her associate degree from OCC in Business. This funding has changed my life and hers, allowing us to contribute to society.

More and more students in New Jersey are just like me. They are choosing the community college route instead of going straight to a four-year school to offset the financial burden of student loans. Community colleges provide an affordable pathway, allowing students to complete their first two years of education at a fraction of the cost before transferring. Funding cuts would make this path harder, forcing students to take on more debt and limiting their opportunities for success.

I searched for every opportunity and seized it. From earning an EOF scholarship to working on campus through the work-study program in the athletic department to utilizing disability services at Ocean

County College. I made sure to access every available resource to help me succeed. These services have provided crucial support, allowing me to overcome every obstacle.

On May 21, 2025, I will proudly say I AM A FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE GRADUATE. My future has never looked brighter thanks to the tools and foundation OCC has given me. I am transferring to Kean University to pursue my bachelor's and master's degrees in Public Administration, focusing in Criminal Justice.

OCC didn't just educate me—it gave me the confidence to aim higher and the resources to achieve more. Community college funding makes this possible. It changes lives, creates opportunities, and gives students like me a future. Cutting the funds is more than a financial decision. It would take away the hopes and dreams of students like me who rely on community college to build a better life.

I urge you to fully fund community colleges. Invest in them as they prepare for our future workforce. Invest in students like me who prove anything is possible. Thank you.



GRADUATES

Fall 2024

Elisabeth Burns	AS General Studies, Social Science	Georgian Court University
Billy Garces	AS Criminal Justice	Employment
Elizabeth Macchioni	AS General Studies, Science	Kean Ocean
Kenya Warren	AS General Studies, Social Science	Employment
Maryam Zaman	AS General Studies, Business	Monmouth University

Spring 2025

Alexis Bajada	AA Liberal Arts, Psychology	Stockton University
Albert Burd	AS General Studies, Computer Science	Undecided
Jessica Campos	AA Liberal Arts	Kean Ocean
Wilson Castillo Alvarez	Nursing	Chamberlain University
Caitlin Cortes	AS Business Administration	Thomas Edison State University
Erin Bolger Elizabeth	AS General Studies, Social Science	Kean Ocean
Dante Fernandes	AS Criminal Justice	Kean Ocean
Viena Fuentes	AS Business Administration	Rutgers University
Khadira Johnson	AS Criminal Justice	Stockton University
Diana Lopez	AS General Studies, Social Science	William Paterson University
Itzel Mateos	AS General Studies, Business	Kean Ocean
Marco Ruiz	AS General Studies, Science	Rowan University
Bianca VanBerkle	AA Liberal Arts	Kean Ocean
Areeba Zulkarnain	AS Business Administration	Kean Ocean

Summer 2025

Mariah Macias	AA Liberal Arts, Psychology	Georgian Court University
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Elisabeth
Burns



Billy
Garces



Elizabeth
Macchioni



Kenya
Warren



Maryam
Zaman



Mariah
Macias



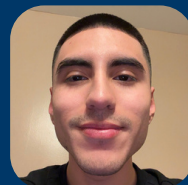
Alexis



Albert
Burd



Jessica
Campos



Wilson Castillo



Caitlin
Cortes



Erin Bolger
Elizabeth



Viena
Fuentes



Khadira
Johnson



Diana
Lopez



Itzel
Mateos



Marco
Ruiz



Bianca
VanBerkle



Areeba
Zulkarnain

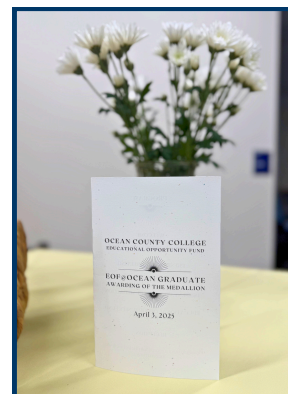
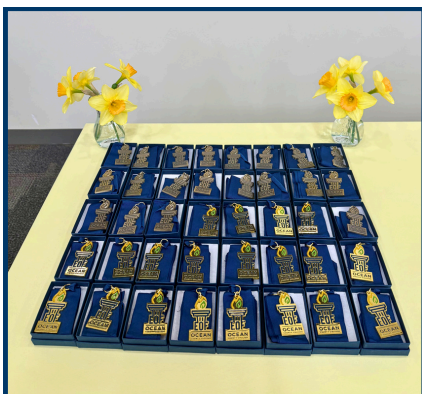


EOF@OCEAN GRADUATE AWARDING OF THE MEDALLION CEREMONY

On April 3rd, the EOF@OCEAN community gathered to honor this year's graduates at the annual EOF Graduate Awarding of the Medallion. Surrounded by family, friends, and supporters, the event celebrated the dedication, resilience, and achievements of our EOF scholars.

OCC President Dr. Pamela Monaco delivered remarks recognizing the graduates' accomplishments. Members of the OCC community, including Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. Jerry Racioppi and Professor Stephen Baglivio, were given special recognition. Professor Pamela Bogdan was bestowed with the 2025 EOF Champion Award by EOF scholar and engineering student Sergio Vargas.

The ceremony concluded with a powerful multimedia presentation set to Magic Carpet Ride by Steppenwolf and paired with scenes from Star Trek: First Contact. This creative finale captured the spirit of graduation as a bold leap into the unknown—full of excitement, opportunity, and adventure. The celebration served as a poignant reminder of what can be achieved with determination, support, and a belief in one's future.



2025 EOF GRADUATE ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) recognizes graduating EOF students who have demonstrated exceptional achievement and exemplify the meaning of the EOF program.

Distinguished Scholar (4.0 GPA)

Caitlin Cortes	4.0
Shana-Kay Smith	4.0

Outstanding Academic Achievement (3.5-3.99 GPA)

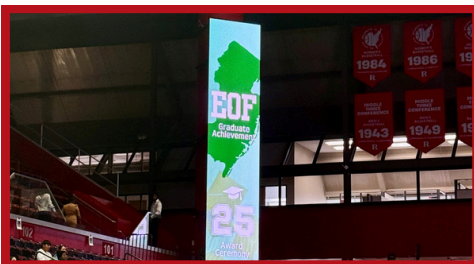
Alexis Bajada	3.618
Elisabeth Burns	3.733
Wilson Castillo Alvarez	3.523
Viena Fuentes	3.681
Elizabeth Macchioni	3.886
Itzel Mateos	3.589
Marco Ruiz	3.547
Bianca VanBerkle	3.635
Kenya Warren	3.683
Maryam Zaman	3.929
Areeba Zulkarnain	3.957

Academic Achievement (3.2-3.49 GPA)

Albert Burd	3.387
Dante Fernandes	3.255
Khadira Johnson	3.21
Diana Lopez	3.373
Arianna Young	3.383

Outstanding Achievement – Best exemplifies the spirit and intent of EOF (No GPA required)

Billy Garces	2.304
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EOF VIKING SPIRIT SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

Itzel Matos



AS General Studies, Business
Spring 2025 Graduate

One of the qualities that sets Itzel apart is her proactive attitude toward her education. She has actively sought additional challenges, requesting and successfully completing honors by contract assignments. These assignments, designed to provide extra academic rigor, highlight her intellectual curiosity and commitment to reaching her highest potential. All in all, I believe Itzel's determination, intellectual ability, and leadership qualities embodies the spirit of the EOF program.
-Stephanie Kroeger, College Lecturer II and Program Chair, Accounting

SCHOLARSHIP DONORS

We would like to thank the following contributors for their generous donations to the EOF scholarship fund:

Maryann Birdsall - Bridget Feneis - Dr. Marilyn Kralik

EOF COMMENCEMENT SPEAKERS: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Maria Pipitone, Class of 2009

After graduating OCC, where did you continue your education?

I continued my education at Georgian Court University, where I earned my bachelor's degree in social work. From there, I went on to Fordham University and completed my master's in social work.

What is your current profession?

I am currently the owner of Pipitone Counseling Service LLC, a private therapy practice.

How did the EOF program impact your educational journey?

When the EOF program came into my life, I was at a crossroads — ready to give up because I simply didn't know how I could continue to afford college. EOF changed everything. It wasn't just the financial assistance — although that was critical — it was the team of people who believed in me when I didn't believe in myself. With their encouragement and unwavering support, I found the confidence to persevere and excel throughout the rest of my college experience. Thank you, EOF, for all you have done for me. I now feel it's my responsibility to pay that support forward.



Hailey Sadowski, Class of 2022

After graduating OCC, where did you continue your education?

I continued my studies at Stockton University. I graduated in 2023 with my Bachelors Degree in Business Administration, and in 2024 with my Masters Degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing.

What is your current profession?

Universal Banker at M&T Bank

How did the EOF program impact your educational journey?

The EOF program was foundational in my ability to succeed academically, professionally and socially throughout both my academic and professional career. It provides you with the opportunity to have guided mentorship and support to reach your goals, financial assistance, and a community of connectivity. Active participation in the EOF program can help students gain the tools, skills, resources and experiences needed to lay the foundations for success.



Sadain Siddique, Class of 2024

After graduating OCC, where did you continue your education?

I am pursuing my Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science at New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT).

How did the EOF program impact your educational journey?

Getting involved with EOF connected me to a community of peers, advisors, and role models who understood my background. Having that support system made me feel like I truly belonged and could accomplish anything I set my mind to.

2025 STUDENT COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER

ELIZABETH MACCHIONI

Elizabeth, a Fall 2024 graduate, has successfully completed her first semester at Kean Ocean, where she is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science.



Parting Comments from Elizabeth:

College may have felt like a strange land at first—but it turned out to be our training ground. We did not just survive it. We conquered it—with humor, with heart, and maybe once or twice with a burrito eaten during a Zoom lecture. We entered as strangers to this world of higher education—many of us first-generation, returning students, parents, dreamers, doers, and everything in between. And now, we leave not just with degrees, but with stories of perseverance, growth, and quiet bravery.

We would like to congratulate Elizabeth on being selected as the Class of 2025 Student Commencement Speaker!

Why EOF Matters?

- EOF County College students have consecutively out performed, non-EOF County College students. We are the only sector to do so. EOF@OCEAN is proud to be a part of that success.
- More than 15,000 students served in EOF statewide this year.
- In 2025, a record was set with over 1,600 EOF graduates statewide achieving a GPA of 3.2 or higher.

ACADEMIC YEAR	EOF GRADE POINT AVERAGES	NON-EOF GRADE POINT AVERAGES
2017- 2018	2.90	2.89
2018 - 2019	2.93	2.91
2019 - 2020	2.87	2.67
2020 - 2021	3.16	2.72
2021 -2022	2.87	2.65

WHAT SCHOLARS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT EOF

*My experience with EOF has been amazing! The support, resources, and encouragement I've received made a huge difference—I truly don't think I would have a 4.0 GPA without everything EOF has done for me. I'm incredibly grateful for the guidance and opportunities this program has provided. - **Tonja Pacheco***

*My advisor [Laura] strongly supports me and never fails to make me feel empowered. - **Jolisa Binoya***

*When I first entered the EOF program I felt so out of place. Once I got an advisor and started to get more knowledge of the program I finally got the feeling that the sky was the limit. I cannot thank Laura, Jen, Michele or Jordan enough for listening to all my rambling and helping me throughout all my obstacles. Without me finding EOF I really think I would have gave up on finishing school all together. - **Khadira Johnson***

*Jordan far exceeded what I would have expected from an advisor, he truly did care how I was doing in school and life, and took as much time as needed to go over issues and work on a solution. - **Matthew Rose***

*Michele Gioxaris, my EOF counselor, has been one of the most influential faculty members during my enrollment at OCC. From the start, she has been there for me with nothing but encouragement and helpful advice to get me started, as well as seeing me through, to a successful completion, during my time as a student here. - **Elizabeth Macchioni***

EOF@OCEAN: SUMMER 2025

Are you ready?

Summer at EOF emphasizes preparation for college and academic success. Join us!

July 30, 2025

8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

All materials and meals provided at no cost.

I want to be EOF!

Apply soon and plan to join us for Summer 2025.



Apply Now!



go.ocean.edu/EOF

To learn more visit
go.ocean.edu/EOF



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