



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

TO: Members, OCC Board of Trustees

FROM: Pamela Monaco, Ph.D.
President

SUBJECT: Items of Interest for the September 24, 2026, Board Meeting

DATE: September 18, 2026

The Voices Center for Genocide, Human Rights, and Justice

Dr. Justin Pfeifer, College Lecturer II in History, will provide a brief update on the development of The Voices Center for Genocide, Human Rights, and Justice at Ocean County College. Dr. Pfeifer is serving as the Director of the Center, and his presentation will introduce the Center's mission, planned use of Instructional Building Room 125, first-year programming, student engagement initiatives, community partnerships, and the upcoming grand opening on December 9, 2026, in recognition of the United Nations' Genocide Prevention Day.

Phlebotomy Technician/Phlebotomist Program

A letter was received from the New Jersey Office of Research and Information Assistant Commissioner Lesley Hirsch indicating that OCC's Phlebotomy Technician/Phlebotomist program has been determined eligible to receive students supported by Workforce Pell federal financial aid funds. The recent review confirmed that the program meets all required completion and employment outcome thresholds and is a high-quality program that aligns with labor market demand in New Jersey as well as the rigorous requirements of eligibility under Workforce Pell.

Ocean County College is the second community college in the state approved to offer the Phlebotomy Technician/Phlebotomist program through Workforce Pell. Congratulations and appreciation are extended to Mr. Sergio Torrico Saniz, Assistant Director of Workforce Education, who pursued the eligibility of this program.

Fall 2026 Colloquium

The 2026 Fall Colloquium was held on Thursday, September 3. It was an all-day event, beginning with breakfast at 8:00 a.m. in the Student Center; followed by a keynote speaker, New Jersey 2025-26 Teacher of the Year Gillian Ober and a panel of OCC alumni who spoke about their experiences at and after OCC; and four concurrent Sessions on Pathways:

- Clarifying the Path to Student Goals
- Helping Students Get on a Path
- Keeping Students on a Path
- Ensuring that Students are Learning

My address to the College community began at 2:00 p.m. It is available to read through this [link](#).

Faculty and Staff Professional Development

- Certified Mental Health First Aid Instructors Melissa Gutzmore, Darra Stack, and Kelly Petrolis conducted an interactive on-campus training for OCC faculty and staff, equipping participants with skills to recognize and respond to mental health and substance use challenges across campus. Twenty staff, faculty, and students attended the August training.
- On July 22 and August 5, 2026, the Counseling Center, in partnership with Massachusetts Bay Community College, facilitated Parts 2 and 3 of the Trauma and Resilience: Trauma-Informed Higher Education professional development series for faculty and staff. Content focused on trauma-informed educational practices, the neurobiology of learning, and practical classroom support strategies.
- In August 2026, Dr. Angel Camilo, College Lecturer II in Biology, and Mr. Michael Leon, Associate Director of Graphic Design in College Relations, began the Drone Instructor Training and Testing program at Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC). They received Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Trust Certificates for non-commercial drone operations and are working on the FAA Commercial Drone License (Part 107). Upon completion of the program, Dr. Camilo and Mr. Leon will be able to teach this material at OCC if a drone course is offered.

Faculty and Staff Activities

- Ms. Sara Winchester, Executive Vice President of Finance and Administration, was recently appointed to the School Alliance Insurance Fund (SAIF) Board. SAIF is a New Jersey joint insurance fund that enables school districts and educational organizations to work collaboratively to manage risk, control insurance costs, and provide comprehensive coverage programs. OCC has been a longstanding participant in SAIF and has benefited from the fund's focus on risk management, loss prevention, and financial stability. As a member of the Board, Ms. Winchester will help represent the interests of participating educational entities and contribute to the ongoing governance of an organization that serves school districts and educational institutions throughout New Jersey.
- Ms. Winchester has also been appointed co-chair of the New Jersey Council of Community Colleges' Health Insurance Task Force: SEHBP Solutions and Options. In this leadership role, she is working with community college representatives from across the state to evaluate opportunities, challenges, and potential alternatives within the State Health Benefits Program (SEHBP). The task force is focused on identifying solutions that support the long-term sustainability of employee health benefits while balancing the financial and operational needs of New Jersey's community colleges.

- After almost 18 months of negotiations, the College and the Lecturer Association bargaining unit successfully reached the first labor agreement through a process that remained cordial, collaborative, and productive. The College's negotiating team, consisting of Ms. Sara Winchester, Executive Director of Human Resources Cara Dubitsky, and Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs Catherine Mancuso, worked diligently throughout the negotiations to achieve an agreement that supports both the institution and its lecturers. Their professionalism, preparation, and commitment to constructive dialogue were instrumental in bringing the process to a successful conclusion. The team was also supported by labor counsel Matthew Giacobbe, whose guidance and expertise contributed significantly to the successful outcome.
- From August 17 to 20, 2026, Ms. Pam Goldsmith, Health/Health Management College Lecturer II, and several recent OCC alumni had the opportunity to volunteer at Kean University's Camp Abilities held at the Field of Dreams in Toms River. Camp Abilities is a sports camp for children ages 7-19 with visual impairments. In addition to empowering young athletes, volunteers gained valuable hands-on coaching experience and learned how to adapt skills and teaching methods to meet the needs of each individual athlete.
- Dr. Edward Reading, Adjunct Professor of Alcohol and Drug Counseling/Addictions Studies, attended the National Association for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors (NAADAC) Annual Conference in Kansas City, Missouri, from August 29 to 31, 2026. During the President's Awards Gala, Dr. Reading received NAADAC's Addiction Educator of the Year Award.

Dr. Reading, also known as Father Reading, has worked in the field of addiction since 1969—before addiction studies had emerged as an organized profession. Over the course of his distinguished career, he has taught at the undergraduate and graduate levels at more than six colleges and universities in New Jersey and has provided professional training and education to medical professionals, law enforcement personnel, and clergy.

For more than 50 years, Dr. Reading has been a nationally recognized leader in the field of addiction studies. He has also served on the New Jersey State Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners, where he has chaired the Alcohol and Drug Counselor Committee for more than 30 years.

- Mental Health Clinician Alejandra Sanchez-Medina joined the Counseling Center in August. Ms. Sanchez-Medina comes to OCC from the Master of Social Work and LISTA Certificate Program at Rutgers University. The LISTA program specializes in evidence-based, culturally responsive strategies for Latina/o/x populations. Ms. Sanchez-Medina is bilingual in English and Spanish, providing increased capacity to serve diverse student populations at Ocean County College.
- Ms. Elmina Yener has joined the School of Workforce Education as its new Academic Affairs Coordinator, adding support to the team and helping to strengthen its operations.
- The School of Workforce Education visited Atlantic Cape Community College to learn from its paramedics program and allied health facilities to inform the planning and design of the expansion project at OCC. Significant progress has been made in the design and planning of the Manahawkin and ICCT Building renovation.
- The Workforce Education School has completed the instructor selection and contract approval process for the new Spanish for Workplace Communication training program at OCC.

Student Welcome Activities

- The School of Workforce Education welcomed 270 students for the Fall semester across healthcare, business, technology, and ESL program areas. Among these, 40 students were awarded \$49,375 in Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grant (SCCT5) scholarships in predominantly healthcare pathway programs.
- Student Life is pleased to report that 357 students attended one of four in-person Orientation sessions offered for new OCC students in August. Additionally, 32 parents and family members participated in a workshop designed to provide information and resources to help them support their students throughout their academic journey at OCC.
- Student Life has continued welcoming students back for the Fall semester by offering several learning and workshop opportunities. This includes the annual Club Leadership Kick-Off event that was held on Tuesday, August 25, 2026.

Student club leaders and their advisors enjoyed breakfast while playing a rousing game of Kahoot to connect with each other and to learn the various policies and procedures for student organizations. Several leaders stayed to participate in a workshop to learn how to navigate club pages on the new OCC app.

- On Monday, August 31, and Tuesday, September 1, 2026, Student Life held a two-day Leadership Retreat, featuring workshops for emerging student leaders to help discover their unique talents and strengths. Special thanks to our new alumni trustee, Anellie Lopez, for joining the students during these sessions. Student Life plans to offer leadership development opportunities by way of the Retreat twice a year to provide more access to these important sessions that accommodate student schedules.
- Student Life was excited to host Welcome Back days on Wednesday, September 9, and Thursday, September 10, outside the Student Center on the campus mall. Representatives from the President's Cabinet and Student Services staff members were on the campus mall distributing new student handbooks, providing directions, answering questions, and greeting students to help them have a great start on their first days of classes.

Additionally, the annual Club Fair was held on September 15 and 16, 2026, to encourage students to get involved outside the classroom and enhance their student experience.

- The Student Success Team assisted with New Student Orientation on August 6, 11, and 19, 2026, by presenting to parents of incoming students on how to be successful in college. In addition, Multi-Language Navigators Mariely Quinto Sanchez and Carolina Newman were on hand to support multi-lingual students.

Student Support Services and Activities

- OCC's campus food pantry, Helping Hands, was busy this summer. Students were able to pick up snacks and grab-and-go meals in between classes, as well as bring food home to combat food insecurity. The staff and volunteers for Helping Hands have been busy stocking the pantry in advance of this academic year and look forward to supporting students throughout the year toward the goal of a hunger-free campus.

Since its establishment, summer visits to Helping Hands have increased from 151 in 2023 to over 340 visits this summer. The pantry is moving across the hall to a larger room in the Library to provide more

space for students and food. Another refrigerator and additional shelving are being purchased in order to offer healthier food options to students.

- Early College Coordinator Madison Caldwell attended Back to School Day at Ambassador Christian Academy to assist students with applying to Ocean County College for 2026-27 early college courses.
- Ms. Carolina Newman and Ms. Mariely Quinto Sanchez assisted six students with applying to OCC, completing Accuplacer testing, and registering for ESL classes for the Fall 2026 term on ESL Registration Day, which took place on August 26, 2026.
- The Student Success team made 2,872 outgoing calls in the month of August. These calls included campaigns to address Fall enrollment, sanctions, summer melt, stop-outs, and re-registration in an effort to encourage the attendance of continuing students.
- Enrollment Services fielded almost 6,000 calls for the month of August. This includes incoming and outgoing calls to assist students with registration for the upcoming term.
- The Recruitment team, alongside Academic Advising, successfully completed two Summer Express Enrollment Days on August 4 and 20, 2026. Students were able to meet with advisors, schedule classes, and take a campus tour in preparation for the Fall term.
- The Counseling Center continued to play a pivotal role in supporting student retention, resilience, and academic success throughout the summer. Driven by a rise in student engagement, the department saw a 59% increase in clinical mental health services compared to July and August 2025, underscoring the Center's expanding impact in delivering vital mental health counseling on campus.
- Under the management of Associate Director Aida Hernandez, the Counseling Center successfully launched an expanded, structured Graduate Student Practicum and Internship Training Program that recruits top-tier graduate counseling and social work students from colleges and universities across New Jersey.

The Counseling Center staff manages the end-to-end clinical lifecycle of the training program, including recruitment, structured onboarding, clinical training, and ongoing performance evaluations. Clinical supervisors provide weekly individual and group supervision, chart reviews, and direct clinical mentorship to maintain high standards of care practices. Staff maintain ongoing collaboration with faculty liaisons and field placement directors at partner universities, ensuring strict compliance with institutional supervision agreements, state licensing board standards, and national accreditation criteria. This program expands clinical service capacity for OCC students in a fiscally sustainable manner while advancing OCC's role in training the next generation of mental health professionals.

- The Counseling Center welcomed two graduate interns in August, one from Kean University and one from The College of New Jersey.
- The Counseling Center reports the following July and August 2026 utilization:
 - Total Mental Health Counseling Sessions: 148 sessions (50–60 minutes each)
 - Case Management, Student Outreach, and Engagements: 75

There has been a 59% increase in counseling sessions compared to July and August 2025. The primary presenting concerns are stress, anxiety, emotional regulation/coping, summer academic demands, self-care, and interpersonal relationships.

The Center noted emerging trends, such as increased reporting around relationship violence and compulsive gambling. In response, the department is preparing targeted prevention campaigns, specialized screening protocols, and campus awareness workshops this academic year.

➤ Advising Services and Advising activity numbers for July 14 through September 3, 2026:

- Current/Returning Student Walk-In Advising: 853
- New Student Walk-In Advising: 305
- New Student Advising Appointments: 23
- Virtual Advising Appointments: 419

In addition, Advising staff are reviewing freshman schedules to confirm degree and concentration information, ensure accurate Fall course schedules, address potential concerns through student outreach, and enter full academic plans. As of September 4, 2026, advisors had reviewed approximately 1,000 freshman schedules.

➤ Financial Aid has been working closely with the Pay It Forward Program to provide interest-free loans to Nursing I, II, III, and IV students. In just one week of offering the program, Financial Aid has helped secure \$47,396 in loans for eligible nursing students.

Additionally, participating students are eligible for a monthly living-expense stipend that does not need to be repaid while they complete their program. Financial Aid is actively reaching out to students on a daily basis to share information and help them apply for available funds.

- Members of the Student Veteran Organization, along with Veteran and Military Resources Center work-study students, have continued to work on the community garden. The garden now has peppers and tomatoes, as well as an herb garden featuring basil, mint, dill, and cilantro available for students and other members of the College community to enjoy.
- The Early College team hosted its first Embedded Instructor/Liaison Professional Day, and 73 embedded instructors, school administrators, and counselors attended. The sessions provided an overview of the Early College program and structure, application and registration processes, advising models, and support services available to students.
- Ms. Madison Caldwell, Coordinator of Early College, has been busy working with high school partners and presenting on Early College opportunities:
 - August 20, 2026 – Grunin Performing Arts Academy Orientation for new students and parents
 - August 24, 2026 – Ambassador Christian Academy Back-to-School event
 - August 26, 2026 – Maayan Academy information session for new students
- On Wednesday, September 2, 2026, Executive Director of Early College Tracey Taylor, and Ms. Madison Caldwell hosted two parent information sessions on Early College opportunities at OCC's new partner school, Red Bank Catholic. Forty-two parents attended the sessions and learned about new student success course opportunities that will be available in the high school. The parents appreciated receiving the information and are thrilled with the new OCC partnership.

- Athletics is proud to announce that an impressive 11 programs earned National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) All-Academic Team honors this past year, a distinction earned by achieving a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher. Congratulations to Men's and Women's Soccer, Men's and Women's Volleyball, Women's Cross Country, Men's and Women's Basketball, Men's and Women's Tennis, Golf, and the Softball team for earning this deserved recognition. Additionally, OCC's Men's Volleyball team, led by Region 19 Coach of the Year Jose Rafael, earned its way to the National Championship tournament this past season, where the team finished second in the nation with a 16-4 overall record.

Grants

- TRIO Student Support Services and TRIO Student Support Services-Students with Disabilities have received Year 2 federal funding awards. Both projects received level funding, maintaining the same federal investment as Year 1. This continued funding supports the College's commitment to providing individualized academic advising, tutoring, career guidance, transfer support, and other services designed to improve persistence and graduation outcomes for first-generation college students, low-income college students, and students with disabilities.
- Ocean County College was awarded a \$500,000 Work Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth Employment Assistance grant for the Work Readiness Assistance Program (WRAP). WIOA is landmark legislation that is designed to strengthen and improve our nation's public workforce system and help get Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers and help employers hire and retain skilled workers.

The program will provide services to young adults 16 to 24, both in school and out of school. WRAP will provide 12 of the 14 elements required for WIOA funds:

- Tutoring, Study Skills Training, and Instruction
 - Alternative Secondary School Services
 - Paid and Unpaid Work Experience
 - Education Offered Concurrently with Workforce Preparation and Training for a Specific Occupation
 - Leadership Development Opportunities
 - Support Services
 - Adult Mentoring
 - Follow-Up Services
 - Financial Literacy Training
 - Services that Provide Labor Market Information
 - Postsecondary Preparation and Transition Activities
- The Planetarium received an Institute of Museum and Library Sciences grant that will enable it to install six space-related exhibits for people of all ages to engage in experiential learning activities that enhance knowledge and align with the planetarium's plans to become a science center hub for the region. Project activities include purchasing the new exhibits, installing them, creating the Launch Lab space, and developing curriculum and interpretive displays for the new offerings. The project also includes evaluation and educator training. Ms. Cara Muscio, the project director, will attend both regional and national conferences to disseminate the project's work with other small and large museums and planetariums. The project will benefit K-12 and college students, as well as the broader public, to engage in STEM learning and pursue STEM careers.

- The Grunin Center received a \$5,000 "Mid Atlantic Tours" grant from Mid Atlantic Arts. This funding will help to support a student workshop as well as a public performance by Brazilian singer Fabiana Cozza.

Community Outreach

- SCCT5 Health First New Jersey convened its Business and Industry Leadership Team (BILT) meeting on August 11, 2026, at OCC, bringing together employers, workforce partners, community organizations, and consortium representatives to advance regional healthcare workforce priorities.
- In recognition of National Preparedness Month, Ms. Jamie Prioli, Director of Access and Disability Services, presented several sessions titled "Disaster Preparedness for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities" at the Ocean County Library. The sessions were held at the Upper Shores Branch on September 23, 2026, and the Manchester Branch on September 28, 2026. These presentations are part of an ongoing partnership between Access and Disability Services and the Ocean County Library System.
- Continuing to strengthen the partnership with the Ocean County Department of Human Services, Ms. Jamie Prioli presented an online session titled "Disaster Preparedness for the Whole Community" on September 17, 2026. The presentation focused on disaster readiness and the development of a personal emergency preparedness plan designed to address the unique needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities, highlighting special consideration for students with disabilities.
- On August 10, 2026, the staff of the VMRC, along with Executive Director of Student Engagement Jennifer Kane, Assistant Vice President of Student Services and Financial Aid Yessika Garcia-Guzman, and Assistant Vice President of Enrollment Services Sheenah Hartigan, met with leadership from American Legion Post #129 to discuss opportunities to strengthen the connection between OCC's veteran and military-affiliated students and the local veteran community. The American Legion expressed a strong interest in partnering with OCC through mentorship, career panels, community events, and opportunities for students to connect with local veterans and learn from their experiences. The partnership allows for the possibility for OCC to participate in American Legion events while expanding recruitment, community engagement, and support resources for veteran students. The team will be working with the American Legion to coordinate steps, including having members participate in a veteran career panel, sharing upcoming events between OCC and the Post, and identifying additional ways for students to become involved in the Post's community.
- Enrollment Services Advisor Lauren Simon and Multi-Language Navigator Carolina Newman participated in National Night Out in Lakewood on August 4, 2026. They were able to meet with community members, hand out swag, and encourage potential students to register for Fall classes.
- Ms. Lauren Simon participated in South Toms River's Family Fun Back-to-School Day on August 15, 2026. Families were able to receive school supplies for free and learn more about potential college options.
- The Grunin Presents Fall season began on August 30, 2026, with two sold-out performances of The Doo Wop Project with 888 attendees.
- On Wednesday, September 9, 2026, the Grunin Center hosted its annual training for the Volunteer Usher and Scanner program, which consists of 44 volunteers for the 2026-2027 season.

- September 13, 2026, brought the first Fall performance in the Jazz on a Sunday Afternoon (JOSA) series, featuring Nat Adderley, Jr., at the Gia Maione Prima Studio Theater. Nat Adderley, Jr.'s album "Took So Long" topped the *Jazz Week* charts for six weeks in 2025.
- On Tuesday, September 15, 2026, the Grunin Center hosted an event organized by the OCC Veterans and Military Resources Center and the Veterans Administration New Jersey Health Care System featuring a one-person performance called *The American Soldier*. The event was part of the VA's Veterans Resilience Arts Trail for Suicide Prevention Awareness Month.
- On September 16, 2026, Samuel A. Simon performed his autobiographical one-man play, *Dementia Man: An Existential Experience*. The play traces his experiences facing an Alzheimer's diagnosis. Over 150 OCC nursing students and faculty attended this event, along with several community organizations, including the Student Nurses Organization, Preferred Behavioral Health, Ocean County Department of Human Services, Regency Memory Care Club, and the Alzheimer's Association of New Jersey. Also in attendance were the Director of Ocean County Office of Senior Services, Maria LaFace; Dr. Mohammad Ghani, Neurologist from Robert Wood Johnson Barnabas Health; and OCC Adjunct Professor of English Deborah Taranto, who recently wrote a book about her mother's experience with Dementia.

Dean of the School of Nursing Tracy Walsh expressed appreciation for allowing nursing students the opportunity to attend the performance. Both faculty and students commented positively on Mr. Simon's story, which will be further discussed in classrooms to focus on the care and support nurses need to provide patients and their families. Medical management is only part of the treatment plan; empathy and caring are required to assist patients and families on their personal journeys.

- September 18, 2026, was the first performance of the classical Afternoon Recital Series. Dr. Chin-Yi Lin performed music on piano from Bach to Chopin to Beethoven.
- On September 19, 2026, Synthpop group *80s Kids* will take patrons on a journey of what it was like growing up with the music of the 1980s.
- The first Blauvelt Speaker of the season, two-time Olympian Laurie Hernandez, will visit the Grunin Center on September 22, 2026. In addition to her keynote, she will have a private meet and greet.
- The Ocean County Achievement Center (OCAC) is a collaborative partnership with Ocean County College; Ocean County PIC, Inc.; Georgian Court University; and Goodwill's Helms Academy. The Ocean County Achievement Center is hosted on OCC's campus and provides free, comprehensive, and individualized services to out-of-school young adults and adults. The services address academic, career, and financial goals. Services are provided by various community partners to engage young adults and adults in educational programs, integrated education training, career exploration, work-readiness training, internships, on-the-job learning, leadership development, job placement, adult mentoring, and work-experience opportunities.

Special events and outreach activities were attended by OCAC representatives during July and August:

- Paws and Unwind – July 29, 2026
- Little Egg Harbor National Night Out – August 4, 2026
- Jackson National Night Out – August 4, 2026
- South Toms River National Night Out – August 6, 2026
- Toms River Library Tabling – August 13, 2026
- Jackson Day – August 23, 2026

- The Work Readiness Assistance Program (WRAP) is a structured training initiative designed to equip individuals with the practical skills, knowledge, and behaviors needed to secure employment, succeed in a job, or transition into a new career. The program is funded through a grant provided by the Ocean County Department of Human Services and the Ocean County Board of Commissioners.

Three participants from the program are completing a Work Experience at the Ocean County Achievement Center. The participants are scheduled four days a week for twenty hours. They are paid through the Ocean County Career Center/OCPIIC, but function as OCC employees. Two participants are employed as Office Assistants/Outreach Recruiters. One is employed as a Teacher's Assistant. The three participants are scheduled to complete mid-October.

- The Adult Education, Civics, and Workforce Preparation Program is funded by the State of New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development for Consolidated Adult Basic Skills (Title II) and Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) Programs.
 - An event was hosted with the Office of New Americans (ONA). The workshop with presenter Patrick Barry provided students an overview of the various social and legal services ONA has to offer. There were 100 students in attendance (eight English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classes and one High School Equivalency class).
 - Fall Registration is now closed. Orientation will be held on September 28, 2026, for approximately 100 new ESL and 50 new GED students.

Security Report

In accordance with New Jersey Public Law 2015, Chapter 220, and College Policy #2332, Reporting of On-Campus and Fire Events, attached is the monthly statistics report of crimes, fires, and other emergencies on campus for the reporting period of August 21, 2026, through September 18, 2026.