



Raritan Valley Community College Foundation
Annual Report



20
21
JUNE



LEARN BETTER

Education is in the midst of a transformation. The experiences students, educators and administrators have had over the past year has only accelerated and amplified trends within learning environments.

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WELCOME

AND THANK YOU!

JUNE 21, 2021



Dear Friends and Supporters of RVCC,

It has been a sobering last 15 months. Equal parts scary, bizarre, tumultuous, exhausting, and ultimately, redeeming. Everyone seems to have their own shortlist of pandemic "silver linings." Near the top of my mine: increased pride in RVCC.

Like so many other industries, higher education was slammed by the pandemic, and had to pivot overnight to a nearly 100% virtual environment. It wasn't perfect. It was all new. It forced institutions across the country to re-think *everything*.

Raritan Valley Community College was hardly spared. We took a hit to enrollment. We lost some students we may never get back. There were employee transitions and retirements. There were bleak days. Bleak weeks. Even Bleak months. But RVCC stayed open, lights on, maximum safety protocols in place. Our faculty and staff soldiered on. Most of our students found a way to persevere. Even with limited physical access, we remained a college *for* the community.

Now with brighter days ahead and a summer like it ought to be, it is a time for everyone to feel pride in Raritan Valley Community College. RVCC is worthy of it. And it feels good to feel pride, especially now.

It is also time for us to feel gratitude. Your support these last 15 months has meant the world to us. You delivered when we needed it most. While we lost last year's RVCC Foundation Golf Classic, our "RV Lives" and "RVCC Giving Day" efforts blew past their goals. Despite your own challenges, your generosity continued. *You* persevered. The truth is, we simply couldn't have made it without you.

For that, we are forever grateful and **#RVCCProud**,



Persevering: Macy Conklin (RVCC Class of 2021), Education major from Bridgewater.



New Life: Spring 2021 Tulips popping up on The Quad.

Michael J. Marion Executive Director & Chief Development Officer
RVCC Foundation 118 Lamington Road, Branchburg, NJ 08876
michael.marion@raritanval.edu Office: (908) 648-8567 Cell: (973) 600-2848

RVCC

FAST FACTS

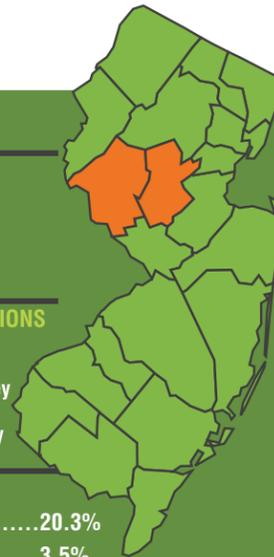
Ranked by WalletHub.com, Intelligent.com and Niche.com as the #1 COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN NEW JERSEY

STUDENT RESIDENCE

99% IN STATE
56% Somerset
25% Hunterdon

TOP TRANSFER DESTINATIONS

Rutgers New Brunswick
Rutgers Newark
The College Of New Jersey
Kean University
Montclair State University



FAST FACTS data from Fall, 2020

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Headcount7,080
Credit Hours64,307
Term Full-time Equivalent (FTE)4,139

STUDENT STATUS

First Time Student20.3%
New Transfer Student3.5%
Continuing / re-admit / non-degree76.2%

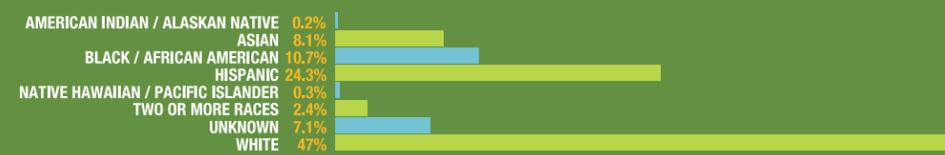
FULL-TIME / PART-TIME STATUS

Full-Time37.5%
Part-Time62.5%

NUMBER OF SECTIONS

Sections Offered1,157
Average Class Size17.9

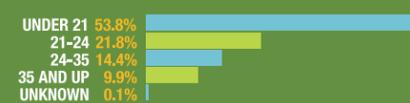
STUDENT ETHNICITY



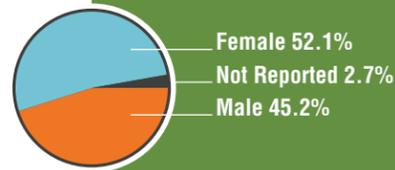
ANNUAL ENROLLMENT 2019-20

Headcount11,029
Term Full-time Equivalent (FTE)5,112

STUDENT AGE



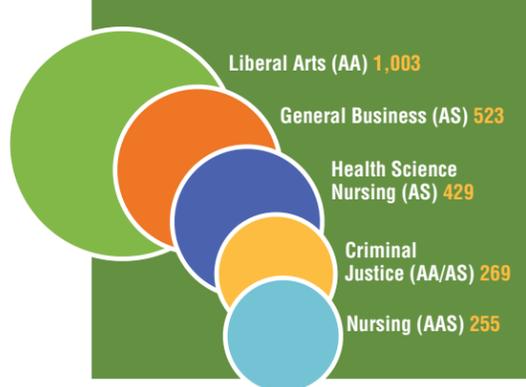
STUDENT GENDER



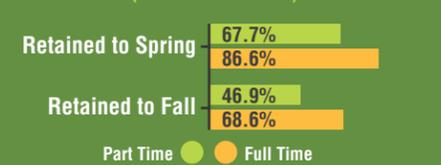
PELL GRANTS (2019-20)



POPULAR MAJORS



RETENTION (Fall 2019 Cohort)

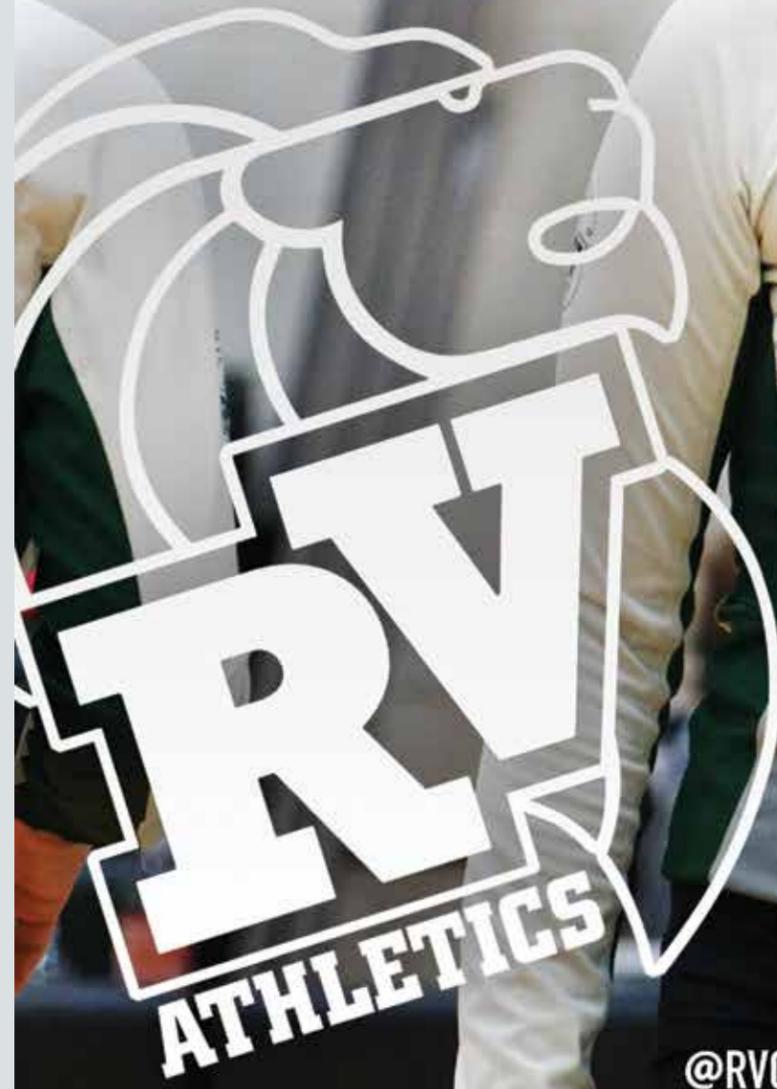


GRADUATES (2019-20)

1,149 Degrees
82 Certificates



DREAMS. GOALS. CHAMPIONS.



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Cindy Haddad, Development Assistant
Stephanie Smullen, Development Associate
Michael Marion, Executive Director &
Chief Development Officer

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Ken Bull
Keith Cahill
Cheryl Errico
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Blejwas Associates, Inc.
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GOLFERS

SUMMA CUM LAUDE

Bio-Shine, Inc.
Bohler Engineering
DiFrancesco, Bateman,
Kunzman, Davis, Lehrer
& Flaum, P.C.
Pave-Rite, Inc.
Provident Bank
Suplee Clooney & Company

MAGNA CUM LAUDE

Hunterdon Healthcare
Foundation
Northfield Bank
SSP Architects
Trane
Van Cleef Engineering
Associates, LLC

CUM LAUDE

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PepsiCo
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Gary Woodring

INDIVIDUAL PLAYERS

DiGroup Architecture
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MUCH GRATITUDE TO

RVCC Foundation
Golf Committee
RVCC Event Volunteers





2019

A LOOK BACK AT THE 16th ANNUAL RVCC FOUNDATION GOLF CLASSIC

Stanton Ridge Golf and
Country Club July 8, 2019



HOW TO BE A GREAT GOLF PARTNER

By Bob Carney
Courtesy of Golf Digest



We call golf an individual sport, but most of it is played with a partner or partners, given that our games by themselves could never achieve anything close to victory. So it's important to know how to be a good partner, or find one. Or friend Dean Knuth, a handicap expert, advises that you find someone who balances your tendencies. If you're "Steady Eddie," play with "Wild Willy," and so forth.

Our **HANDY GUIDE TO GOLF PARTNERING** is what you need for the rest:

1 Believe in the team when no sensible person would. See: "Jets Fan."

The essential characteristic of a great partner is hope. A steady diet of "Why do we do this to ourselves?" or "I'd be better off re-painting my cupola," is not what you're after. You'd much rather hear, "We're close," even if it evokes laughter. I have a friend who dispenses with score and counts "LVs", or Little Victories: A great escape from the woods. A nifty bunker shot. He's a smiler. You're like him. You keep mood and score separate.

2 Don't be an instructor. Or even impersonate one.

You'd love to tell your friend and partner he's swinging at, oh, 50 mph faster than necessary, but you don't be-

cause you're a good partner. You wait for him to inquire, after multiple double-bogeys: "You see anything?" And then, in your best Bob Uecker voice you reply, "Just a hairrrrrrrrr quick." That's it, no analysis. You're also an expert in biting your tongue about your own game. Your partner never hears you say: "I'm setting the angle way too soon..." We'll give you the damn angle.

3 Forget, forget, forget. Remember only the best parts of your teammate's game—and expect the same.

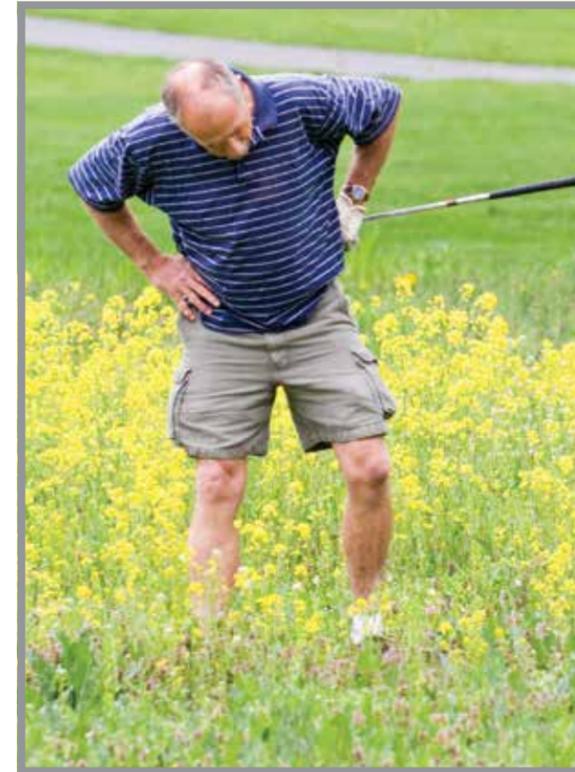
A new study reveals that marathoners quickly forget the anguish of their runs. "This explains," says the study's author, "why people run marathons again and again in spite of pain." This forgetfulness also applies to childbirth. (See where we're headed?) In golf, amnesia is oxygen. Beware the partner who says, "I'd love to play with you again if you'll get some help with your putting." He's a rememberer. You, on the other hand, are known for uttering the most perfect sentence in the history of golf companionship: "I can't remember ever seeing you miss a putt that counted."

4 Take competition seriously, but not too seriously. Golf's fun, kind of.

Maybe you're not joke-teller, though that's a plus if you are. You simply get that our golf games are often the joke. One time my brother and I were playing modified alternate shot in a member-guest. For 7 holes, I'd hit the green, he'd hit the first putt 4 feet past. On the 8th hole I made a hole-in-one. Seriously. "Does this mean you'll talk to me now?" he asked. "It means I don't have an effing 4-footer," I said. He's told that story a million times.

5 Be on the same page with your partner when it really counts.

Golfers, in our experience, are Bermudas-wearing judgment machines. They're experts on what's wrong



with the world, including the goddamn Liberal Media, hats backward, cell phones and cargo shorts! Good partners share similar codes of conduct. If he's Old School and you're a shirt-out, rock-n-roller, beware. But if you're a traditionalist amused by changing standards, that's okay. My friend Squirrel, about a 4 handicap, plays with a boom box on his cart, and sometimes dresses as the aforementioned animal. He has a very big tech job. When he applied to his North Carolina club his wife said, "Are you sure you're country club material?" Good question. Turns out he is, but it's a tolerant country club, compatible with a passion for both golf and the Doobies. Brothers, that is.

6 Don't mope. And grant pardons like an outgoing President.

Regret's a killer. We had a colleague once who's favorite expression on Hole No. 1 was "Let's play two!" and on Hole No. 4, "Why do I even put myself through this!?" He went from Ernie Banks to Eeyore in an hour—tough on himself and harder on his partner. Your partner doesn't need you obsessing about the chunk you hit into the pond to lose the front nine. He expects you to be ready for the next one. Woody Allen said, "My one regret is that I'm not someone else." Sure, you both want to be a better golfer; but you're fine with the ones you are.



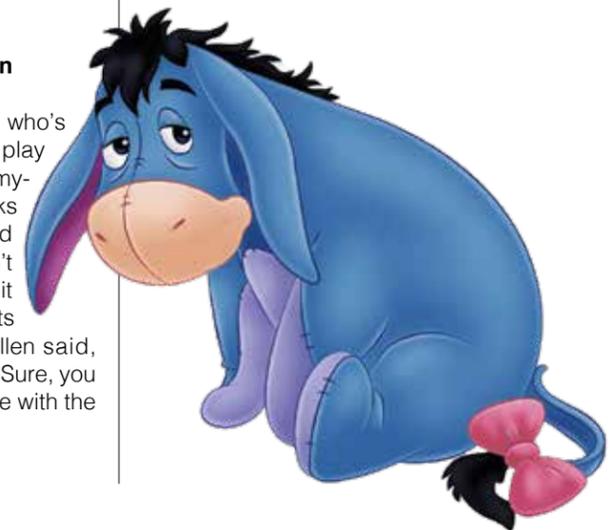
7 Never give up. And then when you do, re-up.

Forgiveness does not equal surrender. It's costly when this translates to making bets you shouldn't, but so it goes. Your model here is Arnold Palmer: "What other people may find in poetry or art museums, I find in the flight of a good drive." There you go. Tell 'em you'll take the double-or-nothing. J! E! T! S!

8 Play fast to reduce pain. And do not torture your partner with 6 practice swings.

Imperfection is not the issue here. Subjecting your partner to a half dozen copies of it is. You play with alacrity. Results come and go quickly. You're like my friend Sissy, who shot 138 while her companion shot 68. It took them 3 and half hours to produce those 206 strokes, a thousand chuckles in between. She also brought champagne. Now that's a partner.

The RVCC Foundation is grateful to Bob Carney for the donation of this article.



PLEASE AVOID SLOW PLAY AT ALL TIMES - 40

-4	10	342	325	4	17	6	5			312	4	17
4	11	185	177	3	15	3	4			168	3	15
4	12	398	386	4	1	5	8			367	4	1
15	13	390	379	4	3	8	12			365	4	3
4	14	208	202	3	7	3	3	None		164	3	7
-5	15	505	488	5	11	4	7	partner		423	5	13
86	16	344	325	4	9	5	4	Don't		315	4	9
6	17	498	480	5	13	4	7	Don't		432	5	11
5	18	391	373	4	5	5	10	!!		360	4	5
43	IN	3261	3135	36		43	62			2907	36	
44	OUT	3288	3152	36		40	62			2826	36	
(87)	TOT	6549	6287	72		83	124			5733	72	

NEWS YOU CAN USE



Conrad Mercurius



RVCC Advanced Manufacturing student, Maria Arevalo Mojica

IN THE FRONT LINES...

Raritan Valley Community College joined the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic early on by mobilizing the manufacture of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that was then donated to Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital New Brunswick and Somerset. RVCC's Advanced Manufacturing program teamed up with Somerset County Vocational & Technical High School, with assistance from RVCC's Engineering Department and the Arts & Design Department, to create the 3D-printed devices featured a headband and plastic face shield, with manufacturing ramping up to 60 face-shields at its peak, according to **Conrad Mercurius**, coordinator of RVCC's Advanced Manufacturing program.

#RVCCProud



ADJUNCT EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARD WINNERS...

It's official, the 2021 winners of the *Adjunct Excellence in Teaching Awards* have been selected and congratulations go to **Denel Bingel** (Health Science Education), **Darleen Fiorelli** (Business & Public Service), and **Julie Mainka** (English), who were recognized with RVCC's 2nd Annual *Adjunct Excellence in Teaching Awards*. This \$1,000 award was made possible through the RVCC Foundation by long-time RVCC supporters, **Dr. Susan Primmer**, a retired dermatologist and pediatrician, and **Dr. Bob Harris**, a retired laboratory animal veterinarian. Special thanks to Dr. Primmer and Dr. Harris, as well as all of our nominators, the review panel, and most importantly, all adjunct faculty at RVCC. RVCC adjunct faculty are dynamic and innovative, and their contributions to RVCC are fundamental to our success and to the success of our students.

#RVCCProud

SPREADING THE HOLIDAY CHEERS...

The 2019 season was a big one for RVCC Women's Volleyball Team, as they finished ranked #10 in the country. As part of their post-Garden State Athletic Conference and Region XIX Division III championship run, the Lions competed as the North B District Champion in the national tournament. These stellar young women then made surprise appearances at the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors holiday party and the Raritan Valley Community College Board of Trustee December meeting. "These young women rock," said head volleyball coach **Philip Herro**. "They are poised on and off the court and are such great ambassadors for RVCC."

In addition to the team's historic success this season, several



2019 RVCC Woman's Volleyball Team



2020 Women's Volleyball Team

RVCC players earned special distinctions, including: **Tess Rogovin**, **Andrea Chavez**, **Anais Duarte**, **Bryahna Shaw** (*Academic All-Region nominees*); **Andrea Chavez** (*Second Team Academic ALL-AMERICAN*); and **Hannah Chiswick** (*First Team All-Region, Garden State Athletic Conference PLAYER OF THE YEAR, Region XIX Tournament MOST VALUABLE PLAYER, and NJCAA ALL-AMERICAN*).

#RVCCProud

ANOTHER STANDING OVATION...

With the Fall 2020 volleyball season postponed due to the pandemic, the RVCC Lions returned to stellar form in the spring 2021 season. The result: A perfect 9-0 (without ever losing a set) in the regular season. They then went on to defeat Erie Community College in the NJCAA DII East Division Championship semifinal, before falling to WVU Potomac State College in the Championship game. Runner Up in the tourney, but #1 in the hearts of the RVCC community!

#RVCCProud



Mike McDonough, Colonel Jack Jacobs, Mike Marion

NEW PERSPECTIVES, NEW FRIENDS...

It was a special group of guests attending RVCC's third 'New Perspective' dinner in summer of '19, but none more special than **Colonel Jack Jacobs**. This American hero, author, and commentator served his country in two tours of duty in Vietnam and was awarded the Medal of Honor, two Silver Stars, three Bronze Stars, and two Purple Hearts. He is a "go to" military analyst and commentator with several national media channels. But on this night he was there to hear a "new perspective" on higher education, compellingly delivered by Raritan Valley Community College President **Mike McDonough**. Post-pandemic plans are to resume the dinner series, which helps put the role of community colleges in context of the broader post-secondary education landscape, while promoting the attributes of New Jersey's #1 community college, Raritan Valley Community College.

#RVCCProud

BIG LEAGUES COME TO TOWN...

RVCC Baseball Team head coach **Fred Orchard**, arranged a surprise February, 2020, visit to practice by Cincinnati Reds Scouting Supervisor, **Lee Seras**. Seras, a one-time coach of the Somerset County College (the forerunner to RVCC) baseball team, brought articles highlighting the early days of baseball at the College and extolled the virtues of athletics and the impact on the college culture. "There's no question that a well-funded athletics program adds vibrancy to a college," said Seras. "That's why it's important for the



RVCC Men's Baseball Team, with Lee Seras, (in jeans)

NEWS YOU CAN USE



community to step up and contribute as it can. The more resources, the better.” Note to readers: RVCC Athletics is open for sponsorship and other supports for our student athletes.

#RVCCProud

2021 RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE SERVICE LEARNING LEADERSHIP AWARD...

Phoebe Chen of Hillsborough was named the recipient of the *Raritan Valley Community College Service Learning Leadership Award*. The annual award honors students for their outstanding leadership and personal development attained through their service learning project and reflection activity and focuses on projects showing a high level of initiative in all areas of planning, including identifying the community need, planning the service, and putting that plan into action.

As part of her Environmental Science & Sustainability course during the Fall 2020 Semester, Chen (Class of 2021) worked to develop a Spotted Lanternfly Extermination Project to implement on both the RVCC campus and throughout the township of Hillsborough. Working with others, including RVCC faculty and staff, the RVCC Environmental Club, Hillsborough High School’s Project Green, and the Hillsborough Township Department of Parks and Recreation, Chen worked both independently and with these collaborators to move toward eliminating the invasive Spotted Lanternfly in Somerset County. Chen also has received a \$600 Student Enrichment Grant from the RVCC Foundation to continue and expand her project. “When we thought our world had endured enough tragedy, an invasive species began to spread throughout the East Coast, destroying our environment, our crops, and our economy,” said Chen. “Through the Lanternfly Extermination Project, I was able to reconnect with other students at my college and my former high school to help fight against a detrimental issue in our community.”

#RVCCProud.

CHANGEBUILDER SCHOLARSHIP AWARD WINNER...

In addition to receiving the Frank S. and Patricia F. Russo Foundation Scholarship, **Alexander Lazeration** of Hillsborough has been recognized for his volunteer work with the New Jersey Campus Compact (NJCC) Changebuilder Scholarship Award. The \$1,000 scholarship recognizes one outstanding Changebuilder per campus. Lazeration has been involved in a number of service activities, and his commitment to volunteerism has continued even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the summer of 2020, the Engineering major has been teaching a virtual art class for clients of The Arc of Somerset



Phoebe Chen



Spotted Lanternfly on Campus



Alexander Lazeration

County, which helps individuals with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities and their families. He even recruited a fellow RVCC student to further assist The Arc with its popular class.

While enrolled in an Introduction to Engineering course, Lazeration became involved in the College’s Service Learning program, which enables students to receive academic credit for their volunteer work. The experience helped solidify his love of service as a volunteer instructor for Bricks 4 Kidz of Hunterdon-Somerset, which provides STEM-based enrichment courses for young students. RVCC’s Service Learning program is nationally recognized for its commitment to the civic purposes of higher education. In 2020 it was one of only two community colleges in the U.S.—and the only New Jersey college—to receive the first Eduardo J. Padrón Award for Institutional Transformation.

#RVCCProud

RVCC STUDENT LEADER RECOGNIZED BY PHI THETA KAPPA...

Rebecca Geary, RVCC Class of 21, was recognized by PTK with both an International Award for “Distinguished Chapter Officer” and “Distinguished Honors in Action Project,” as well as a Regional Award for “Most Distinguished Chapter Officer.” Geary, also a recipient of the “Jake Irwin Honors College Scholarship” and “Galileo Scholarship” through the RVCC Foundation, was one of five students to speak at the RVCC Foundation’s Annual Scholarship Reception. Rebecca is bound for Rutgers University School of Arts and Sciences in the fall to study Mathematics with a specialization in Actuarial Science.

#RVCCProud

A SWEET APPROACH TO FUNDRAISING...

Resourcefulness is one of the hallmarks of good fundraising, and it was on full display last month as **Juaquin Goodbar** (RVCC Class of 2021 and outgoing president of the RVCC Environmental Club) manned the Club’s “retail operation” at the roof top garden of the Bateman Center. The Club had harvested its very own maple syrup from local trees and then made the product available for sale to the campus community. All proceeds from the sale will be directed to Club initiatives, including maintaining the organic garden, green roof top garden, and the rain garden on campus. One bottle, however, was “donated” by the Club to Jim and Jill Gibson, as a token of appreciation for their recent epic gift to the RVCC Center for Environmental Studies.

#RVCCProud



Rebecca Geary



Juaquin Goodbar

NEWS YOU CAN USE



NEWEST MEMBERS OF THE RVCC FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS...

The board of directors of the RVCC Foundation has affirmed three new board members as part of its “Emerging Class” program. Established in 2019, the Emerging Class provides opportunities for current RVCC students, as well as recent RVCC grads to serve in leadership roles with the RVCC Foundation. The newest members, to be officially welcomed at the board’s July 16 meeting, are:

JOMIL LONDON – Jomil is a Summa Cum Laude RVCC grad, Rutgers biomedical engineering degree holder and now in Rutgers Law School.



Jomil London

Cooper Irving

Jimena Torres

Says Jomil: “I met so many wonderful men and women from all walks of life during my short time on campus, and those experiences I would not trade for anything. This is a wonderful opportunity to give back that speaks more to me than simply donating to the Foundation and calling it a day. RVCC holds a special place in my life, and I would like for others to have this same experience during their time at RVCC.”

COOPER IRVING – Cooper is a Business Administration major and member of the RVCC Class of '22, who has his sights on Rutgers University, with interests in Supply Chain Management or Business Analytics and Information

Technology—and eventually, the FBI. He is a resident of Hunterdon County. Says Cooper: “Many people have this negative connotation about community college, they do not believe it is a good education or a good place for their child to go. I would like to produce ways to make community colleges—and specifically RVCC—more appealing to students and parents. I want students who are smart and have a lot of potential with no money to realize that RVCC is a great option.”

JIMENA TORRES – Jimena is an Engineering Science major who lives in Somerset County. Says Jimena: “I also wish to be someone who can uplift those who do not believe they have the means necessary to achieve success, as I once did, and contribute to a support system for them. To achieve the success that got me to this point, I will continue along a path of engineering and use my creativity to contribute to innovations that bring joy to people’s lives.”

#RVCCProud

NEW GREENHOUSE NOW UNDER CONSTRUCTION...

The Center for Environmental Studies and Department of Science & Engineering are collaborating to build a four-season, heated greenhouse to support educational, research and stewardship projects



Greenhouse Footprint

on campus and in the community. The greenhouse will support several classes directly, including Plants, Humans and the Environment, Field Botany—some 300 students in all—and potentially others in the future. The greenhouse will also support sustainable agriculture projects currently conducted by the Environmental Club (organic vegetable production) and Enactus club (hydroponics), both of which are among the largest and most active student clubs on campus, with strong records in community and campus service, and fundraising success.

The greenhouse use will also support endangered plant species restoration and research projects in New Jersey, and native plant propagation for campus and community stewardship projects. Funding for the project comes from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and generous support from a Jim and Jill Gibson Grant, and an anonymous donor (and a company match of that anonymous donor).

#RVCCProud

MORNING RICH...

RVCC’s ever-present front desk security presence, **Rich Trotter**, has unlimited number of RVCC student, staff, and faculty admirers who appreciate his welcoming presence each morning. Rich has been at RVCC some 10 years and is literally the first person you see upon arrival at the College’s main entrance.

Liam Fleisher, RVCC Class of 2021, put it this way: “I had made a joke last time we were talking with Rich, that he should be the ‘mascot of RVCC!’ I know that’s not likely to happen but he is one of the first faces many staff and students see when they enter the campus. This was even more evident during this pandemic since the Event Center was the single access point for all campus visitors. Rich is always there with a smile, greeting everyone who walks in. I have been a student here for about 3 years now and I have come to know Rich as a defining individual at RVCC—just by his saying, “Good morning” and wishing me a good day.” Thank you Rich, for helping to keep our campus safe but also more making it a little brighter each day.

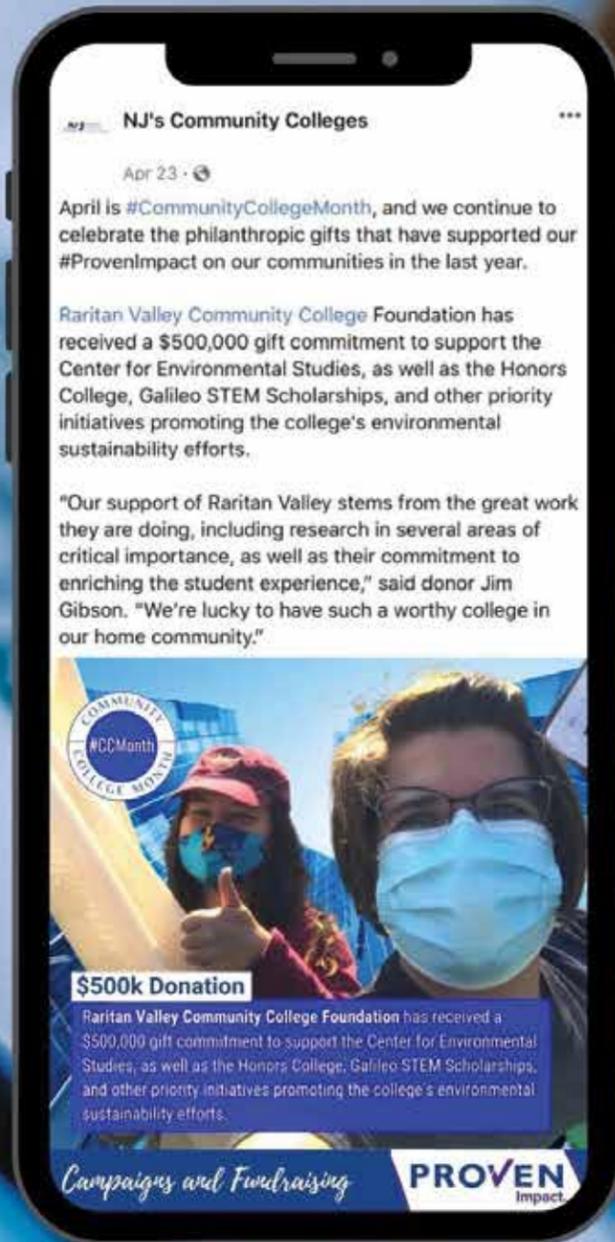


Security staffer, Rich Trotter, wearing his RVCC Giving Day spirit.



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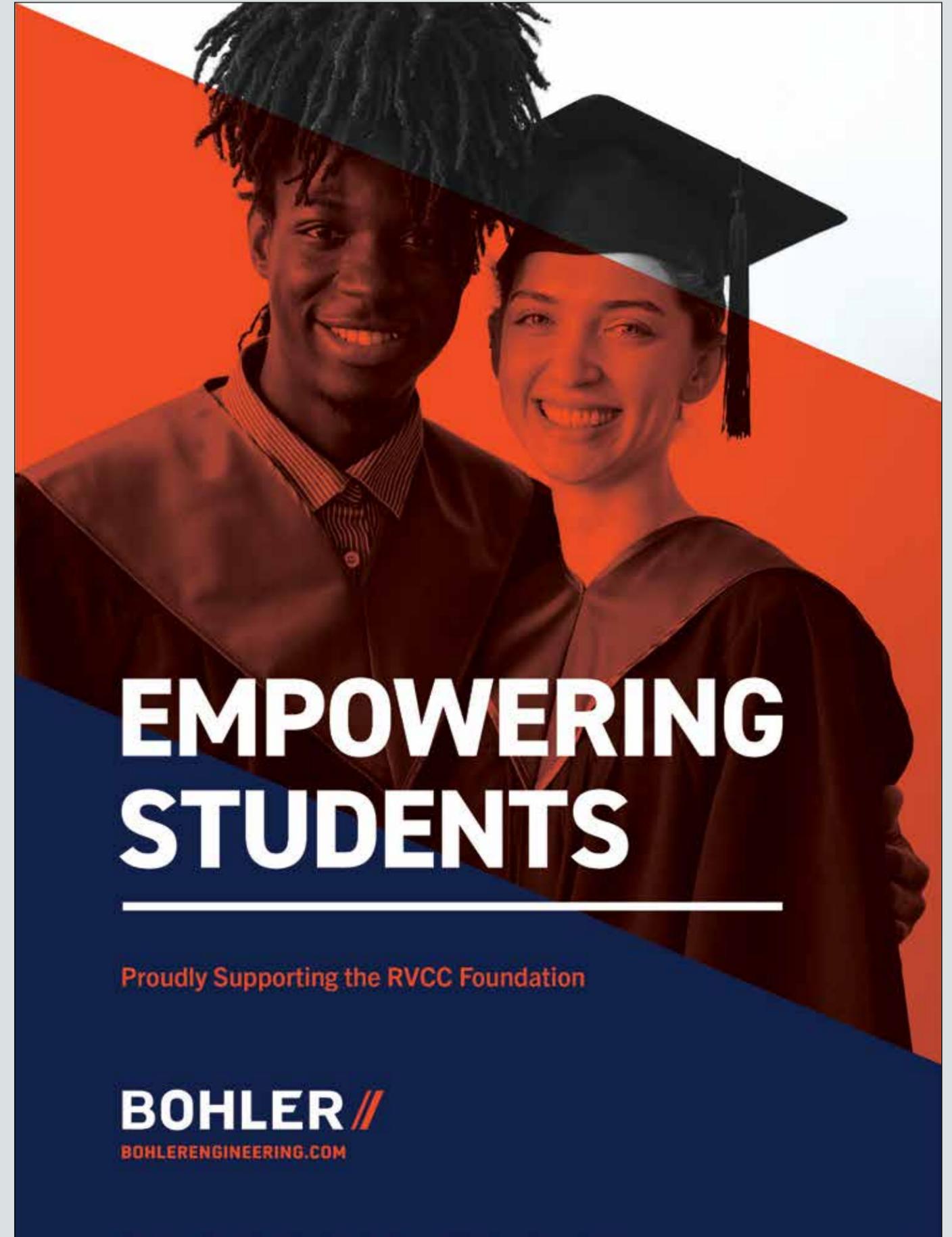
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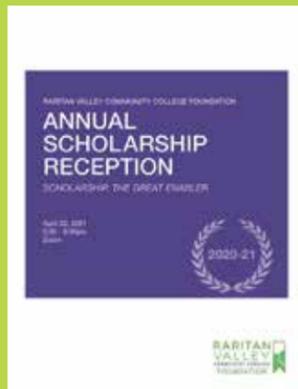


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IN SUPPORT OF STUDENTS

RVCC Foundation

The scholarship program at RVCC has long been providing financial assistance to students in need. With over 60 named scholarships and other scholarships from general funds, the RVCC Foundation is able to help support hundreds of students every year. Over the last two academic years, through generosity of our donors, the RVCC Foundation has awarded some



SCHOLARSHIP DOLLARS AWARDED VIA 550 SCHOLARSHIPS

2019-2020 & 2020-2021 Academic Years

were able to apply to the RVCC Foundation for funds to cover living expenses not covered by scholarships or other sources. The RVCC Foundation supported 40 students over three funding cycles in the spring of 2020, fall of 2020, and spring of 2021—totaling nearly \$33,000.

\$32,708

\$814,500

COVID RELIEF FUNDING AWARDED TO 40 STUDENTS

550 scholarships and more than \$800,000 in support to students.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the RVCC Foundation also mirrored the College's Federal CARES Act Funding to students who are citizens and permanent residents by offering much needed financial relief to non-citizens and international students. Students



First (and last) group "virtual" selfie of speakers at the RVCC Foundation Annual Scholarship Reception

CLASS OF SUCCESS 2021 STORIES



"We have graduated from the best community college in NJ that's not only exceptional in academics but has a solid sense of community."

CATHERINE LINET NAMULI
LIBERAL ARTS



"As a Latino student, RVCC's small classes made attending college in a different language much easier. My teachers gave me the confidence to keep trying and helped me improve my skills."

ANA CAROLINA P. MITCHELL
GRAPHIC AND INTERACTIVE DESIGN



"The faculty and staff at RVCC became fully invested in supporting my career, both academically and professionally."

SEBASTIAN GALVEZ
GENERAL BUSINESS



"I met great professors and classmates from diverse backgrounds, who all became my inspiration and motivation to move forward."

KUN CHEN
ESL CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION



"RVCC has helped me find my passion."

KEVIN CLINEBELL
COMMERCIAL ENERGY MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGY



"RVCC allowed me to integrate into a college atmosphere while still in high school, and I was able to take advantage of facilities like labs and the anatomy models/diagrams in the tutoring center to better understand difficult subjects and prepare for exams."

ELIZABETH WILLIAMS
GENERAL BUSINESS



"RVCC gave me many opportunities to grow and explore new qualities about myself."

RAMSHAH SANGI
GENERAL BUSINESS



"I would recommend RVCC because of the incredible opportunity it gives students."

GRACE MEECHAN
EDUCATION: P-12



"I was able to take classes at both my high school and RVCC and complete two degrees at the same time."

KATHERINE CLARKSON
LIBERAL ARTS

CLASS OF 2021 SUCCESS STORIES



"The professors are amazing; they want to help and see you succeed."

ALEXANDER LAZERATION
MECHANICAL ENGINEERING



"Success to me means using what I've learned in future situations, making the most out of all the things I experience, and continuing to grow and learn."

JULIANA YANGCO
GENERAL SCIENCE/PREHEALTH PROFESSIONAL



"At RVCC I found a community passionate about students and the learning process."

CATHERINE OLDFIELD
COMPUTER SCIENCE, COMPUTER NETWORKING & COMPUTER PROGRAMMING



"RVCC's small class sizes were extremely appealing to a student returning to school to take science and math classes for the first time in over 2½ decades."

YVONNE SELANDER
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE



"If you can truly look at what you have done in your life and are content with the outcome, then you should consider yourself a success."

MATTHEW CIUFFO
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE



"I had a great experience in all of my classes, and you feel part of the community."

NICOLE GAETA
GENERAL BUSINESS



"I achieved as much as I sought out to achieve, because I put my heart into it."

GERARDO CARCAMO
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION



"RVCC makes sure that all students are given equal opportunities, no matter who you identify as or what your background is."

DANIELLE MARZIGLIANO
SOCIAL SCIENCE



"Attending the OTA program at RVCC gave me the skills I needed to really make a difference in people's lives and gave me confidence in my ability to help others."

MATTHEW HALL
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT



"At RVCC, I became involved in various clubs and organizations, where I got to meet many of my close friends."

CARMEN LOOI
GENERAL BUSINESS



"Success is the ability to continue acquiring knowledge and achieving happiness and self-actualization while being as healthy as possible."

MARTHA I. SPEAKMAN
NURSING



"I was looking for an opportunity to start my college journey over again, and RVCC provided plenty of support for me to do so."

JUAQUIN GOODBAR
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE



"RVCC allowed me to discover my academic strengths and pursue student leadership positions."

SARAH CONNORS
NURSING



"I have gained not only a rewarding education, but also a lifelong passion for education."

KIRSTEN FRITTS
EDUCATION: P-12



"I feel I am successful when I am able to work hard and enjoy the process of learning."

PAUL YANOSO
GENERAL SCIENCE/PREHEALTH PROFESSIONAL



"Success, though different for everyone, can be defined by doing what you love."

JENNIFER CLOCK
HUMAN SERVICES/PRE-SOCIAL WORK



"RVCC gave me the opportunity to develop myself professionally and academically while in a helpful and supportive environment."

SAMUEL CARTAGENA-SERGENIAN
GENERAL BUSINESS



"Success means being able to do something you love."

JAMIE MALLINSON
MUSIC

PERSERVERING

IN THE PANDEMIC:

Brian O'Rourke



Brian O'Rourke: Man with a plan (and a view)

As executive director of Facilities and Grounds, it's safe to say that **Brian O'Rourke** has a unique vantage on the campus. In short, anything "physical" is his domain. As domains go, it's never easy: you only get noticed when something goes wrong. Now imagine a pandemic arrives on your doorstep. That's been Brian's world the last 15 months.

Charged with co-chairing the RVCC's 30-person, campus-wide "Reopening Taskforce," Brian has been the lead on nearly everything: from "supply and demand" of materials to innovative ways to provide access, including safe instruction spaces. His output is impressive; here are just some of the things Brian has overseen:

- Upgrading ventilation and converting all central air handlers, resetting all outdoor air dampers to provide the maximum amount of outside air, upgrading Individual air purifiers with HEPA filters and providing UV light to all classrooms and offices.
- Regular and sustained cleaning and misting of all restrooms, hallways, offices, classrooms, with wipes and sanitizers provided and replenished in all offices and classrooms.
- Restricting campus access points and adding health checks and temperature checks, reconfiguring classrooms, office and bathrooms for 6 foot spacing, constructing clear partitions and curtains in hundreds of spaces throughout the college, and creating directional markings for hallways and elevators.

"Brian has been invaluable throughout the pandemic—from his leadership on the college-wide "Reopening" committee, to his real-time creativity and problem-solving skills in response to the far-ranging challenges of the last 15 months," said RVCC President **Mike McDonough**. "We are all truly grateful for his commitment to keeping us safe and



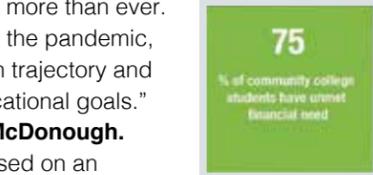
open during the pandemic."

Brian is particularly well qualified for the RVCC job. Born and raised in Yonkers, New York, he attended Fordham Preparatory School in the Bronx, earned a BS in Mechanical Engineering from Villanova University in 1990, and an MBA in Management from Pace University in 1999. Beyond the academics, he also worked for 10 years as a design engineer of building HVAC and plumbing systems, and eventually moved into the school systems in Facilities (before coming to RVCC, Brian was Director of Facilities for Columbia University at the Morningside campus).

Meanwhile, after 10,000 Masks, 100 Gallons of hand sanitizer, 150 Clear curtains, 150 Gallons of misting and 40 sheets of plexiglass, he's happy with the College's plans to completely re-open next month. "It has been an honor to serve as the Co-Chair of the Reopening Task Force," Brian noted. "While certainly challenging, it has allowed me to reconnect with staff and faculty in an honest and thoughtful way. If there is a silver lining, it is the strength of the people in our college—our RVCC community."



RV LIVES: The Crisis and the Response



Challenged by the devastating impacts the Covid-19 pandemic, last August the RVCC Foundation team launched a virtual fundraising campaign 100% dedicated to students in need. The goal was simple: raise \$100,000 by yearend to fortify a range of supports to help keep RVCC students on track and moving forward. That collective effort, including from some exceptionally generous donors, resulted in \$132,000 in funds raised.

“Our students needed our support more than ever. They were uniquely challenged by the pandemic, and our hope was to keep them on trajectory and ever closer to achieving their educational goals.” said RVCC President **Michael J. McDonough**.

The RV LIVES campaign focused on an expansion of the Student Emergency Fund, resources for the RVCC Food Pantry, and related needs—areas that have a direct impact on helping students to persevere and continue their education.

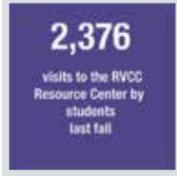
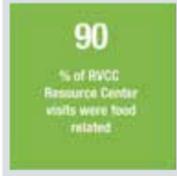
Other areas benefiting from the campaign included technology to support students’ transition to remote learning, new scholarships for students from underrepresented communities, as well as the “Emerging Heroes Nursing Scholarship.”

RVCC Nursing student **Isabel Perez**, a non-traditional student, understood firsthand the importance of the campaign. “Thank you for investing in those of us in our ‘50s who are running to the front lines. Your support, including for the new Emerging Heroes Nursing Scholarship, means the world to us,” said Perez.

To inspire generosity, the campaign had to accurately represent the challenges of RVCC students. To ensure that it did, the RV LIVES enlisted some 15 students to share their voices by video, which were showcased on the RV LIVES website, along with the voices of selected alumni and community leaders. In addition, the website featured 20 “fact boxes” which provided compelling data about students, their burdens and their needs.

Ultimately the RV LIVES campaign received over 100 gifts, including three \$25,000 donations, which were stimulated by a “match” challenge from a local donor. More than 60 donations were given by RVCC faculty and staff.

“It’s was so gratifying to see the community rally in support of RVCC students—they are so worthy of the outpouring,” said **Stacey Kimmins**, Chair, RVCC Foundation Board of Directors.



EMERGING HEROES NURSING SCHOLARSHIP
AT RVCC

EVELYN S. FIELD SCHOLARSHIP
AT RVCC

PAUL ROBESON SCHOLARSHIP
AT RVCC

New Support For Students

Three new scholarships emerged from the RV LIVES fundraising effort—the “Emerging Heroes Nursing Scholarship”, the “Paul Robeson Scholarship”, and the “Evelyn S. Field Scholarship”. The Emerging Heroes Nursing Scholarship is for our future frontline healthcare professionals, the nursing students at RVCC. The Paul Robeson and Evelyn S. Field Scholarships support incoming (first year) African American students who’ve chosen to begin their post-secondary education journeys at RVCC.

“The Field family is extremely appreciative of the honor of having our mother’s service to Raritan Valley Community College and the African American community of Somerset recognized through a scholarship in her name. She was a true inspiration to all those she touched in life—not only through education but also on the forefront of advancing the civil rights. She cared deeply about the underrepresented and those challenged by financial hardship, and we are grateful for the honor and legacy represented in this scholarship.”
--**Glenn W. Field** (son of Evelyn)

THE GIFT

RVCC Center For Environmental Studies

It's true that every gift has impact. But some gifts—whether it's because of their timing, their focus, or their size—can be true difference makers. And when all three boxes can be checked, it is truly epic.

Such was the case this spring when Raritan Valley Community College received a \$500,000 donation to support a number of important initiatives on campus, including RVCC's Center for Environmental Studies. Spread across five years, this gift will help ensure the financial stability of the Center—the only

college in our home community."

"The Gibsons' extraordinary generosity is a resounding affirmation of the work of our faculty and the quality of our students. We couldn't be more honored or grateful. This incredible gift will help us maintain our commitment to providing innovative environmental education and being a national leader in sustainability initiatives," said RVCC President **Michael J. McDonough**.

"This is such a momentous gift," noted **Dr. Jay Kelly**, co-director of the Center. "The Gibsons' gen-

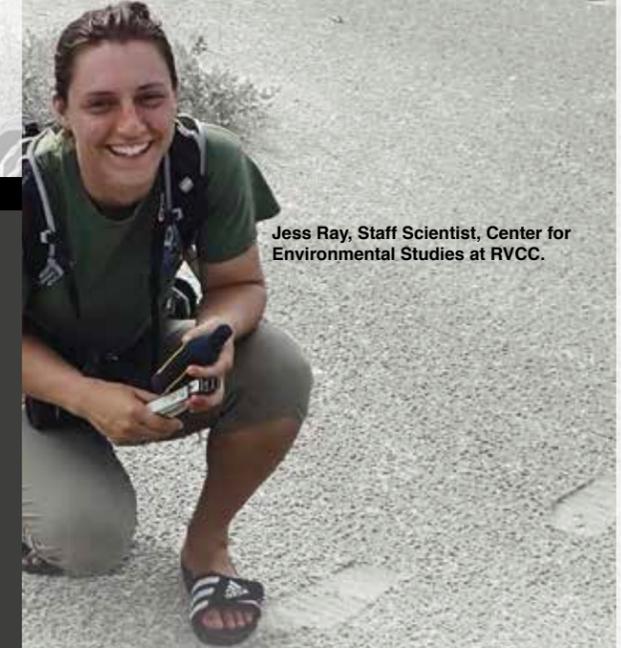
largest single donors to RVCC. In 2016, the couple provided an equally generous commitment to support STEM education programs and innovation in science, technology, and research, including "in-the-field" projects to enhance student learning.

"We are so fortunate to have such caring and generous supporters of the College," said **Mike Marion**, Executive Director, RVCC Foundation. "The Gibsons are truly in a league of their own: they believe in the mission of RVCC and they're committed to supporting it."

A STAFF SCIENTIST IS BORN

Preceding the Gibson donation by a year, RVCC Foundation was also the recipient of another five-year gift commitment—a \$300,000 gift from an anonymous donor—to fund the first Staff Scientist for Ecological Research and Restoration position at RVCC's Center for Environmental Studies.

"The gift is utterly transformative for RVCC and the Center. It will dramatically increase our capacity to conduct research and restoration projects with students and better assist community partners. By securing support for this position over multiple years, we will be able to better plan and move forward strategically on our initiatives," said Dr. Kelly.



Jess Ray, Staff Scientist, Center for Environmental Studies at RVCC.

The Center has hired **Jessica Ray**, an RVCC 2014 grad, as its first Staff Scientist. Ray also received a degree in 2016 from Rutgers University in Ecology, Evolution and National Resources, and has been studying plant communities and habitat conservation through various internships in forest health, coastal conservation, deer surveys, and identification of unknown plant specimens.

Ray is responsible for coordinating and completing the Center's ecological research, restoration and stewardship projects. She is also involved with such areas as grant writing; training student interns; data collection, analysis and reporting; developing curriculum and outreach materials; managing vegetation and environmental stewardship; and working with community partners.

The Gibsons' extraordinary generosity is a resounding affirmation of the work of our faculty and the quality of our students. We couldn't be more honored or grateful...



(Left) RVCC campus sustainability interns Allyson Schmieder, RVCC grad and biology major, with Theresa Vitovitch, Environmental Science major, monitoring trees and shrubs that were planted to expand



the width of the riparian buffer along the stream that runs through campus. (Right) Anna Izeppi, RVCC Communications major, caring for the butterfly/pollinator garden.



Raquel Mennella, RVCC environmental science major, and Valeria Izeppi, RVCC grad and biology major, taking measurements of vegetation as part of their forest ecology internship.

one of its kind at a New Jersey community college.

This extraordinary donation was from **Jim and Jill Gibson** of Basking Ridge and it will sustain student involvement in critical environmental areas of the Center, including Forest Ecology, Wildlife Research, Coastal Conservation, Rare Plant Research and Recovery, Open Space Stewardship and Native Plant Propagation, Water Quality Research, and Campus Sustainability.

"Our support of Raritan Valley stems from the great work they are doing, including research in several areas of critical importance, as well as their commitment to enriching the student experience," said Jim Gibson. "We're lucky to have such a worthy

generosity has been nothing short of transformational for our programs, and this gift will allow us to continue to offer opportunities for our students to apply what they are learning in their classes to directly benefit the communities we serve. We are all thrilled and beyond grateful."

Added **Dr. Emilie Stander**, the Center's other co-director, "This support will allow us to continue to employ student interns year-round on a wide variety of environmental projects. It will help kickstart their careers as environmental professionals, as well as provide valuable technical assistance and service to local communities and environmental organizations." With their latest donation, the Gibsons are now the

“ESCAPISM”

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT CLASS OF SPRING 2021

RVCC Division of Liberal & Fine Arts

We're proud to showcase five student works from the Portfolio Development class in the RVCC Arts & Design department. For the final group exhibition, students decided on the theme of “Escapism”, and each student created artwork under this chosen theme. This semester, a total of 15 students participated, showing a wide range of interpretation of Escapism. Please scan the QR code at the end to visit the full online exhibition.



“The things we don't have are what we want the most.”
-Luis Natal

“Trapped Inside” by Luis Natal
Pencil, ink, colored pencil on paper
8.5” x 11”
2021

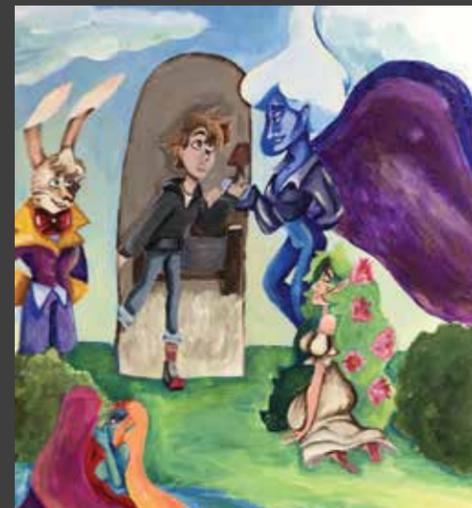


“I never paint dreams or nightmares. I paint my own reality”
-Frida Kahlo

“Freedom” by Justine MacKinnon
Ink & alcohol-based marker on paper
18” x 24”
2020-2021

“In this timeless land of enchantment, the age of chivalry, magic and make-believe are reborn and fairy tales become true.”
-Walt Disney

“Escapism” by Mike Rego
Acrylic on paper
16” x 24”
2021



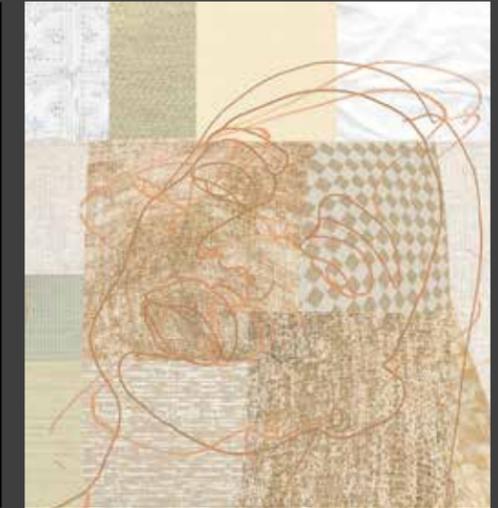
“Your escape can become your trap”
-Ana Mitchell

“The New Normal”
by Ana Carolina Mitchell
Illustrator
11” x 15”
2021




“In the wise words of Nate Berkus, your home should tell the story of who you are and be a collection of what you love”
-Alicia Novoa

“Patchwork” by Alicia Novoa
Digital image created by Procreate
20” x 20”
2021



MOZAIKA

Concert Series

Autumn Schedule at the Welpel Theater on the campus of RVCC



Anna Keiserman, pianist

The MOZAIKA Concert Series was created to promote multicultural dialogue through the performance of music from the classical canon through the 21st Century. The concerts in the MOZAIKA Concert Series are free of charge, but donations are accepted and will go to the RVCC Applied Music Fund to help the College's music majors pay for private lessons on their primary instruments. The MOZAIKA Concert Series is made possible by funds from the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission, a partner of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.



Made possible by funds from the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission, a partner of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.



The Welpel Theater

College in early 2021. Soon after, they were named recipients of Chamber Music America's Ensemble Forward Grant, made possible by the New York Community Trust. Other season highlights include several upcoming online performances through A440, whose roster they joined.



SEPTEMBER 12TH, 2PM

Carlos De La Gala, violin; Anna Keiserman, piano

The Jewish Legacy XX project will feature Jewish music of the Holocaust, the Russian-Jewish Avant- Garde, US and Spain. The product of painstaking research and thoughtful selection, it revives the oeuvre of the Jewish composers Erwin Schulhoff, who was murdered by the Nazis, and Aleksandr Veprik who suffered greatly in the Gulag. The Jewish Avant-Garde movement represented by Aleksandr Krein and Yulian Krein. The music by Spanish-Jewish composer Elena Romero is quite unknown, as her pieces for violin and piano were never recorded. Uncovering forgotten composers and inspiring a renewed fascination with works long out of print, the duo of De La Gala and Keiserman is very excited to introduce this music to a new generation.



SEPTEMBER 26TH, 2PM

Christopher Herbert, baritone; Anna Keiserman, piano

The program will feature "Petersburg, a vocal poem" composed by the distinguished Russian composer Georgi Sviridov (1915-1998). The texts, by 20th century poet Alexandr Blok, were written between 1901 and 1914, and reflect the traumatic state of mind and soul that permeated Russian society in the "Silver Age" of Russian arts and letters preceding World War I. Sviridov worked on "Petersburg" over a period of 20 years, creating a masterful unity of music and texts as poignant for our time as for the era when St. Petersburg symbolized the best and worst in Russian society.



OCTOBER 17TH 2 PM

Trio Solace: Jacob Savransky (piano), Yukiko Kuhara (violin), Mark serkin (cello).

Trio Solace was formed at the height of the 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic by long-time school friends Yukiko, Mark, and Jacob as a way to spread a modicum of comfort by way of music. The trio made its debut at the Mozaika Concert Series at Raritan Valley Community



NOVEMBER 14TH, 2 PM

Anastasia Dedik, piano

Anastasia Dedik has been performing as a soloist and chamber musician on some of the most important stages in the world, including the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, The Great Philharmonic Hall in St. Petersburg, Russia and many others. Anastasia has appeared as a soloist with Fort Worth Symphony, Saint Petersburg Philharmonic, NYCA Symphony Orchestra, San Jose Symphony, and Oberlin Orchestra. She has been featured on RAI TV in Italy, NDR TV in Germany, WABC in NYC as well as in an episode of NBC's "Law and Order SVU", performing Beethoven's "Appassionata" in an exciting episode "True believers".



DECEMBER 12TH, 2 PM

Atlantic Chamber Players: Sarah Davol, oboe; James Noyes, saxophone; Andrea Herr, bassoon; Lisa Pike, horn; Anna Keiserman, piano

The Atlantic Chamber Players is a cutting-edge freelance ensemble featuring a unique combination of winds (oboe, saxophone, bassoon, horn) with piano, specializing in rarely played gems of the modern repertoire. Members of the ACP may be heard with the American Classical Orchestra, Atlantic Symphony, New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, New York City Opera, New York City Ballet, New York Arts Ensemble, Argento New Music Project, Bronx Arts Ensemble, and on Broadway. The concert will feature two premier pieces dedicated to the ensemble by John Sichel and Steve Cohen

RVCC GIVING DAY 2021

A Single Day and a Community That Was All In.

Despite the challenges imposed by a global pandemic, the RVCC Foundation had a record-setting **Giving Day** on March 18, more than doubling its success over last year's total. Giving Day 2021 raised \$51,510 to help the students, programs, and faculty of RVCC. In 2020, RVCC Giving Day raised \$23,635.



This year, the 24-hour, online fundraising event focused on four broad areas at the College—Student Life, Student Support, Academic & Faculty Programs, and Institutes—representing a significant cross-section of RVCC. Given the pandemic, this annual single-day “give-a-thon” leaned heavily social media and other forms of digital communication.

in Mechanical Engineering. He is now a Propulsion Engineer at The Boeing Company.

“I did not know at the time that going to RVCC would be one of the best decisions I ever made. RVCC offered me everything I needed and more. I went from initially not securing the financial support I needed, to successfully and comfortably transferring to earn my bachelor’s degree and then

landing my dream job—debt free. I benefited from so many caring people when I was a student at RVCC—people I remain in touch with—so I know the importance of paying it forward,” said Joel, who is also a member of the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors. “Celebrating Giving Day with the gift of



Fittipaldi Winners: RVCC Men's Basketball Team and RVCC Women's Volleyball Team



Much of the day's success was thanks to a generous, \$10,000 contribution from RVCC alum **Joel Reyes-Guzman**, a former resident of Bound Brook who graduated from the College in 2014. After RVCC, Joel transferred to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and earned a Bachelor of Science degree

RVCC scholarships for students from Bound Brook High School was a perfect way for me to start giving back.”

In addition, Joel decided to “challenge” his colleagues on the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors, “to double the impact of my \$10,000, I



asked board members to collectively match my gift—and they did, and then some.”

“Our record results for this 24-hour campaign were particularly gratifying this year, given the pandemic and the isolation everyone has

been feeling,” said Mike Marion, Executive Director, RVCC Foundation. “With our students in mind and taking RVCC’s mission to heart, our community, led by our Foundation Board of Directors, stepped up and said, ‘you matter and we care.’ It was a truly extraordinary outpouring of generosity and we could not be more grateful,” continued Marion.

The event’s student contributions were led by the RVCC Women’s Volleyball and Men’s Basketball teams, winners of the **Patrick J. Fittipaldi Award** for student Giving Day fundraising success. The Men’s Basketball team was honored for raising the most funds at \$3,137.50, and the Women’s Volleyball team was celebrated for bringing in the most donors: 38.

In total, close to 250 donors from the College and larger community supported Giving Day, with RVCC student clubs and teams raising over \$8,000. The top three areas of donations were earmarked for the College’s Athletic programs, the Student Emergency Fund, and Scholarships.

\$51,510



STD: GivingDay2022 is MARCH 8

Giving Day 2020!!

Though last year’s Giving Day total of \$23,635 did not eclipse Giving Day 2019 totals (nothing like a pandemic to throw a wrench into our homestretch!), the event did provide a first: the first ever student created and produced video to promote giving among students, faculty and staff. The brainchild of RVCC student, **Gabby Taylor** (Class of 2020, now pursuing a BA in Television, Digital Media, and TV Production at Montclair State University), the video was a fun and upbeat “recruitment” effort, showing an ever-growing group of students traveling the campus. Gabby also held the distinction of being one of two RVCC students serving on the RVCC Foundation board as part of its “Emerging Class.”



Gabby (center-right, in glasses) and crew.

SPOTLIGHT

SANOFI: A Best-in-Class Neighbor and Champion



A fair amount has been written on the importance of community colleges in the nation's higher education system, with even more coverage recently given double-digit enrollment declines brought on by the pandemic and the associated impacts to these institutions.

Thankfully, we have friends in high places, including the First Lady of the United States, who has taught for years at Northern Virginia Community College and has big plans for community colleges. "They are our most powerful engine of prosperity," Dr. Biden has said.



TEAM SANOFI: Clint Wallace, Head, NA Human Resources;
Diana Blankman Roberts, Head, NA Corporate Social Responsibility;
Sharon Katz, CSR Consultant.

Friends in high places is always a good thing, and even better—particularly for a community college—if those friends are in leadership positions at a nearby corporation. And **Raritan Valley Community College** (RVCC) could not have a better neighbor or champion in the corporate community, than **Sanofi**. **Sanofi** is a global biopharmaceutical company focused on human health, preventing illness with vaccines and providing innovative treatments to fight pain and ease suffering. As described in **Sanofi** North America's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) focus, the company is also committed to helping sustain "ecosystems" around **Sanofi** locations and engaging employees in their home communities. Thankfully, RVCC is a beneficiary of this commitment. In fact, RVCC's proximity to **Sanofi**'s Bridgewater, New Jersey, offices, along with the company's willingness to explore a range of philanthropic partnership opportunities, also reveals a compelling and



Mentors and mentees get to know each other in a 2020 training session at RVCC.



The Sanofi Mentorship program's annual "Closing Ceremony," in which mentors and mentees share their experiences from the year, went "virtual" this year, courtesy of Zoom.

replicable model for companies of all sizes.

"We recognize the value of RVCC, and we appreciate its role in the community in which our employees live and work," said **Diana Blankman Roberts**, who heads the company's U.S. Corporate Social Responsibility efforts and was named one of the 2020 Top 25 Leading Women Entrepreneurs and Intrapreneurs of New Jersey.

Ms. Blankman Roberts added, "The **Sanofi** US Corporate Mentorship Program alone provides a powerful return on the human capital we invest—and it's because of the quality of students we get to know and the passion of the RVCC staff who manage the program."

According to **Clint Wallace**, Head, NA Human Resources at **Sanofi**, "Our employee colleagues love this program because it reconnects them with an earlier part of their own journeys, and it reminds them just how important it is to be caring, generous, and supportive." Mr. Wallace, whose own higher education journey includes multiple degrees from community colleges, also serves as vice-chair of the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors and was commencement speaker at RVCC's 2019 graduation ceremony. It's noteworthy that **Sanofi** has spread its generosity across critical areas at the college, including the Nursing Simulation Lab, STEM and nursing scholarships, and the RVCC Science Education Institute. The company has also promoted the college's various fundraising initiatives through its intranet site for U.S. employees (the firm also matches the donations of those employees).

But its signature initiative is the **Sanofi US Corporate Mentorship Program** at RVCC, which is currently in the process of identifying its fifth cohort of mentees and mentors. Among some of the program highlights to date:

- 45 students have participated since the program began in 2017
- Of the participating students, there's a 95% transfer acceptance record
- Over 330 RVCC students have formally applied to be considered in the program
- Some \$68,500 dollars in scholarships have been awarded
- 20 students received internship invitations (including 4 with Sanofi)
- Every year mentees receive over 22 hours of extensive professional & personal development training within the year-long program
- Every year mentees in the program meet with their mentor approximately 30 times in person, with countless email, Zoom and phone interactions
- Mentees all graduate from the program with their professional brand created which includes resume, LinkedIn and more

"We are grateful to have such an exceptional

Ka'Sheer Cassett, RVCC Class of 2022, is a Pre-Med major and one of the Sanofi mentees, who is also interning at the company this summer. Ka'Sheer was selected to serve as the program's student ambassador for the 2021-22 Academic Year.



Hien Ngo (RVCC Class of 2019) and Sanofi Mentor, Jessica Freund, on the RVCC campus working on Hien's preparation for the PCAT (Pharmacy College Admission Test).



company so involved at RVCC," says **Alicia Hermono-Weaver**, Coordinator of Internships & Cooperative Education at RVCC. "Their leadership and generosity are extraordinary. Their team is also fun to work with—just great people doing great work. It doesn't get any better than that!"

The truth is, a greater number of companies should follow **Sanofi**'s lead by supporting—and harnessing—the community colleges in their respective local footprints. Facing an increasingly uncertain future and related economic challenges, community colleges will need more strong corporate partners and partnerships that deliver on shared goals and provide mutual benefits.

"There are unlimited opportunities," said **Michael McDonough**, President, Raritan Valley Community College. "By engaging with a community college, you immediately become a force for good and can have a transformational impact on the lives of students. **Sanofi** is such a vibrant example of impact and mutual benefit."

One very recent mutual benefit: **Andrew Beach**, RVCC Class of 2019 and mentee in the **Sanofi** US Corporate Mentorship Program at RVCC, has just accepted an offer to join the company full-time as a Financial Associate, working with the company's Brand OPEX team within **Sanofi** US.

"I thank God for this opportunity, and I have so many people to thank for helping me out along the way. Especially the faculty of RVCC and Centenary University, and mentors I've met through **Sanofi**. You all know who you are!"

They do indeed, Andrew. And thank you too.

#RVCCPROUD

“That notion of a ‘junior college’... it’s offensive, it is incorrect, and in no way captures the remarkable work that’s getting done here.”

Michael McDonough
Raritan Valley Community College President



It was a video posted on LinkedIn and it featured Raritan Valley Community College President Michael McDonough addressing “head on” the negative stigma that some affix to community colleges.

“That notion of a ‘junior college,’” said the president, “it’s offensive, it is incorrect, and in no way captures the remarkable work that’s getting done here.”

One short video stimulated plenty of comments from the RVCC alumni community, which we’re pleased to share here, on these pages, under the #RVCCProud banner.

With RVCC’s 52nd graduating class (Class ‘2021) now beginning the next steps in their journeys and a new academic year to begin in just a few short months, it is time to put to rest the stigma that some associate with community colleges...

View the “Stigma & Community Colleges” video at <https://youtu.be/XNauoD4bvW4>

#rarityvalleycommunitycollege
#leadership #provenimpact #provenpathways
#bestofnewjersey #RVCCproud



Dr. Michael J. McDonough
President, Raritan Valley Community College

Rich Berliner
CEO Fifth Gen Media

#RVCCPROUD

“That notion of a ‘junior college’... it’s offensive, it is incorrect, and in no way captures the remarkable work that’s getting done here.”



VALERIA GUTIERREZ • RVCC Class of 2019; Biological Science, Rutgers University, Class of 2021

As a RVCC alumna, I’ve experienced all the negative stigma associated with community colleges and I’m absolutely glad I never let that affect my decision of attending a community college. RVCC has quality professors, academic programs, clubs, and counselors/directors that genuinely want you to succeed. I am and always will be thankful for such an amazing 2 years! I will never forget all the amazing people I met and it makes me proud to see them chasing their dreams — Andrew Beach, Johanna Sailema, Elizabeth DeFazio, Thomas Boon, Sakshi Kulshrestha (I can’t tag more or I would run out of space)!

ELIZABETH DEFAZIO • RVCC Class of 2019; Chemical Engineering, Rutgers University, Class of 2021

As an engineering student, RVCC provided SO MANY opportunities for me to learn & grow. I felt more than prepared when transferring to Rutgers University. I always rave about RVCC to anyone that will listen! This video does a great job of highlighting everything I loved about my time at community college.

SADAF GHARIBI • RVCC Class of 2020; Doctor of Pharmacy Student, Class of 2025, Rutgers University

As an ESL student, I could have never imagined that I would be able to study in my dream US colleges, RVCC welcomed me with open arms and provided me with a lot of opportunities. I will be forever grateful of all faculty and professors at RVCC!



ANDY NGUYEN • Class of 2012, Hong Bang University; RVCC Class of 2017; Web and Information Systems Student, NJIT, Class of 2021; Information Analysis, Retail Operations, Gucci North America

Thank you, Mike, for sharing with us this post. I couldn’t agree more. As an alum, I am so proud of myself that I attended RVCC 8 years ago (as ESL/English Second Language student - Level 2 :)). It was a long journey for me and RVCC provided me a chance to fulfill all I needed to build “American Dream.” With the low financial cost, RVCC is one of the best places to attend and save for all students.

Moreover, I was given a chance to be a part of Student Life (Thank to Mr. Russell and Ms. Alaysha), and Ms. Annette at Tutoring Center, Ms. Marianne at College Advising and many, many professors who helped make my Dream come true. Additionally, Mr. George (our anonymous donor to the PASA program) who offered a scholarship, which was an honor for me to receive—and it was RVCC that gave me the chance.

Of my ESL classmates: one is currently working in RWJ Hospital, others are at J & J, and elsewhere in the Civil Engineering industrial and at so many great places—which demonstrates how grateful we are as RVCC alumni.

I’m proud to say that my wife graduated from RVCC as well and my niece is currently attending the school because she heard my story about RVCC and she would like to follow the same path. RVCC will always be my second home.

#RVCCalumni #RVCCProud.

LIAM FLEISHER • RVCC Class of 2021; Rutgers University, Class of 2023

In my sophomore year at RVCC I wrote a paper about the importance of attending Community College, I argued that while you can go to a 4-year College immediately out of Highschool it is more worthwhile and cost effective to attend Community College and how RVCC gave me opportunity to find what I wanted to do in life. Now being a 2021 graduate with an Associates of Applied Science in Computer Networking and Cybersecurity I am moving on to my next opportunity at Rutgers with a toolbox of skills learned at RVCC!



REBECCA GEARY • RVCC Class of 2021; Mathematics Major, Rutgers University, Class of 2023

As a soon to be community college alumna, I can confidently say that my experience at RVCC has been life changing. The leadership, scholarship, and academic opportunities at CC have helped me achieve success. I have experienced the stigma against community college first hand, and at first it made me question if attending was the right choice. However, I quickly realized that RVCC felt more like a home than I could have ever imagined. I am sad that my time is over at Raritan Valley Community College but the memories and support from others will stay with me forever.

SEBASTIAN GALVEZ • RVCC Class of 2020; Data Analyst, Johnson & Johnson

What a powerful and crucial message from President McDonough! I had the privilege of attending and recently graduating from RVCC last year. I too worried about the stigma that attending a community college might bring. However, I quickly realized that RVCC was exactly the institution I was looking for. It allowed me a safe space to figure out my career and connect me with passionate individuals who were invested in seeing me succeed. I will be a life-long supporter of community colleges! Thank you, Mike, for sharing this and being such a great advocate of RVCC!

NATALIE SABATELLA • RVCC Class of 2018; Class of 2020, Rutgers University; Institutional Asset Management Group Analyst at PNC

Well done! Proud RVCC alumni. Countless opportunities at your fingertips along with a supporting and professional staff striving to deliver an engaging learning experience. RVCC creates a launchpad to a tremendous career.



#RVCCPROUD

“That notion of a ‘junior college’... it’s offensive, it is incorrect, and in no way captures the remarkable work that’s getting done here.”



MARA TOLAS • RVCC Class of 1994; Fairleigh Dickinson University, BA & MA, Class of 1998; Director of Development at Girl Scouts Heart of New Jersey



I am a proud graduate from RVCC. Two years post high school, I was yearning to learn in an academic setting and decided to start locally. My experience set me up beautifully for my next school. I valued my education there so much, that I vowed to teach there one day. After grad school, I was fortunate to make that a reality as an adjunct. I gave my all in honor of those who had ignited my academic fire. I can't speak highly enough about the benefits.

ANDREW BEACH • RVCC Class of 2019; Class of 2021, Centenary University; Financial Associate, Sanofi

Fantastic school that provides its students with excellent opportunities for academic and career development. (I'm still in touch with many of my peers, mentors, & professors from the school).

RV was not only affordable and enjoyable, but academically rigorous. An incredible experience that I am so thankful to have had. Thank you RV for facilitating so much growth in my life, and the lives of my fellow alums & current students.

JOHANNA SAILEMA • RVCC Class of 2020; Biology Student, Class of 2022, Rutgers University



I am a proud alumna pursuing a career in the medical field. RVCC provided me with many opportunities to learn & grow. One of them was having the opportunity to participate in the Sanofi Mentoring program. This video reminded me that attending RVCC was the best decision I have ever made. Everyone at RVCC welcomes you with open arms and is eager to help you. I will always carry a quote Professor Peter Stupak mentioned the first week of class “ Insist do not resist” because it highlights my journey at the college. RVCC helped me believe in myself and grow academically, professionally, and personally.

MARISSA FAMA • RVCC Class of 2020; Public Relations Student, Class of 2022, East Carolina University

I transferred to RVCC my sophomore year of college after attending East Carolina University. I was hesitant at first because I was buying into the stigma that it wouldn't be good education, but I was proven to be very wrong. My professors genuinely cared about every single one of their students and they did everything in their power to help us succeed— especially once the pandemic hit. With the help of my professors, advisor, and other staff members I encountered, I graduated from RVCC in 2020. Not only did I finish with two associate's degrees, I re-entered East Carolina University ahead in credits, giving me the ability to graduate early and debt free! I owe so much of my success to RVCC. The curriculum and education was stellar and they have many resources to help every student succeed. After spending two years at a four-year university, I can confidently say that RVCC gave me more than enough educational resources to help me thrive. Attending RVCC was one of the best decisions I have ever made and I urge everyone to look past the stigma and see everything community colleges have to offer!

CATHERINE LINET NAMULI • RVCC Class of 2021



Thank you so much for sharing this Mike! All the negativity surrounding community college, challenged by President Michael McDonough in this video, is still quite observable. It is the fear of not being good enough, and the fear of being labeled as such that often keeps us from achieving our full potential; especially if the path we choose or may have to take is less glamorized. President McDonough did a fantastic job encapsulating the essence of community college and community college students - especially their perseverance. I am a proud alumna of Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC) and I am beyond grateful to have been welcomed into such a supportive community of scholars, mentors, and students. My journey towards a bachelor's degree in a new country has been that much more wholesome and fulfilling because I started it at RVCC and it is by far one of the best financial and academic decisions I have made so far as a young adult.



ANDY SEKYERE • RVCC Class of 2016; Site Reliability Engineer at Google

It's a shame to see how underrated Community Colleges are in the values they provide. I believe it's one of the few golden tickets that young people can get today.

Like many others, I opted to attend RVCC simply as a cost-saving solution, but I soon came to realize and appreciate the plethora of support and opportunities it provided to its students. Through RVCC's career services, I landed my first IT role in the industry, working part-time at a local municipality while pursuing my Associate's degree - this was a crucial opportunity that undoubtedly propelled my career in the right direction.

If I had to go back and do things over again, I would change a few things, but the decision to attend a community college is not one of them. I strongly recommend it without reservation.



SAKSHI KULSHRESTHA • RVCC Class of 2019; Accounting & Entrepreneurship Major, Rutgers University, Class of 2021

What a great video, community colleges are definitely the way to go!! As someone who was new to America, RVCC provided me everything that a 4-year university can offer and is the best financial decision I made for myself. It doesn't add years, it is NOT offensive, and definitely preps you for the real world! Finished 2 degrees in 4 years and graduating this May from Rutgers - but RVCC will always have a special place in my heart :')

#RVCCPROUD

“That notion of a ‘junior college’... it’s offensive, it is incorrect, and in no way captures the remarkable work that’s getting done here.”



ZOYA MOBEEN • RVCC Class of 2020; Biology Student, Class of 2022, Rutgers University

RVCC is great stepping stone on our way to success! I was introduced to best classes with honorable professors, wide-range of clubs and activities to get involved, and introduced to faculty who is willing to go above and beyond for their students. RVCC has given me great education, friends, mentors and experiences that I’ll cherish for a lifetime! Forever grateful :)



AALIYAH WILLIAMS • RVCC Class of 2020; Pharmacy Candidate, Class of 2024, at Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy at Rutgers University

My parents immigrated from Jamaica in the 1980s. Money was tight, and the circumstances were dire; education was our saving grace. During the early 1990s, my mother attended RVCC as a nursing major.

Here I am, 30 years later, as a graduate of the very same college that changed the trajectory of my family’s life. RVCC will always have a special place in my heart. The education that I received is unmatched, the quality is superb, and most importantly, the faculty and staff are present. The welcoming people are what made my experience at RVCC unforgettable. If you or anyone you know is questioning whether RVCC is the right place- I would implore you to reach out to the plethora of accomplished alumni.

The proof is in the pudding - join the family!

#RVCC #RVCCHonorsCollege #CommunityCollege #RVCCProud



SHAUN HOWE • RVCC Class of 2014; Cornell University Class of 2016; MS, University of Maryland; Scientist II at Areté

I certainly felt the negative stigma of attending community college when I made my decision to go to RVCC. Many of my friends were going to four-year institutions and I felt that I might not have the same opportunities as them. Soon after starting at RVCC, I found that my feelings were very misguided. As a physics major, I was taking science and math classes that rivaled the curriculum of my peers at four-year institutions. The small class sizes at RVCC allowed me to develop personal relationships with my professors which helped me with the difficult subject matter. While at RVCC, I also had the amazing opportunity of attending the Honors College. The honors program allowed me to partake in specialized honors courses as well as a capstone research project. My rigorous coursework and interesting research experiences at RVCC helped me get into dream school, Cornell University!

BARBARA KANIA • RVCC Class of 2018; Chief Medical Scribe at Tufts Medical Center

Thank you for sharing Mike! I could not agree more with you regarding COST of tuition of college these days and the benefit of alternatively attending community college. When my time came to choose a college, my family was going through one of the toughest times that we have ever been through. A four-year university was pretty much out of the picture for me. RVCC provided me with the opportunity to study hard, pay a fraction of what my peers were paying, and put me in a position to be almost fully funded to attend the college of my dreams in Boston afterwards. The tuition of Boston University is something that my family never in a million years would have been able to afford, but with the support of the incredible staff and my peers, I was able to grow professionally and academically at RVCC. I wave it loud and proud that I transferred to BU from a community college. There is so much stigma revolving community colleges as a whole, but with time I truly believe that the financial benefit of attending them will be much more widely acknowledged and normalized. I am so proud of my college and would not be half of who I am without the community here that supported me through!



KAELEY IPSON • RVCC Class of 2019, Civil Engineering Student at Cornell University

Sharing Mike Marion’s post because I couldn’t agree more - it is time to end the stigma against community college.

Around this time four years ago, I remember feeling embarrassed to tell my peers that I would be attending RVCC, especially because I was a high achieving student. In some ways I saw attending RVCC as a means to an end - I knew I could save money and that I could potentially transfer to my dream school.

Today I am beyond grateful for my decision to attend RVCC; it was the best decision I ever made. While it did lend me the ability to transfer to the school I wanted to, I now realize RVCC offered so much more on its own. I grew incredibly as an individual. I was able to network, develop soft skills, gain emotional intelligence, challenge myself academically, and partake in a multitude of projects and leadership positions. Most importantly, I met amazing mentors that I will stay in contact with throughout life, Peter Stupak and Antonella Pompo.

I’d be the first to say - it doesn’t matter what school you went to. What matters is what you can DO, your ATTITUDE, how hard you can WORK, and the PEOPLE around you! RVCC is the perfect environment for you to learn, grow, network, and develop confidence. I’d recommend it to anyone.



RVCC FOUNDATION FUNDRAISING

Annual Report at a Glance
Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020)



TOTAL FUNDS RAISED
\$1,142,788

TOTAL GIFTS: 2,226
TOTAL DONORS: 740
NEW DONORS/1ST TIME GIFTS: 292



SOURCE OF FUNDS



Foundations: \$141,841 (13%)
Corporations: \$281,083 (24%)
Individuals: \$719,864 (63%)



INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTERS

(\$10,000 and above)

- Sanofi US \$85,000
- ERS Charitable Fund, Inc. \$25,500
- Ayco Charitable Foundation \$21,200
- Janssen Pharmaceuticals \$20,000
- Johnson & Johnson \$20,000
- The Robert Sydney Needham Foundation \$15,000
- Area VII Physicians Review Organization Inc. \$15,000
- Jewish Federation of Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren Counties \$14,767
- The Neuwiesinger Foundation \$10,000
- Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital – Somerset \$10,000
- W.B. Mason \$10,000
- The Campbell Family Foundation \$10,000
- The Food Bank Network of Somerset County \$10,000
- United Way of Northern New Jersey \$10,000
- Vanguard Charitable \$10,000

About The RVCC FOUNDATION

The RVCC Foundation is the fundraising arm of Raritan Valley Community College. It supports the advancement and growth of Raritan Valley Community College, its strategic priorities, exceptional students, faculty and staff, and critical programs and initiatives. The RVCC Foundation team leads the cultivation of existing philanthropic relationships, and identifies, activates, and grows new relationships, all to increase overall engagement with, and support of, Raritan Valley Community College. We invite residents of Somerset and Hunterdon Counties—and beyond—to learn more and join our efforts on behalf of the best community college of New Jersey.

RVCC FOUNDATION STAFF

Mike Marion - Executive Director & Chief Development Officer

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Mike joined RVCC in April of 2018, after 11 years at Rutgers University Foundation, where he served as Associate Vice President. Prior to coming to higher education, Mike had a distinguished career in the advertising, marketing, sponsorship management, and event marketing industries, including 17 years at AT&T, where his passion for philanthropy began. He has an MBA from the University of South Carolina and a BS from Eastern Michigan University.



Janet Dunne - Development Associate

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Janet has been with the RVCC Foundation since 2014. Her main responsibilities include special events, managing the financial and fiscal reporting processes, and maintaining the day-to-day operations of the Foundation. Prior to joining RVCC, Janet worked at a consulting firm in Washington D.C. She has a BS from West Chester University.



Stephanie Smullen - Development Associate

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Stephanie has been with the foundation since November of 2018. She manages the scholarship program at RVCC and is responsible for corporate and institutional foundation fundraising efforts. Prior to joining RVCC, Stephanie was the Director of Advancement and Alumni Relations at Immaculata High School and held Corporate and Foundation Relations positions at Saint Peter's University Hospital, Stevens Institute of Technology, and Learning Ally. She earned a BA degree from the University of Notre Dame.



Cindy Haddad - Development Assistant

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Cindy is the part-time Development Assistant and has been with the Foundation since May 2021 and assists with fundraising events, data entry, scholarships, and any other day-to-day needs. Previously, Cindy worked as an Executive Assistant for BOC Gases for 10 years. She was also a Board Member of the St. Ann School Home School Association.



RVCC Foundation Offices

118 Lamington Road Branchburg, NJ 08876-3315 / RVCC Foundation's federal tax number: 23-7138731

Things We Won't Miss: THE MASKED MONTHS

A beautiful campus checkered with responsible, mask-wearing students, faculty, and staff, who persevered through Covid-19 pandemic. One day we'll all look back, maybe even shake our heads. But we won't miss the masked months.



IN SERVICE OF LEADERSHIP

Providing access to the tools, communications, and forums for dialogue that enrich the student experience is at the forefront of everything the Raritan Valley Community College does, and is integral to what RVCC President, **Dr. Michael McDonough**, has described as "our commitment to developing *engaged, ethical, global citizens*."

Some of this work gets noticed and national acclaim, like the **Eduardo J. Padrón Award for Insti-**

longstanding commitment to providing every Raritan Valley student with civic and community-based learning experiences" and for having "service-learning opportunities deeply embedded in student life and in the curriculum, with service-learning courses offered in every academic department." As *Campus Compact* noted, "Not only has this enhanced learning and provided professional development opportunities for students, but it has also been integral to addressing the major challenges facing communities in their region."

1,000,000

Annual \$ value of community service hours donated by RVCC students to local organizations



tutional Transformation, bestowed upon RVCC by Boston-based *Campus Compact*. The College's Service Learning Program, led by **Lori Moog**, Director of Service Learning and Community Outreach, put RVCC in rare company: in 2020, it was one of just three community colleges in the country to earn the *Padrón Award*. RVCC was singled out for "its

In fact, RVCC students provide about \$1 million a year in time and service to some 250 community partners and organizations. As President McDonough notes of this epic commitment, "it has become the defining fabric of this institution."

GRATITUDE



Emerson Villaran Calles: Memorial Gateway, Old Queen's Campus, Rutgers University, May, 2019



Until the pandemic intervened, we had planned to feature this photo and message in last year's Golf Classic program. But since expressions of gratitude are timeless, we offer it now, some 25 months after it was composed. It was sent as an email to legendary RVCC supporter, Mr. George Case, from one of his beneficiaries, Emerson Villaran Calles, RVCC Class of 2016, Rutgers University Class of 2019 (BS, Chemistry). Emerson is currently a fulltime Laboratory Technician at SGS North American Inc.

Thank you George, for your remarkable generosity and commitment; and thank you, Emerson, for expressing your gratitude so thoughtfully...

Dear George,

Three years ago you gave me an opportunity that I never thought I'd be fortunate enough to have received. You awarded me the Pathways scholarship and my life will forever be transformed.

As you know, I wasn't born in the US. I came to the US when I was 4 years old. My mom and I walked, took buses, and traveled day and night through Central America to get to the US border. When we crossed the Rio Bravo River I was completely naked. As we got to US soil, we were detained. I remember waiting in a cell with my mom. I was given a pair of girl's leggings and a girls T-shirt. They had seen that we had TPS and let us go. My mom and I took a greyhound from Texas to New Jersey and that's where I was reunited with my family.

At an early age, my mom stressed the importance of education to me. She told me how the school I was to have been attending had crumbled down due to the devastating earthquake that hit El Salvador. She told me that we didn't have money for me to go to college. She then stressed to me how I had to work hard and find scholarships in order to succeed.

I worked so hard in high school and thought that I had it all figured out. When it was "application time" the reality of my immigration status really hit. My grades were great but I wasn't eligible for EOF or NJ STARS because my immigration status

prevented me from taking part in those programs. I cried for days because it felt like my life had no purpose. I had worked so hard over the years and it was for nothing. I decided to continue to apply to RVCC and the Honors College there. When I was accepted, my very close friend gave me \$1,000 to go to RVCC for my first semester. I then started working two jobs and thankfully got to meet some of the most amazing people in my life. It was there that I met Ronnie and you (along with so many amazing professors and friends).

I remember sitting across from you at a lunch and I shared my story. You told me to apply for your scholarship and I when I applied I merely hoped for the best. When you awarded me the scholarship, I felt something I couldn't and still can't put into words. It was the happiest feeling in my life and yet it felt surreal. You believed in me and wanted me to change my life.

To you it was money, but to me it is far more than you will ever know. In El Salvador I remember using an outhouse, I remember a wood-burning stove, and I remember walking on unpaved streets. The contrast of what my life could have been and is now, is unfathomable. I remain committed to pursuing fragrance and cosmetics chemistry still. With any job opportunities that come along, I will no longer look at future income as something that I could use to better myself, but something that I can share to better my siblings. My younger brothers are 4 and 2 years old. I see them and I want to give them the best childhood imaginable. I want to be able to pay for their music lessons or their martial arts, or any extracurricular they want to pursue. Those were opportunities I never had as a child and longed for, but never understood the real reason why they were unattainable.

Thank you for changing my life for the better. Thank you for believing me. I owe so much to you. You will always have such a special place in my heart.

Love,
Emerson Villaran Calles

THE LAST WORD

Catherine Linet Namuli
(RVCC Class of 2021)

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A native of Uganda, Catherine Linet Namuli is a member of RVCC's Honor's College and serves as a Mentor in its Mentorship Program. The Liberal Arts major is graduating from RVCC Summa Cum Laude with a 4.0 Grade Point Average.



Active in College life, Catherine served as Vice President of the Rotaract Club, a Student Ambassador for the Women's Center, and was part of the Changebuilder Program. She is a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and the National Society of Leadership and Success. She plans to study International Relations at a four-year school and already has been accepted at several universities, including American University in Washington, DC. Catherine aspires to work as a Political Affairs Officer for the United Nations or a related position in a non-governmental organizations (NGO) focused on human rights issues—especially in third-world countries—including global health, gender equality, and international security.

Hello students, family, and faculty. My name is Catherine Linet Namuli and it is my honor today to be this year's student commencement speaker. I was born and raised in Uganda and recently moved to the U.S for college. I am graduating with an Associate's in Liberal Arts this semester and transferring to a four-year institution this Fall as an International Relations major.

When I first started at Raritan Valley Community College, I, like many of you was scared. I was afraid of getting lost taking the bus, not being able to make friends, and feeling inadequate for not having attended a four-year university right after high school. But so much has changed in two years.

I recognize and experience the stigma that is often placed on community college students making us appear less than. Similarly, for the majority of my childhood, I grew up believing that where I come from, Uganda, was not good enough. Recently, I was inspired by a Ted Talk titled "The

Each year **The Last Word** features the remarks of the student commencement speaker at RVCC's Commencement Ceremony.



Danger of a Single Story" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian author. She expressed that if we limit ourselves to viewing a story from a singular viewpoint, then we center our thoughts, perspectives, and lives based on one limited version of reality. This can be detrimental.

For instance, when people hear Africa, or in my case Uganda, I rarely expect them to imagine anything positive beyond the starving child, the strug-

gling economy or lack thereof, the poverty-stricken mother, war, drought, and famine. How could they even begin to imagine education? Often, my expectation is met.

Yet, there is more to Uganda than what people see in the media. Uganda is known as "The Pearl of Africa" because of its brilliance of life. From its sprawling savannas, dense forestry, and colorful wildlife; to its organic vegetation, rich culture, and the unceasing community spiritedness of the people.

“ Know that you are resilient, you are creative, and you are successful. We have graduated from the best community college in New Jersey that's not only exceptional in academics but has a solid sense of community... ”

Despite all this beauty, I decided to leave home if I wanted to challenge myself academically. I chose to begin at a community college because it offered a chance to explore endless opportunities and career interests while providing a more affordable path to a bachelor's degree.

For some of us, Raritan Valley Community College was not our first choice. We had to face the stigma of taking a path less traveled. I've heard people say that a community college is a place for unmotivated individuals, or for people who will always be tied down to a lower socioeconomic status.

Just like my story, there is more to community college than what is commonly perceived. The

perseverance of the students, their commitment to learning, and community engagement.

I had to overcome being an ocean away from my family living on a different continent, and an 8-hour time difference to speak to them for support and encouragement. For others it is juggling a double work shift and still showing up to evening classes, raising children while taking a rigorous major for a dream job, or re-entering school as an older student to explore interests and opportunities.



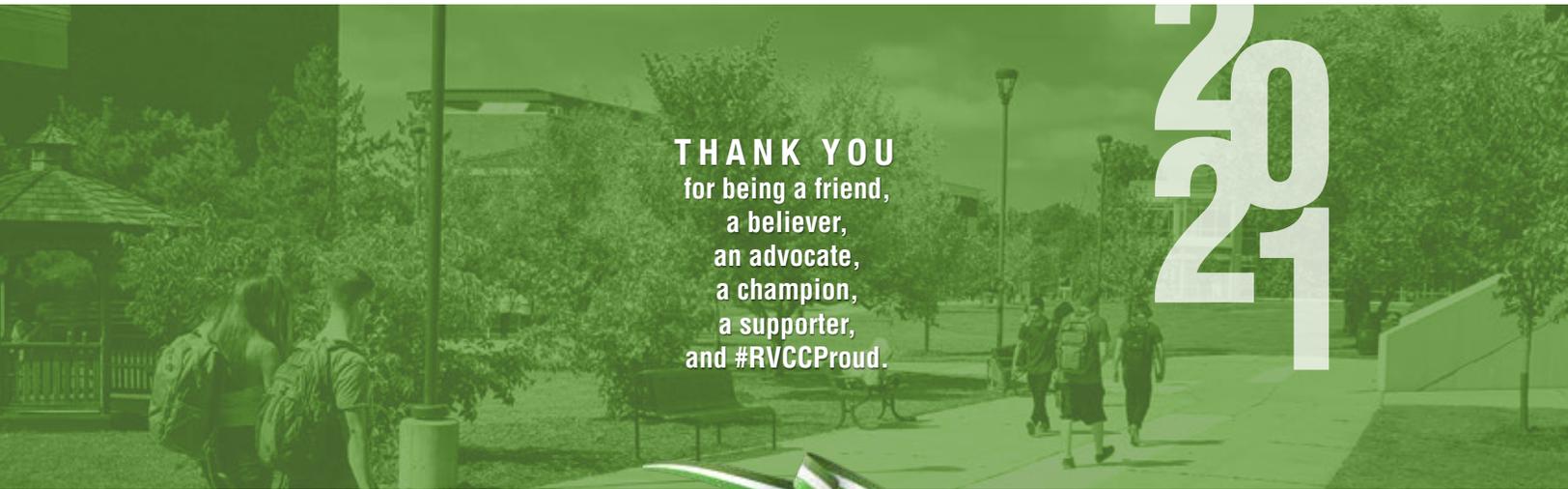
It doesn't matter what path you took to reach this milestone, you are here now. Today, you are living proof of all that you are capable of accomplishing. And if for a second you doubt it, I ask that you look at your cap and gown, your diploma, or check your "Lion's Den" portal for the non-existent copy of your Fall 2021 tuition bill.

I would like to take a moment to thank my family, my friends, and faculty for being a force of positivity and guiding me since day one. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

And for my fellow 2021 graduates:

Know that you are resilient, you are creative, and you are successful. We have graduated from the best community college in New Jersey that's not only exceptional in academics but has a solid sense of community. It has supported each one of us on our journey through the clubs, the moral support, the ability to find a friend in every hallway, the celebration of diversity, and of personal growth. As we move forward in life I hope that we, the Raritan Valley Community College class of 2021, continue to build strong communities and defy the odds. Congratulations!





THANK YOU
for being a friend,
a believer,
an advocate,
a champion,
a supporter,
and #RVCCProud.

2021

