

Notes from the Valley...

...an update from the Raritan Valley Community College Foundation

Fall 2022



SGA GOES TO WASHINGTON!!

In this issue: **RVCC PROUD - RVCC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION - FROM THE HEART - NEWSFRONT - THE LAST WORD**

Members of RVCC Student Government Association (SGA) at the National Summit for the American Student Government Association Conference, October 7, in Washington, DC. L-to-R: Christian Rodriguez, President; Brendan Feller, Senator (bottom); Nicholas Gallo, Executive Vice President (top); Russell Barefoot, Advisor; Melanie Quesada, Executive Assistant; Steven Reffler, Vice President of Finance; Olivia Odonnell, Senator; Ethan Hernandez, Senator; Garret Gerow, general Committee Chair (kneeling in background)

LIFE ON CAMPUS

A new academic year and a vibrant campus reminds us of the best of New Jersey and the promise of education, access, and lives transformed.



Center Bottom: Class of 2023: Antonette Julia Almendras and Jimena Torres **Right:** MR. FIX ITS: Johnny Matias and Dago Dubon, RVCC Facilities staff. **Bottom Right:** Orgullo Latino Club, Taste of Latin Culture lunch: (foreground) Madison Pitts and Julio Marsiglia

RVCC PROUD

FUTURES AT WORK

Mentors and mentees of the **Sanofi** Corporate Mentor Program at Raritan Valley Community College regularly meet as part of a nine-month long schedule of interactive and face-to-face sessions that are all about “futures.”



Now in its sixth year, this program continues to provide the rarest of things: exceptional opportunities for select RVCC students to accelerate their growth and professional development.

Amazing to think of the number of futures that have been encouraged, enriched and empowered through the magic of these mentor-mentee relationships. It's well beyond the paid internships and employment at Sanofi that many mentees have benefited from; in fact, the multiplier effect of this partnership exceeds our ability to fully measure it. How do you capture a mentee “paying it forward” somewhere ahead in their journey?

Highest of praise—and thanks—to Sanofi's **Diana Blankman Roberts** and **Sharon Katz** for their steady leadership, commitment, and generous support of the futures of RVCC students.

And special thanks as well to the Sanofi mentors—for encouraging, enriching, and empowering those futures.

**#mentorship #leadership #partnership
#corporate social responsibility #rvccproud**

OPEN HOUSE

For our first “open house” at the RVCC Foundation's new digs (74 Lamington Road), there is simply no better first “guests” than those who care for the buildings and grounds—day-in and day-out—on the more than 250 acres of the Raritan Valley Community College campus. We love this committed, hard-working group—and we couldn't do what we do without them!



**#rvccproud #gratitude #rvcchousekeeping
#rvccgrounds #rvccfacilities #bestofnewjersey
#raritanvalleycc #branchburgnj
#74lamingtonroad**



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Left: Sanofi mentors and RVCC student mentees **Right:** Power breakfast for RVCC Grounds & Housekeeping staff

RVCC PROUD

HAIL TO THE VICTORS AND STUDENT ATHLETES AT RVCC



Much deserved applause for the Raritan Valley Community College Athletics program. First, congratulations to the RVCC Women's Volleyball team and to Head Coach **Phil Herro** for clinching the Garden State Athletic Conference Championship with a perfect 16-0 conference record. While the Lions lost a heartbreaker in the Region XIX District Championship game to Northampton, they have so much to be proud of—including a 28-5 overall record and a season full of highlights.

And a “standing O” as well to the RVCC Men's Soccer team, which beat #1 ranked Bergen County Community College in the Region XIX Division III North Atlantic A Championship. Though the Lions lost in the first round of the national tourney to Herkimer College, they won their consolation match against Anne Arundel Community College and closed the year as Region champs, with a 12-4-1 record. Head Coach **Mark Malchow** also netted Region XIX “Coach of the Year” honors!



#champions #rvccproud



BIG NUMBERS



Through the generosity of donors to Raritan Valley Community College, the RVCC Foundation awarded **\$375,000** in scholarship support this fall to some **215** student recipients for the 2022-23 Academic Year. Scholarship support remains a critical need at the College and a popular choice for donors. In addition to

relieving some of the financial burden students face, scholarships also play another important if less quantified role. Getting selected to receive a scholarship—to be singled out in so positive a way—can be highly affirming to students and can boost confidence and motivation to succeed.

Anyone interested in supporting RVCC students through scholarship funding is encouraged to contact Mike Marion (michael.marion@raritanval.edu).



Dylan McBride and Daniela Ovelar, recipients of the Frank S. and Patricia F. Russo Scholarship at RVCC—and just two of over 200 scholarship awardees.

RVCC RANKS #1 AMONG COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS



For the first time in its history, Raritan Valley Community College has earned a STARS Gold rating by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). STARS, the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System, measures and encourages sustainability in all aspects of higher education.

This is the eighth year in a row that RVCC has been recognized nationally by AASHE and now sits at #1 overall for two-year colleges in the US for its sustainability efforts; #1 in the country—with a perfect score—for sustainability research (for the RVCC Center for Environmental Studies); #1 for academics (for research and learning outcomes); tied for #1 for water use and rainwater management—with perfect scores for both (for River Friendly commitments); #3 for two-year institutions, with a 97.25% score, for sustainability learning outcomes; #3 for energy; and #4 for air and climate, due to the College's energy efficiency initiatives and purchasing of carbon offsets and renewable energy credits.

"STARS was developed by the campus sustainability community to provide high standards for recognizing campus sustainability efforts," said AASHE Executive Director **Meghan Fay Zahniser**. "Raritan Valley Community College has demonstrated a substantial commitment to sustainability by achieving a STARS Gold Rating and is to be congratulated for their efforts."

Indeed, RVCC has a proven track record in its efforts to reduce its carbon footprint. In 2009, RVCC became the first community college in the US to sign an environmental stewardship agreement with the Environmental Protection Agency. RVCC is River Friendly, as well as Bee Campus USA and Monarch Watch certified. The College has three solar installations, a new greenhouse, publicly available electric car charging stations, a green roof and a green wall, numerous pollinator gardens, a rain garden, three rainwater harvesting systems, and three buildings built to LEED standards.

The RVCC Strategic Plan formalizes the College's commitment to sustainability, so this recognition clearly affirms that we are "walking the talk!"

#sustainability #leadership
#environmentaleducation #rvccproud

River Friendly: The New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA) has recertified Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC) as a **"River-Friendly Business,"** celebrating the College's efforts to promote clean water and a healthy ecosystem in New Jersey's Raritan River Basin.

RVCC was recognized for improving stream riparian corridors, planting native trees and pollinator plants, maintaining deer exclosures and no-mow areas, and installing rainwater harvesting systems.

"RVCC has worked with NJWSA since their initial certification in 2011 to conduct activities that help to improve water quality in the Raritan River Basin. Both students and staff continue to contribute to the environmental stewardship that is occurring on the campus,"

- **Kathy Hale**
of NJWSA.



ART WORKS

We celebrate the far-ranging creative talents of the Raritan Valley Community College Arts & Design faculty and students, with a special shoutout to instructor **Ji Yong Kim**.



Born and raised in South Korea, Ji Yong's works are often inspired by his experience in Myanmar where he spent his adolescent years. His recent art explores the intersections between traditional images of Buddhist art and images from contemporary popular culture.

Ji Yong's creativity is getting attention. His "Ripples of Peace and Calm" was the winning proposal design for an open call for the Union Square asphalt mural. The project was organized by the **Union Square Partnership**, and supported by the Artevention program of **NYC Department of Transportation**.

"Throughout the pandemic, I became acutely aware of being Asian, and often feared of being a target of Asian hate crime," says Ji Yong. "I designed this mural to be an antithesis of hate, resonating with peace and calm: lotus flowers, floating leaves, and swimming koi fishes are inspired by traditional paintings from East Asia. The colors are kept vibrant and positive, while keeping its specific color reference to Asian paintings."

The design and planning process took 3-4 months, and the entire mural was sketched and painted in 4 days, with over 120 volunteer painters participating in the process.

Ji Yong also tapped into the RVCC Foundation's "College Community Grant" process to create murals to bring a more welcoming, vibrant feel to the RVCC Resource Center & Food Pantry space.



Top left: Ji Yong and one of his murals at the RVCC Resource Center & Food Pantry **Left:** Panorama of Ji Yong's "Ripples of Peace and Calm" **Above:** A bike path transformed for Koi

And at the North American headquarters of **Signify**, a world leader in lighting, in nearby Bridgewater, NJ, Ji Yong's presence can also be seen, but this time through the art of his students.

"Our new office is designed to tell the story of our company, our lighting innovations and our culture," said **Cathy Cubberly**, Head of HR, Americas, Signify. "When we reached out to RVCC, we were seeking ideas to bring to life the spirit of our 'Brighter Lives, Better World' sustainability program."

Enter Ji Yong and six of his Arts & Design students: **Christina (Zanara) Dean, Ryin Galaini, Israel Garcia, Sarah Lopez, Delia Mchendry** and **Lindsey Scheire**. "Their murals have complemented our space," added Ms. Cubberly. "Our employees and customers can come together and be inspired—by art from local artists—to unlock the extraordinary potential of light."

This is a classic win-win-win story: for NYC, for the broader RVCC community (including our good neighbor Signify), and for our RVCC Arts & Design students.

**#bestofnewjersey #signify #rvccproud
#raritanvalleycommunitycollege #rvccfacultyrock
#rvccarts&design #rvccstudents**



ABOVE: Brighter Lives, Better World: Mural on the wall at Signify, created by RVCC Arts & Design students

TOP RIGHT: Mike Marion (Chief Development Officer at RVCC), Bill Haas (Senior Vice President, Northeast Operations, Labcorp), Siddra Dar (Director, Medical Laboratory Technician Program at RVCC), Sarah Imbriglio (Dean, STEM and Health Sciences, RVCC), Elise Wagner (Vice President, Laboratory Operations, Labcorp), Mary Williamson (Vice President, Lab Operations, Northeast and North Central Divisions), Matt Christianson (Associate Vice President, Marketing and Commercial Strategy, Labcorp), Jesse Greenberg (Talent Acquisition Manager, Labcorp), and Inieka Stafford (Director of Health & Technology, RVCC)

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP: LABCORP AND RVCC



RVCC faculty and staff are working closely with Labcorp as the launch of the new Medical Laboratory Technician Associate Degree program at Raritan Valley Community College nears. The Labcorp partnership with RVCC continues to evolve and grow, with new focus on promotion of the program to both current and future RVCC students whose interests might align with the new MLT track and the promising careers that await at Labcorp and other firms in this sector.

The Labcorp-RVCC partnership is an excellent example of what is possible when the corporate community invites the College in to assist with their talent pipeline challenges or other areas of need for which synergy may exist. In fact, this is one of the unique roles community colleges play: helping to drive local and regional impact while demonstrating the value of public-private partnerships.

**#labcorp #talentpipeline
#raritanvalleycommunitycollege
#bestofnewjersey #partners
#publicprivatepartnership #raritannj
#local #rvccproud**

RVCC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

GAME DAY!

Great day for LIONS past and present, as the RVCC Men's Soccer Team had its own alumni reunion last August on the campus of Raritan Valley Community College. The 2nd Annual RVCC Men's Soccer Team Alumni Game featured some 35 players: the WHITE-jersey'd alumni squad squaring off against the BLACK-jersey'd 2022 RVCC Men's team.



Congrats to **Mark Malchow**, head coach of RVCC Men's Soccer (as well as an RVCC alum and former RVCC player) for organizing this event. And a special shout out to all of the RVCC student athletes—past and present—for an entertaining match.

As it turns out, this event was a worthy “tune-up” (8-0 final score) for the RVCC Men, who went on to achieve “champions” status for the 2022 season.

While our RVCC soccer alums undoubtedly felt aches and pains on the “morning after,” their presence on campus brought pure joy to the RVCC faithful.



**#rvccalumni #rvccmenssoccer #rvccathletics
#bestofnewjersey #rvccproud**

Left: RVCC's Jesus Hernandez (Class of '25) **Right:** RVCC alumni: Craig Ferrante (Class of '18), Coach Mark Malchow, Abbas Haider (Class of '18)

AN EVENING WELL SPENT



Celebrating Raritan Valley Community College, its students and alumni, while enjoying excellent food and superb wine, courtesy of Baron Philippe de Rothschild and US Brand Manager, **Alejandro Flores**, MBA.



Credit to Alejandro (RVCC Class of 2005) and colleague **Rafal Loboda** (RVCC Class of 1995) for the wine tour and accompanying narrative, Chef Brian Lanni for our four wonderful courses, **Stacey Kimmins**, RVCC Foundation board member, for her thoughtful event choreography, and to our gracious hosts—and longtime RVCC supporters—**Betsy** and **Steven Knapp**, for opening their home and generously offsetting the evening's costs.

**#rvcccommunity
#rvccproud**

Top: Rafal Loboda, RVCC President Mike McDonough, Alejandro Flores **Bottom left:** Betsy & Steve Knapp



RVCC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

2022-23 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD RECIPIENTS

We are pleased to announce the recipients of this year's RVCC Distinguished Alumni Awards:



Robert Nichols (Class of 2001)

An RVCC Associates in Liberal Arts degree holder, this 12-time inductee of the United States Martial Arts Hall of Fame (inductions include "School of the Year," "Instructor of the Year," "International Instructor of the Year," and "Man of the Year") has led one of the largest Martial Arts schools in NJ from 2001 through the present. The Union, NJ facility serves inner-city areas such as Newark and Elizabeth, with a program focused on personal development, leadership training, and community involvement. To date over 450 individuals have earned their black belts at Robert's facility, as well as over 250 individuals participating in Leadership certification. He has also volunteered as an Anti-Bullying Coordinator for 12 public schools from 2004 to 2019, and served on the board of Martial Arts with Hearts Charity Foundation. His first book, *"Earn a Black Belt in...An Average Guys Guide to Life"* quickly became an AMAZON #1 Best Seller. Robert is also a 12-time US Commerce Award Winner for Best Business.



Elisabeth McConville (Class of 1995 & 2004)

With three degrees (Paralegal, Humanities, and English) from RVCC—all with high honors (the latter two, "Cum Laude")—it is clear that few grads have gotten more from the College than Elisabeth. And few have given more: RVCC has benefitted significantly from her philanthropy, the seeds of which may have been planted during her years of working as the personal assistant to Doris Duke (yes, that Duke!). Having established a scholarship at RVCC in memory of her sister, the Mary T. Zanetti Scholarship has benefited some 23 students. Elisabeth served on the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors from 2010-2018. She has also been honored as "Lady Commander in The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem" (also called Order of the Holy Sepulchre)—this is a Roman Catholic order of knighthood under the protection of the Holy See. Elisabeth also received the Courier News "Star Award" for her work with the Bridgewater Police Crisis Intervention Team.



Jamal Kassim (Class of 2011)

As a first-generation college graduate who was raised by single mother, Jamal overcame all obstacles he faced, and now enjoys a flourishing career in the education sector. His Associate of Arts Degree in Communication Studies at RVCC has served Jamal well, having gone on to get both a Bachelor's degree (Communications and Human Resources) and a Master's degree (Labor Relations) from Rutgers University (with a perfect 4.0 GPA in his Master's work). Jamal brought his expertise back to RVCC in 2016, finishing his tenure as Transfer Articulation and Graduate Associate (he is currently Assistant Registrar at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School at Rutgers University). While at RVCC, Jamal was credited with improving the graduation application process and increasing graduation participation among graduates. Jamal also helped revive Black Student Alliance (BSA) and served as its faculty advisor. He was also "all in" for the RVCC Foundation's annual "Giving Day" and helped elevate the BSA's fundraising results. He also volunteers as an Assistant Football Coach for Somerville Branchburg United.

We look forward to celebrating our honorees throughout the year, including at the RVCC Foundation Annual Scholarship Dinner on April 20.

Congratulations to Jamal, Elisabeth, and Robert for the impact you are having in the world and for being such outstanding representatives of the alumni of Raritan Valley Community College!!

#rvccalumni #rvccproud

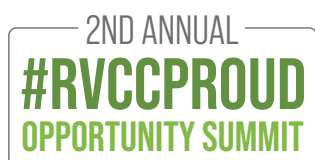


RVCC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: ALUMNI OPPS AHEAD



On January 19, 2023, 7-8pm Zoom: President's Alumni Council Discussion (a chance to join the discussion about establishing the RVCC Alumni Association President's Council; if you are interested in attending this meeting, please email Greg DeSanctis at: greg.desanctis@raritanval.edu).



On March 15, 2023, the 2nd Annual #RVCCProud Opportunity Summit (held on RVCC's campus and focused on engaging alumni in opportunities to network and learn about the latest news of the College—directly from leadership at RVCC; we will be providing more information as the date draws closer).



On June 6, 2023, the 1st Annual RVCC Alumni Association Open House (an evening reception will be held at the new home of both the RVCC Foundation & RVCC Alumni Association: 74 Lamington Road; this 18th century house harkens back to the time when RVCC's campus was very much a working farm. The event will offer the chance to network with fellow alums while toasting RVCC; additional information will follow in the spring).

#rvccalumni #rvccproud

TAILGATE TIME

It was rainy evening on the campus of Raritan Valley Community College, so it was a small but hearty group that turned out on October 13 for the inaugural RVCC Alumni Association "Homecoming-Tailgate" gathering. The event included networking, dinner, and a chance to see the RVCC Women's Volleyball team (and eventual 2022 Garden State Athletic Conference champions) trounce Passaic County Community College.



Left: Members of the RVCC Women's Volleyball Team **Right:** Some RVCCProud alumni!!



FROM THE HEART

The purest form of philanthropy is that which emerges from the heart, or sometimes heartache.

For anyone persevering through the unexpected loss of a child, bringing friends and family together to remember and celebrate that child can be a wonderful and restorative thing. Purposefulness is the tailwind of resilience.

This was on full display on a beautiful day last August—on the campus of Raritan Valley Community College and at Oakwood Lanes in Washington, NJ. Two family gatherings—separated by 24 miles—but forever linked by sons whose lives ended far too soon.

Zach Bunsa and **Jake Irwin**, RVCC Class of 2018 and 2019 respectively, both brilliant, cherished, and missed. But both very much present in those whose love remains strong, boundless, and inspiring.

#gratitude #rvccproud

TOP RIGHT: A fitting collage to honor Zach Buns. **RIGHT:** Ella and Donna Buns, Zach's sister and Zach's mom, on the RVCC campus. **BELOW:** RVCC alumni and friends of Jake, pause while partaking in his favorite sport. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** A fitting invite to honor Jake Irwin.



FUTURES

A new academic year, a resurgent institution, and a fundraising campaign in support of the students of Raritan Valley Community College.

We're excited by the **FUTURES** initiative, which features RVCC students, faculty, staff, alumni, and donors—in their own words—and captured by first-year film student **Luis Cruz-Duarte**. The campaign is an acknowledgment that many of our donors to RVCC haven't been to campus in a long time and likely haven't had much interacted with our students, faculty and staff, all of whom are vital to what makes the College so exceptional.

This fundraising initiative presents a chance to hear from the RVCC community and make your impact felt in any of the following areas:



SCHOLARSHIP: Replenishes the general scholarship fund as well as selected other scholarships, all to help relieve the financial burden of attending college while affirming the quality of our students...



LEADERSHIP: Brings additional resources to offset membership fees allowing a more diverse range of RVCC students to join select national organizations, and rewards initiative and emerging leadership traits in our students...



STEWARDSHIP: Supports students whose journeys have been impacted by unanticipated disruptions and emergencies, including but not limited to food insecurity, housing issues, and mental health concerns...



CITIZENSHIP: Helps expand our model RVCC Service Learning Program, to bring a greater number of student volunteer opportunities as well recognition of student excellence in community service...



Antonette Julia Almendras



Rhonda Stewart



Bill Klinger



Daniela Ovelar



Olivia Sims



Alexander Floyd

Just a few of the many voices of the RVCC FUTURES campaign

Please visit raritanval.edu/futures to support the students of RVCC—and their FUTURES.

**#futures #raritanvalleycommunitycollege
#bestofnewjersey #philanthropy #rvccfoundation
#insupportofrvccstudents #rvccproud**

RVCC ARTS CENTER RENOVATIONS NEARING COMPLETION

Thanks to a \$5.3 million capital improvement, the RVCC Arts Center is gaining 9,000 square feet on the north and east sides of the existing space, including five new instructional spaces, a student lounge, and three single occupant bathrooms, and a new façade. These improvements come on top of approximately \$1.2 million of investment over the last five years for a new roof and mechanical equipment and \$1 million of renovations to the existing 40,000 square feet of space for a new and enlarged space for theater, a music practice room, as well as graphic and interior design spaces.

#rvccproud



INAUGURAL RECIPIENTS AWARDED FOR THE SOMERSET HILLS COMMUNITY HEALTH FOUNDATION NURSING SCHOLARSHIP AT RVCC



RVCC Nursing students are among the hardest working on campus and now, they're also being richly rewarded.

The first recipients of the largest scholarship gift in the history of the RVCC Nursing program were named earlier this fall—and there be enough gratitude expressed to benefactor behind the gift, the Somerset Hills Community Health Foundation. The inaugural recipients—**Elicia Levandoski, Avery Schaefer, Isabelle Lauducci, Ross Danis, Janet Nyambura, Kenzie Lane, Katherine Sosa, Sarah Caputo, Winmyria Roberts, and Tara Maher**—are all in their 2nd year of the Nursing program, a requirement of the scholarship.

The \$100,000 donation to the RVCC Foundation was announced last spring by the Community Foundation of New Jersey, on behalf of SHCHF. In addition to the 10 full scholarships—the first full scholarships in the Nursing program's history, an additional \$25,000 was awarded by SHCHF to help offset textbook and Nursing program expenses for dozens of other Nursing students.

“The importance of this gift to our Nursing program cannot be overstated; it is unprecedented in its size and its impact on our Nursing students,” said **Dr. Michael McDonough**, President, Raritan Valley Community College. “We are grateful for the leadership and generosity of the **Somerset Hills Community Health Foundation.**”



RVCC RECEIVES \$100,000 GRANT FROM PROVIDENT BANK FOUNDATION

Raritan Valley Community College is the recipient of a \$100,000 “Signature Grant” from **The Provident Bank Foundation** (PBF) for 2022. The generous gift, in the “Education” funding priority area, is the Foundation’s first Signature Grant awardee in Somerset County and one of three statewide.



RVCC was selected for the work of **The Achievement Center** (TAC)—a unique collaboration between the College and the **Arc of Somerset County**. The Center provides a certificate-based, post-secondary program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities so that they can continue academic study, experience college life, and gain important skills for entering the workforce.

*“The collaboration between Raritan Valley Community College and the Arc of Somerset County is inspiring,” said **Samantha Plotino**, Executive Director, The Provident Bank Foundation. “And their collective impact is so evident in the students whose lives are enriched through the work of The Achievement Center.”*

The multi-year award will support the expansion of the courses offered at TAC, specifically in the STEM disciplines, and allow the TAC model to be amplified more broadly across the state.

“We applaud both the vision and the generosity of the Provident Bank Foundation,” said RVCC President **Michael McDonough**. “Their commitment to the students served by The Achievement Center at RVCC is unprecedented.”

“We’re honored by the endorsement by the Provident Bank Foundation and excited by the impact this support will enable,” said **Christopher Corvino**, Executive Director, The Arc of Somerset County. “The growth of our program is the best evidence of our value to the communities we serve.”

LEADERSHIP AT RVCC

Special Welcomes:



Dr. Karen Bearce

On September 12, **Dr. Karen Bearce** joined RVCC as *Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs*. Dr. Bearce comes to us from Northampton Community College in Bethlehem, PA,

where she served (most recently) as interim Vice President for Academic Affairs. After earning her M.S. and Ph.D. in Psychology from Rutgers University (she has a B.A. in Psychology from the University of New Hampshire), Dr. Bearce took her love of psychology and passion for learning into the classroom, where she excelled as a faculty member at Mercer County Community College. “Teaching was transformative for me and I loved it, but I also wanted more,” she noted. So, after 11 years, Dr. Bearce left her role as professor to impact students more broadly as an institutional leader focused on academic affairs. “Mercer County Community College was an important part of my journey, but Northampton really allowed me to grow and expand both my perspective and my span of influence,” added Dr. Bearce.

Among her professional achievements, Dr. Bearce is most proud of her work implementing the Guided Pathways framework at Northampton Community College. Working in partnership with college stakeholders, she developed a multi-year implementation plan aimed at reforming practices and approaches to supporting students across their college lifecycle – from onboarding, to program identification, to persistence support and mentoring, to credential completion. Through collaboration with faculty, administrators, and staff, the College developed areas of study to help students identify academic paths best suited for their future career and college goals, redesigned the academic advising model, developed program maps, and created internal cross-divisional teams to support students from interest to engagement to completion.

Expanding the Guided Pathways framework to build bridges between credit and non-credit programs and to create pathways from high schools to college is a top priority of Dr. Bearce, who is excited to bring her teaching and administrative experiences to RVCC. “This is such an exceptional institution,” she noted. “And it already feels like home.”

HOME LIFE: Family is an important part of Dr. Bearce’s world. She is married to a cybersecurity professional and mother to an inquisitive, witty 11-year-old son, Logan, who just started middle school. They are a Marvel family so you can often find them watching the latest Marvel tv show or movie. They are also a sports family—rooting now more than actually playing. And there are rivalries “in the house”—Dr. Bearce is originally from New England while her husband is from New Jersey so they’re often cheering for different teams. As a family, they enjoy going to the local minor league baseball stadium and visiting professional stadiums when they can.



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Dr. Windy Paz-Amor

Also arriving at RVCC in 2022 is **Dr. Windy Paz-Amor**, the College’s new *Director of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion*.

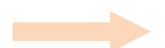
Dr. Paz-Amor received her B.A., M.Ed., Ed. D, from the University of Vermont and

brings 20 years of experience working in non-profits and higher education. Her work is about enhancing the lives of individuals “through a pluralistic and authentic approach” to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. She is focused on helping individuals grow and develop skills and tools to better enhance both their personal and professional lives.

Dr. Paz-Amor’s professional experiences have given her the opportunity to work with a variety of constituents—students, faculty, staff—through a developmental approach that translates to identifying agency, accountability, and leadership. This compliments her passion and vision for social justice, leadership, equity and the many diverse aspects and concerns that have intersectional, political and ethical implications on the lives of individuals. Dr. Paz-Amor leads with community and believes that a multifaceted authentic approach to the work is critical in developing successful collaborations that lead to effective change. She characterizes her “full self” as a writer, educator, trainer, advocate, poet, artist, scholar, and social justice warrior.

Her work with community in DEI encompasses tenants of accessibility, agency, and mutual understanding, with a commitment to creating intentional, inclusive spaces where people feel encouraged, engaged, and excited to further develop themselves and our shared community.

We recently caught up with Dr. Paz-Amor (“please, please call me Windy!!!”) to get to know her a little better...



Q: Clearly the University of Vermont was formative for you—and that Vermont setting is a travel destination! So, what attracted you to community college sector and RVCC specifically and why New Jersey?

I lived in Vermont for over 20 years, it will always have a very special place in my heart. Choosing to leave was a hard decision, however, I knew it was a wise one. As much as I loved Vermont, it was missing one very important thing...my family. There is nothing more valuable to me than time and it was time for us to be together again. My family all live in the New Jersey–New York area. It made the decision very simple.

After working in 4-year institutions for some time and particularly at a public Ivy like UVM, I realized I needed something else. It didn't feel like I was having the opportunity to create change for some of our most vulnerable populations in the ways I felt I needed to. The values at the community college sector, particularly at RVCC aligned with my own. It allowed me to walk my calling, and work with vulnerable populations that are often marginalized and minoritized. RVCC is doing something for our population of learners I have yet to find in other institutions; guaranteeing jobs upon graduation for so many, ensuring that students are not going into massive debt while reaching for their goals, carving space in higher education for people whom are often put on the fringes of the academy. It is actually as Paulo Freire says, "liberating knowledge". What could be more meaningful!

Q: How has your "re-entry" into the Garden State gone?

Re-entry was not without difficulty! However, with the help of friends and family we were able to re-acclimate to the area slowly but surely (still happening). I don't think I'll ever get used to the traffic but I must say I missed the New Jersey edge.

Q: What has most impressed you about RVCC in your first eight months on the job?

I think I am most impressed by the community that works here. The ethic of care that is offered by so many in serving this community is deeply felt. I feel

it from so many each day I come to work. I have been welcomed here with open arms.

Q: What are some of RVCC's biggest challenges (or opportunities if you prefer) in the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion space?

We have huge opportunities at RVCC with regard to diversity, equity & inclusion. Since I began, eight months ago, I have been working on systematizing DEI into the fabric of our institution. Using the umbrella of "Inclusive Excellence" (American Universities, 2005), I'm working to center DEI into the core of what we do here at RVCC. Ensuring that it isn't only happening in an office, but rather, as a systematic framework of transformative thinking that's inter-woven into all that we do. As a leader and scholar, I am committed to creating intentional, inclusive spaces where people feel encouraged, engaged, and excited to further develop themselves and our community.

Q: What has most surprised you about RVCC?

Honestly, the Planetarium! We have our own planetarium on campus! Additionally, seeing environmental sustainability efforts align so intentionally with DEI efforts; keeping the land healthy, honoring the reciprocal relationships between nature and humanity. Acknowledging the deep wellness and intentionality needed to sustain both efforts. This is my heart language, and RVCC speaks it.

Q: On a lighter note, what are some of your interests/hobbies outside of work?

After living in Vermont for over 20+ years my interests include, nature walks, leaf-peeping, playing with my dogs (Grace & Koko), writing (especially poetry), quilting, art projects made with recyclable materials, baking bread, playing Rumikube, and of course checking out what's new on Netflix.

Q: Catamounts or Lions?

Well, given my time at the University of Vermont, my new found love of RVCC, and my "inclusiveness" responsibilities...why not both? Go Cats!

SET YOUR CLOCK

For anyone seeking to deepen their engagement with the best community college in New Jersey (aka, Raritan Valley Community College), please take note of these important opportunities...



March 23, 2023 **RVCC Giving Day:** Join us for this 24-hour online fundraising campaign as we seek to exceed last year's record-breaking total of \$137,690. Lots of ways to become involved in this annual tradition of generosity! Contact Janet Dunne (janet.dunne@raritanval.edu) for more information.



Photo: RVCC Foundation board members Joel Reyes-Guzman and Jimena Torres

April 20, 2023
18th Annual RVCC Foundation Annual Scholarship Dinner:
An opportunity for scholarship donors and student recipients to enjoy a meal together and celebrate their shared journeys. Contact Cindy Haddad (cindy.haddad@raritanval.edu) for additional details.



June 15, 2023 **19th Annual RVCC Foundation Golf Classic:** Join us for a day of networking and friendly competition, all in support of RVCC. Corporate sponsorship and individual golf slots are available; contact Janet Dunne (janet.dunne@raritanval.edu) for more information.



Top: Erin Kislan and Janet Dunne

Bottom: Anything is possible at the RVCC Foundation Golf Classic



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THE LAST WORD FROM OUR DONORS

"We are proud to support the Sanofi Corporate Mentor Program at Raritan Valley Community College, in part because the RVCC team is such a wonderful partner. And we know our Sanofi mentors are always excited for the role they play in the journeys of their RVCC student mentees. Six years and counting and each year of this program is more inspiring than the next."

-Diana Blankman Roberts, Head, Corporate Social Responsibility, Sanofi US

"RVCC holds a special place for us. It is where we all met. Coming from many different backgrounds, RVCC was our starting and supporting block in all of our journeys. We started the "Friends of RVCC" scholarship to be the leverage someone needs to help them succeed in their education and eventually in their preferred job path regardless of their background. We all know how much of a role RVCC played for us, and we would like to pay it forward and give someone else a chance the same way we received it."

-Kate Roskova (RVCC Class of 2013),
on behalf of alumni "Friends of RVCC"



Photo: RVCC Men's Basketball teammates Malachi White and Eddie Robinson with RVCC donor David Nader and Men's Basketball Coach Kevin Ryan

"Giving always feels great, and knowing that all of our gifts, no matter how large or small, are needed, appreciated, and always put to good use creates a wonderful sense of personal partnership with RVCC. We've heard many special and inspirational stories, some involving hardships overcome, from RV students over the years. The feeling of being a contributor to their future success is one of the most rewarding philanthropic experiences you'll ever know. RVCC's Foundation often talks about the transformative power of education...it's been our privilege to witness that first hand, and we've experienced great joy in knowing that we may have, in some small way, contributed to that magical transformation."

-Gary Woodring, RVCC Foundation Board Member
(Gary and wife Lisa are longtime believers in RVCC)

"Through the Visiting Nurse Association, we know firsthand that nurses not only help people get well, but also fundamentally change lives. Now as a foundation committed to healthcare worker availability and employment, and ultimately stronger, healthier communities in Somerset and Morris counties, it is our privilege to support future Raritan Valley Community College Nursing students. The future of nursing starts now."

-Kathy Cummins, Board Chair, Somerset Hills Community Health Foundation



"I believe in our students and appreciate the challenges they face. I also value education and its ability to transform lives, especially those who have been marginalized. And I donate to RVCC because I wish to increase the number of historically underrepresented students on our campus. To help achieve this, I've made a commitment of \$5000 over a five-year period to RVCC's "My Brother's Keeper Black Male Community Service Scholarship". I'm proud to be able to transform lives as both an educator and as a donor."

-Lisa M. Tucker Professor,
English Department, RVCC

"We're proud of our association with RVCC and appreciate the role it plays in our community. Bohler Engineering has been a long-time supporter of the RVCC Foundation Golf Classic, which provides a wonderful opportunity to build relationships with our partners and guests and help grow awareness—and appreciation—of RVCC. We also know firsthand the value of the College: we've hired RVCC alumni and they're now doing great work at Bohler!"

-Keith Cahill, Principal, Bohler Engineering



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HOMEFRONT. The original house for the farm from which the College would eventually emerge. Built in 1743, addition completed in 1805. Home primarily to the Brokaw, Wortman, and Little families, and later, in 1923, the Howell family. As a farmhouse, it has great bones and a rich history. For the RVCC Foundation and RVCC Alumni Association, it is a rare and beautiful workspace and it brings new life to the western edge of campus.

Notes from the Valley is published by RVCC Foundation to share what inspires us every day: your generosity, your engagement, your commitment. Whether you're a donor, a friend, a student, an alumnus, or a member of the RVCC faculty and staff, you are essential to this exceptional community, which we are honored to support.

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