

# PRESENTING THE 2023 EDUCATION POWER 50

BY JEFFREY KANIGE  
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As the state, national and global economy becomes more complex, more competitive and more reliant on increasingly sophisticated processes, systems and technology, New Jersey residents and businesses risk falling behind. The key to maintaining an edge in this interconnected world is a workforce that continually adds knowledge and expertise.

The importance of expanding educational opportunities and preparing for new challenges is evident when a commercial real estate firm starts its own “university” to prepare new associates for what they will face in the market. Jessica Perry describes JLL’s efforts beginning on page 12. The new hires have skills, JLLU provides the specialized knowledge they’ll need to succeed.

State officials also recognize the importance of post-secondary education, as Matthew Fazel-poor reports starting on page 4. Higher Education Secretary Brian Bridges tells him about efforts to re-connect New Jerseyans who interrupted their

education with colleges and universities where they can finish what they started. Bridges notes that the state’s goal is for 65% of adults to get a degree by 2025. The Some College, No Degree initiative is the centerpiece of the work toward attaining that goal.

And colleges and universities themselves are making concerted efforts to reverse the enrollment declines that started during the pandemic, as Kimberly Redmond explains beginning on page 2. Since COVID-19 faded, new obstacles have arisen that dissuade young people from continuing their education beyond high school.

Fixing that problem, and generally keeping New Jersey’s workforce on the cutting edge of achievement, will be the job of the individuals profiled in these pages. All have demonstrated their commitment to the critical task of ensuring that New Jerseyans are prepared for the future.

So, take a look at the profiles and let us know what you think of the -leaders honored here. As always, the top 10 are ranked in numerical order; the rest are listed alphabetically.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. JONATHAN HOLLOWAY	14
2. TODD WOLFSON AND REBECCA GIVAN	14
3. ROBERT JOHNSON	16
4. CHRISTOPHER EISGRUBER	16
5. TEIK LIM	18
6. ALI HOUSHMAND	18
7. ANNETTE REBOLI	20
8. GIGI SCHWEIKERT	20
9. DALE CALDWELL	22
10. JANE BOKUNEWICZ	22
HONOREES 23-30 (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)	23-30

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1

## JONATHAN **HOLLOWAY**

“Excellence can be found everywhere, I know that to be true,” Rutgers President Jonathan Holloway said in a 2022 message when the school released its first-ever Diversity Strategic Plan. “But we have to look for it, we have to nurture and cultivate it, we have to remove barriers to it, and we have to reward and celebrate it throughout the university. This plan is Rutgers’ declaration that we will.”

Since 2020, Holloway has served as the 21st president in the history of New Jersey’s flagship state university. During that time, he has worked to shape and evolve Rutgers through a number of efforts and initiatives such as the Diversity Strategic Plan; physical development at the school’s campuses; as well as ambitious yet controversial plans like the one recently approved by the board of governors to combine New Jersey Medical School and Robert Wood Johnson under one umbrella as Rutgers School Medicine.

Holloway says that the merger would position Rutgers School of Medicine as one of the largest and leading public medical schools in the nation – creating an unparalleled hub of biomedical and health sciences education, research, and clinical care.

In the spring, Holloway navigated the first strike in the school’s 257-year history as Rutgers reached an agreement with three labor unions to end the nearly weekly-long standoff – with Gov. Phil Murphy helping to broker the talks.

“The framework that was reached today between Rutgers and its faculty unions provides fair and equitable wages, benefits, and work conditions for our faculty as well as our graduate students and part-time lecturers,” said Holloway in April.



2

## TODD **WOLFSON** AND REBECCA **GIVAN**

Joining a massive wave of labor action throughout the country, academic workers at Rutgers University – the largest public university in the state – went on a historic five-day strike in April, rallying for higher wages, increased benefits and better job security for adjunct faculty, among other requests.

Over 9,000 workers represented by three unions took to the picket lines in New Brunswick, Camden and Newark for a five-day strike – the first-ever since the university’s founding in 1766 and the largest public-sector strike in New Jersey history. After Gov. Phil Murphy intervened, pressuring both sides to come to terms on a framework, the pickets ended and classes resumed. Nearly a month later, 93% of voting members across three unions – Rutgers AAUP-AFT (full-time faculty, graduate workers, postdoctoral associates and counselors), the Rutgers Adjunct Faculty Union and Rutgers AAUP-BHSNJ (health science faculty in the university’s biomedical and health sciences facilities) – cast ballots in favor of ratifying new four-year contracts that provide pay boosts and additional job security.

The potential for a strike loomed over Rutgers from late last year as faculty and staff from the unions had been working without a contract since summer. After negotiations went nowhere, unions voted in late March to authorize a strike.

Rutgers AAUP-AFT President Wolfson stated, “This is a new moment for higher ed labor around the country. Other unions representing graduate workers and faculty organized, struck, and won strong contracts, inspiring us to fight for more. And now we’ve contributed to the largest strike wave in the history of public higher education.”

“We have a vision of a public university that works for our students, our communities, and everyone who works there—and we’ve taken important steps toward achieving it,” said Wolfson, an associate professor of journalism and media studies

Givan, general vice president of Rutgers AAUP-AFT, described the vote to ratify as the “culmination of intense efforts by so many people who walked the picket lines and organized with their colleagues.”



# 3

## ROBERT JOHNSON

Since 2011, Johnson has served as dean of the Rutgers New Jersey Medical School – the state’s oldest medical school.

Johnson is also a professor of pediatrics and the director of the Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine at the school.

With decades of experience, Johnson’s clinical expertise and research focuses on adolescent physical and mental health, HIV, violence, sexuality, as well as health equity and family strengthening. He is a widely recognized spokesperson for adolescents and adolescent issues with regular media appearances and published work on the topic.

He chairs the New Jersey Governor’s Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS and Related Blood Borne Pathogens and the Newark Ryan White Planning Council.

Johnson is also at the center of the planned merger of New Jersey Medical School and Robert Wood Johnson Medical School into a single accreditation as Rutgers School of Medicine – which was recently approved by the Rutgers board of governors.

“In the past, the two medical schools have been competitors for talent and resources. Now, we can be allies in attracting students, grants, and faculty who are pioneers in their fields,” Johnson co-wrote in a message to the Rutgers Health community earlier this month along with Dr. Amy Murtha, dean of Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. “As the state university, Rutgers and now Rutgers School of Medicine, we have an obligation to the residents of New Jersey to lead in transformative health care delivery. Through the creation of Rutgers School of Medicine, with campuses in Newark and New Brunswick, we will have an academic health care delivery enterprise that will better serve all New Jersey communities.”



# 4

## CHRISTOPHER EISGRUBER

Eisgruber has served as Princeton University’s 20th president for 10 years – taking the helm in July 2013. The school always ranks at or near the top of national rankings, including taking the No. 1 spot on last year’s U.S. News and World Report list and this year’s Wall Street Journal/College Pulse report.

As president, Eisgruber has overseen a number of innovative initiatives and programs and has led efforts to increase the representation of low-income and first-generation students at Princeton and other colleges and universities.

“One of Princeton’s defining values is our commitment to ensure that talented students from all backgrounds can not only afford a Princeton education but can flourish on our campus and in the world beyond it,” he said last year in a statement as the university announced it was updating its financial aid program to offer free tuition, room and board for undergraduate students whose families earn up to \$100,000 annually.

As he welcomed the Class of 2027 during Opening Exercises earlier this month, Eisgruber encouraged first-year students to embrace the learning and growth that awaits them as Princeton undergraduates.

“Transformation is a wonderful thing,” he said. “It’s also very demanding. It brings worry along with joy, frustration along with happiness. That’s okay; indeed, that is part of what it means to get a great education.”



## 5 TEIK LIM

Lim is president of the New Jersey Institute of Technology, joining the Newark school from the University of Texas at Arlington. And NJIT has been on a roll lately, climbing the national rankings and expanding its role in the fabric of its home city and New Jersey generally.

Most recently, NJIT ranked 19th on the Wall Street Journal/College Pulse list of the top U.S. colleges. That placement was good enough to make the school the second-highest ranked public school after the University of Florida. “This ranking confirms that NJIT is an exceptional public polytechnic university that primes students for rewarding careers, particularly in STEM disciplines,” Lim said in a statement. “We are focused on outcomes and enabling graduates to realize their goals, so they can personally thrive and make significant contributions to society.”

NJIT said the list, which replaces the former WSJ/Times Higher Education ranking with similar methodology, uses a larger survey and factors in feedback from students and alumni. It also called the 2024 ranking “more exclusive, with only 400 schools awarded. That’s just 20% of the eligible universities examined.”

In an interview not long after he was appointed, Lim extolled the virtues of NJIT and said he felt at home there.

“I’ve done research my entire professional career and so NJIT being a top research institution is great,” he said, adding: “It’s an urban setting — I love urban institutions.” Such a setting “allows me to create mutually beneficial private-public partnerships with industry that enhances the education of our students,” Lim said. “I find the Board of Trustees at NJIT is passionate, forward-thinking, very collaborative and I like that a lot.” But NJIT boasts one characteristic that Lim values above all others. “The most attractive feature is the diversity of the campus,” he explained. “I think we can make full use of the diversity here to really strengthen NJIT’s academics and research, and then use that to make NJIT a supercharged engine of social mobility.”

As Newark welcomes new technology companies, NJIT under Lim should play an even greater role as an anchor institution.



## 6 ALI HOUSHMAND

Houshmand was born into poverty in Iran. He eventually left to pursue an education – first in the U.K., then here in the United States. He started working in the private sector, then built a successful academic career, landing in Glassboro at Rowan University.

After serving in a series of senior administrative roles, he became the school’s seventh president in 2012 and embarked on a mission to transform the South Jersey institution. Houshmand recently spoke with NJBIZ about his work at Rowan, how far the university has come and where the school – and American higher education in general – needs to go next.

“I believe that the reason that I’ve been successful is because I’ve been made so humble,” he told NJBIZ earlier this year. “I’ve seen so much difficulty that I appreciate that, and I don’t want to see any other person to go through what I have. When I see a person in here who comes from a from a depressed area having a difficult time, the first instinct is, how do I help that person? How do I leave that person because I have seen the power of it on me. As a result of me many of my family members have been upgraded, and there are so many other friends and colleagues that I have promoted, so many graduate students who are very successful citizens of this country. That is a fantastic feeling.”

And that attitude provides the foundation for his leadership. Under Houshmand, Rowan has evolved into a Carnegie-classified national research university with two medical schools and soon, the state’s first veterinary school. He has guided a number of partnerships and development, including Rowan Boulevard, a collaboration between the school, private developers and the Borough of Glassboro that has created a vibrant downtown with housing, retail, restaurants and academic space. During his presidency, Rowan has completed \$1.5 billion in university-related construction projects with another \$1 billion in additional construction planned over the next five years. Rowan has raised \$155 million in new gifts and pledges throughout his tenure in charge. He also created a Division of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion to increase access and quality while continuing to expand the diversity of Rowan’s enrollment.



# 7 ANNETTE REBOLI

In March, Cooper Medical School of Rowan University's Class of 2023, like other graduating medical students nationwide, learned the specialty and location of their residency programs. Setting the school's largest group of graduates apart was its 100% match rate—surpassing the national average of 93.7% for U.S. medical school seniors.

At the time, CMSRU dean Reboli remarked that the achievement was a reflection on the students, faculty and programming at the school, but it's also a reflection on Reboli.

During her tenure, the leader and professor of medicine has been recognized for elevating the status of what was the state's first new medical school in 35 years when it launched in 2012. And that prestige is not unique to the Garden State. In May, CMSRU ranked highest among included New Jersey institutions (No. 50) on U.S. News & World Report's national Best Medical Schools: Primary Care list. The distinction came along with placing as one of the best medical schools for research, as well (No. 110). And that latter position is poised to reach new heights in the coming years. This summer, CMSRU, Cooper University Health Care and Coriell Institute for Medical Research announced a \$30 million joint pledge to further cancer research in South Jersey.

At the time, Reboli said the school was honored to collaborate with fellow Camden institutions, adding in a video announcing the center that "It's critically important that our students and our residents and our fellows learn about research because we don't want to just be delivering knowledge. We want to be able to create knowledge."



# 8 GIGI SCHWEIKERT

Named chief executive officer of Lightbridge Holdings Group in October 2021 after just six years with the early childhood day care center franchise, Schweikert is leading the Iselin-based enterprise through a substantial period of expansion.

With 150 child care centers either open or in development, the 25-year-old company is considered an industry leader in educational child care franchising and consistently recognized as one of the fastest-growing private businesses in the U.S. by Inc. 500, Franchise Times and Entrepreneur Magazine. In 2023 alone, Lightbridge has celebrated 18 franchise signings, with 24 locations in development, entering new states, like Texas and Michigan, while continuing to grow in existing markets.

Before joining Lightbridge Franchise Co. in 2015 as president, Schweikert was in charge of developing and managing on-site employer-sponsored child care programs for numerous Fortune 500 companies, including Merck, Prudential and Bright Horizons. Her background also includes serving as the director of the United Nations Child Care Centre.

In addition to her CEO role at Lightbridge, Schweikert is president of the company's nonprofit foundation, which provides more than \$500,000 in grants and scholarships to support the health, education and well-being of children and their families. She's also a board member for the Early Care & Education Consortium, an advisory board member for Marco Polo World School and Seton Hall University.

With 30-plus years of experience, Schweikert is also a best-selling author of 18 books and a popular keynote speaker for parenting seminars, education conferences, corporations and women's events. Additionally, she has appeared on CBC, Fox and the Wall Street Journal's Lunch Hour News, as well as hosted NBC's "Today's Family" from 1998 through 2001.



# 9 DALE CALDWELL

After being unanimously appointed as Centenary University's 15th president earlier this year, Dale Caldwell made history July 1 by officially becoming the first African American to lead the Hackettstown-based institution.

In announcing the successor of retiring president Bruce Murphy, Centenary's board of trustees cited Caldwell's extensive leadership in higher education, business and government, as well as a commitment to fostering innovation and diversity.

Before joining Centenary, Caldwell was executive director of the Rothman Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Fairleigh Dickinson University. During his four years there, Caldwell was credited with transforming the organization into one of New Jersey's most influential entrepreneurial institutes serving family businesses, veteran entrepreneurs and urban enterprises.

As president of the board of the Educational Services Commission of New Jersey, Caldwell steered the development of a strategic vision, recommending operational initiatives that resulted in a \$132 million revenue increase during his 22-year tenure.

Additionally, Caldwell's background features positions in the public, private and nonprofit sectors, including as senior manager at Deloitte Consulting, founding executive director of the Newark Alliance and deputy commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. He's also served on the New Brunswick Board of Education, written a book ("Intelligent Influence: The 4 Steps of Highly Successful Leaders and Organizations") and serves as a licensed pastor.

In taking the helm of Centenary, Caldwell said he anticipates using his "business experience, contacts and insights to engage government, business, philanthropic, academic and other leaders to secure critical partnerships and financial support" for the Hackettstown-based private liberal arts university.



# 10 JANE BOKUNEWICZ

Bokunewicz serves as faculty director and associate professor at Stockton University's Lloyd Levenson Institute of Gaming, Hospitality and Tourism where she is perhaps the leading voice on those issues and more here in the Garden State and across the region. She has worked with the LIGHT institute since 2012, moving into the faculty director role three years ago, bringing with her more than 20 years of experience in the Atlantic City casino industry.

Bokunewicz has been the lead researcher on several LIGHT studies - noting that the institute provides a forum for public policy discussions regarding the gaming, hospitality, and tourism industries in New Jersey; and is a key part of Stockton's commitment to play a central role in issues that are vital to the economic and social well-being of the community and region.

"LIGHT has earned a reputation for providing expert analysis of issues facing the gaming, hospitality and tourism industry," she said last year after being recognized on NJBIZ's Power 50 list as a Top 10 honoree. "This award coming from one of the top business journals in New Jersey is an acknowledgement of the impact of LIGHT's research and analysis in educating not only students here at Stockton but the business community and the general public as well."



**ANDRES ACEBO**



Acebo was named interim president at New Jersey City University in January. At just 37 years old, the Hudson County native is the youngest president to lead a public university in the state and just the second Hispanic to lead a four-year public institution. "This was certainly not something that was ever in my career trajectory or even something that I ever fancied pursuing," said Acebo. Before his appointment, he was elevated to executive vice president and university counsel amid the school's announcement of its fiscal emergency in the summer of 2022. Yet, faced with a more than \$20 million deficit and a blistering report from the state comptroller, Acebo has steadfastly guided the school. In February, NJCU entered a first-of-its-kind agreement with the Hudson County Building Trades to provide internship opportunities for students that also authorizes all university construction projects over \$5 million be built with union labor. Over the summer, and just six months after stepping into his interim role, Acebo declared to the university community that it had turned a corner—moving from crisis to recovery and reducing its deficit to less than \$8 million. To

continue that work, and in a move welcomed by Acebo, a state monitor was appointed for the school at the end of August. "[I]t was hard to say no, to be very blunt, to this opportunity," Acebo told NJBIZ, referencing his personal connection to the university, which has seemed to work in everyone's favor. "I ran to NJCU's mission. I didn't run from something. I ran toward something. And every single day on this campus, there are students, faculty, and staff that live the mission of this institution, that personify its mission." This fall, NJCU welcomed more than 1,200 new students. Acebo's interim appointment is for 24 months – and with all he's accomplished so far, that leaves plenty of time for more potential progress.

**STEVE ADUBATO JR.**

Adubato is an Emmy-winning broadcaster, author, syndicated columnist, university professor, lecturer and motivational speaker. He also served in the mid-1980s as New Jersey's youngest state legislator at the age of 26. As the anchor of several television series produced by the Caucus Educational Corp., which he founded in the mid-90s, he is a near constant presence in New Jersey's media landscape. State of Affairs with Steve Adubato is a public policy series exploring critical statewide issues. One-on-One with Steve Adubato serves up nightly in-depth interviews with

the region's most compelling personalities.

Think Tank with Steve Adubato features national leaders affecting the state and region.



Adubato is also co-anchor of the Lessons in Leadership video podcast with his colleague Mary Gamba. Gov. Phil Murphy has called State of Affairs "one of the most popular and well-regarded public affairs programs in New Jersey." Adubato, adds U.S. Sen. Cory Booker, produces "relevant and timely programming...that benefits the people of our state and nation." CEC's series air on PBS stations Thirteen/WNET (the flagship station in New York), NJ PBS, WHYY and WHYY's Y2; on cable on News 12+; on radio on NPR stations WBGO and WQXR; and on digital platforms including Steve Adubato.org, NJ.com, YouTube, Thirteen.org, MyNJPBS.org the Thirteen Explore app, the NJ PBS app and across social media on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

**MONICA AMADIO**

Amadio is a consultant and instructor at Stockton University, a national Board-Certified teacher as well as an author. As an entrepreneur and business researcher, she has mas-

tered the complexities of starting and running a business. Amadio is also concerned about high school and college students, spearheading the creation of a degree in entrepreneurship at Stockton while promoting effective teaching strategies in multiple courses. Among the tracts she has developed and taught are Technology and Innovation Management; Introduction to Management; Management Skills; Engineering Ethics & Communications; Business Communications; Business Basics; Personal Financial Literacy and others. In addition, Amadio was scheduled to speak on four topics at the 2023 Eastern Academy of Management Conference in Philadelphia: Equity through Esports and Entrepreneurship; AI in College Admissions and Upper-Level Writing Courses; Vertical Leadership Skills; and Esports and Entrepreneurship as Innovative Programs.


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**MICHAEL AVALTRONI**

Following his appointment as interim president of Fairleigh Dickinson University earlier this year after Chris Capuano stepped down at the end of 2022, Avaltroni was offi-

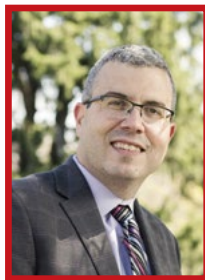


The Hudson County Community College Family congratulates President Christopher Reber. Named to *NJBIZ* Power 50 for the third consecutive year. Dr. Reber, thank you for your dedication and commitment to HCCC and New Jersey Higher Education!




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cially named to the post in April, becoming the institution's ninth president. A long-time faculty member and administrator, Avaltroni is also the first FDU graduate to serve as president. After earning a bachelor's degree in chemistry in 1999, he went on to receive a master's in chemistry in 2001 and a doctorate in chemistry in 2003, both at Princeton University. He returned that year to FDU, serving as a faculty member and chair of the Department of Chemistry and Pharmaceutical Sciences and was instrumental in creating the School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. In 2012, he took over as interim dean and was appointed



permanently to that role in 2013. Last January, Avaltroni transitioned to provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at the 80-year-old multi-campus, multinational private university.

Since becoming president, he has led several initiatives, including engaging the community in a strategic planning process that led to the development of a four-year-plan, "FDU Will Soar," which focuses on areas such as recruitment, retention, philanthropy and collaborations. In a message accompanying the plan, Avaltroni wrote, "The University is moving aggressively on these goals, starting with initial efforts to improve enrollment, retention and fund-raising, to reduce inefficiencies and continue to better define and differentiate programs while also moving toward longer-term goals such as new partnerships that will benefit our students."

## JOE BERTOLINO

In March, Bertolino was named as Stockton University's sixth president - replacing the retiring Harvey Kesselman, assuming the role July 1. Bertolino, who has more than 30 years of experience in higher education, previously served as the president of Southern Connecticut State University since 2016. He was selected for this top job at Stockton following an extensive national search. Born and raised in Glendora, he said he felt like he was returning home by joining Stockton where his mother, Eileen, graduated in 1977. "Being here now to serve [my mother's] alma mater as its president is both meaningful and an act of love," Bertolino.



"I am keenly aware of the challenges facing higher education - especially public regional institutions. I can say with confidence that Stockton is facing those challenges head

on and will continue to thrive." Raymond Ciccone, chair of the Stockton University board of trustees, said, "Dr. Bertolino is drawn to Stock-

ton University's commitment to create a caring community dedicated to exceptional teaching, learning, and academic excellence."

## JEFFREY BOSCOMP



As dean of the Hackensack Meridian Health School of Medicine, Boscamp is in charge of developing, promoting and organizing programs to amplify learning across the continuum

of undergraduate medical education, graduate medical education and continuing medical education. In February, the school capped off a seven-year journey when it became fully accredited. The Liaison Committee on Medical Education - the accrediting body for all institutions conferring medical doctorate degrees in the U.S. and Canada - bestowed the certification after a review that included the entire curriculum, finances, infrastructure and faculty. "We are meeting every standard required of us while pioneering, among a small cadre of other institutions, an accelerated medical education program, fully embracing an active learning pedagogy, and pioneering an award-winning investment in our local communities through the Human Dimension course," Boscamp said at the time. A longtime leader at Hackensack University Medical Center, he also serves as a member of the Hackensack University Medical Center medical executive committee and on the Hackensack Meridian Health Board of Trustees Academics Committee. Boscamp has been integrally involved with the founding of the school of medicine since the concept of starting one was discussed and co-chaired the search committee that brought founding Dean Bonita Stanton to the school.

## BRIAN BRIDGES



Since 2020, Bridges has served as Gov. Phil Murphy's point person on higher education in his role as secretary of higher education. In this role, Bridges is responsible for policy development and coordination

of higher education activities for the state and was instrumental in helping New Jersey's higher ed institutions navigate COVID as well as this current and continued re-emergence from the pandemic. Bridges coordinates initiatives to improve college affordability in the state and enhance postsecondary opportunities, such as New Jersey recently joining the Complete College America Alliance. He has spearheaded efforts such as New Jersey's Some College, No Degree initiative, aimed at addressing the aspirations of over 750,000 New Jersey residents by

providing them with resources and opportunities necessary to return to higher education and complete their degree or credential. "Our goal is to help them overcome barriers to reenrollment, learn about newly available state resources and financial aid, and emphasize how a credential can open new doors of opportunity," said Bridges over the summer during the first statewide convening of the initiative. "By bringing together national policy leaders and campus partners, who work directly with these students, all under one roof, we hope to inspire new and amplify ongoing strategic approaches to reaching, reengaging, and reenrolling this population statewide."

## JACKIE BURKE

Since 2021, Burke has served as executive director of the New Jersey Council of County Vocational-Technical Schools, a nonprofit association that represents vocational-technical schools across the state's 21 counties. Widely recognized as a leading voice for career and technical education before policymakers, the business community, labor unions and other education leaders, the organization supports collaboration among its member vo-tech districts, which offer programming in high-demand fields for 35,000-plus high school students as well as adults. During her tenure, Burke has continued executing NJCCVTS's mission to not only promote career-focused education, but also expand opportunities for those who wish to pursue career and technical education studies. As part of that effort, several construction projects are underway that support new and enhanced programming to meet



critical workforce demands in areas like advanced manufacturing, allied health, cybersecurity, global logistics & supply chain management, sustainable construction and

green technology. Made possible by \$250 million in state Career and Technical Education grants funded through 2018's Securing Our Children's Future Bond Act, the upgrades at 17 vo-tech schools include new construction and renovation work. Prior to taking the helm in the wake of longtime executive director Judy Savage's retirement, Burke served since 2016 as assistant executive director for the organization.

## NANCY CANTOR

Cantor joined Rutgers University-Newark as chancellor in 2014 and was later named to a second five-year appointment. And while her tenure in that role will end along with her current term in June 2024, Rutgers President Jonathan Holloway announced to the school community at the end of the summer, it's perhaps

the reaction to that news that best illuminates the kind of power that Cantor wields. "As a child, I remember growing up and hearing the slogan 'Newark is a College Town,'" Mayor Ras Baraka wrote Holloway in response to the unexpected news. "I honestly can say that I never really felt the real meaning of that until Nancy Cantor showed up and became an integral part of the fabric and growth of this city." The correspondence was signed by state lawmakers; leaders from fellow anchor institutions in the state's largest city, including New Jersey Performing Arts Center CEO John Schreiber and The Newark Museum of Art Director and CEO Linda Harrison; and others. In the wake of the announcement, similar sentiments emerged



from the university community, as well, with a group of two dozen faculty members - among them a Pulitzer Prize winner and a MacArthur fellow -

also sending a letter to Holloway, questioning the decision. Following the conclusion of her second term, Cantor will have a one-year sabbatical at her current salary and then the option to return to the faculty as a university professor. Some highlights under her leadership include the Fiserv-Rutgers Program for Inclusive Innovation; the Honors Living-Learning Community, which was supported by a \$10 million gift from Newark-based Prudential Financial Inc.; and the launch of Express Newark, an arts collaborative with direct connections to the community. "I had hoped to remain here to continue advancing the expansive work we've done together over the past decade to build and strengthen civil and social infrastructure, but I am confident that the durable partnerships we've built are well positioned to grow and that our university and our community can continue to thrive," she wrote to the school community in August following Holloway's announcement, reiterating her commitment to "our collective work" throughout the remainder of her term, adding that "My love and admiration for everyone who has been a part of this will endure as Rutgers evolves."

## THOMAS CAVALIERI



Cavalieri is vice president for the Virtua Health College of Medicine & Life Sciences of Rowan University - a role he assumed in February. The partnership be-

tween the South Jersey institutions, supported with an \$85 million contribution from Virtua Health and \$125 million from Rowan, includes an expanded nursing and allied health pro-



fessions school, a school of translational biomedical engineering and sciences; research institutes focused on Health Equity, Cardiovascular Disease, and Regenerative Medicine and Transplantation; and aligned clinical practices. The college also includes New Jersey's only osteopathic medical school. That's where Cavalieri was before his current appointment, having served as dean – and continuing as a professor of medicine and the Osteopathic Heritage Endowed Chair for Primary Care Research – at Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine (now Rowan-Virtua SOM) since 2006. During his tenure, enrollment doubled. And last summer, the SOM marked the biggest expansion in its 45 years—launching a Sewell campus location. Cavalieri is also the founding director of the Center of Aging, now the Rowan-Virtua New Jersey Institute for Successful Aging. At an event commemorating the opening of the SOM's Sewell spot, Cavalieri said the celebration was not just for the "the beginning of the medical careers of our students, but also the beginning of expanded access to health care for thousands of South Jersey residents." That sentiment carries through to the aspirations of the new medical school he will now lead, a foundational component of its partners' path to foster an innovative – and inclusive – health care hub in the southern part of the state.

**FRANCINE CONWAY**

After serving as chancellor-provost since 2021, Conway became chancellor of Rutgers-New Brunswick this past July, overseeing administrative, academic and research operations for the school, its more than \$300 million research portfolio and 40,000 students, as well as 10,000 faculty and staff. "Chancellor Conway's work has highlighted the complexities



of managing an institution that is a top 20 public university, a member of the Big Ten Academic Alliance, a world-class powerhouse of research and a proud home of diversity and opportunity," Rutgers President Jonathan Holloway said when Conway's streamlined title was announced. According to the university, the switch back to separate chancellor/provost positions is a reflection of Conway's performance leading the campus, including through a history-making strike that hit the school in the spring, and developing the Academic Master Plan. Implementation of the blueprint for the school's future – based on four Pillars of Excellence: Scholarly Leadership, Innovative Research, Student Success and Community Engagement – began last fall. And while Conway is looking to continue building,

she's keen to keep collaboration and campus culture as key components. To compile the master plan, more than 4,000 responses were collected from surveys and stakeholder meetings that included undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff and administrators. "As we have said before, cultivating academic excellence is not about building something new at Rutgers, but about building on what we already are and moving toward a vision of what can be," Conway said announcing the plan's initial execution. "... We are excited to embark on this journey with you, and we invite you to help us shape Rutgers-New Brunswick's future together."

**EUGENE CORNACCHIA**

Cornacchia, who has served as Saint Peter's University's 22nd president since 2007, made news last month when he announced that he would step down from the position at New Jersey's only Jesuit college/university at the end of his contract next June. He taught at Saint Peter's for 20 years before serving as academic dean, then provost and vice president for academic affairs, and ultimately president – a tenure the school says has been characterized by "transformative leadership, unwavering dedication and a fierce commitment to academic excellence and the Jesuit mission." During that tenure, Cornacchia has overseen

an expansion in academic programs, achieving university status, record fundraising hauls, a physical transformation of the campus, and much more. "As a new faculty member in 1981, I never could have imagined having the



opportunity to lead this great institution as president," Cornacchia said in a statement announcing his upcoming retirement. "Together, we have accomplished many of the goals I set out to

achieve for the University and I could not be more proud or more grateful for this incredible community. My love for Saint Peter's will never waver." "Dr. Cornacchia has been a visionary leader who has made an indelible mark on the institution. His collaborative leadership has brought Saint Peter's to new heights and his accomplishments have been immeasurable," said Kenneth Moore, chair of the Saint Peter's board. "The board of trustees is deeply grateful for President Cornacchia's dedication and service, and we are fortunate to have his leadership for another academic year."

**DONNA CUSTARD**

Custard has led the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation since 2015. The or-

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## POWER 50

ganization partners with national and New Jersey-based nonprofits, K-12 schools and other strategic stakeholders to prepare young adults for college and their careers. Bringing more than 30 years of nonprofit experience to this leadership role, Custard is responsible for directing program and service initiatives that



help drive current and future members of the workforce to be globally competitive, successful members of society. She is deeply involved with the foundation's flagship program – Jobs for New Jersey Graduates, assisting high-school students who were once considered at-risk for dropping out of school to graduate and go on to succeed in full-time jobs, the military, or post-secondary education. Throughout her career, her work has centered on education and workforce development initiatives including major fundraising campaigns and program design and implementation for system reform. Custard serves on a number of boards and committees pertaining to these areas including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Education, Employment and Training Committee; the NJBIA's Post-Secondary Education Taskforce; New Jersey STEM Pathways Network; and more. She is

a sought-after speaker and recognized for her work, including being a past honoree on this list.

### GREGORY DELL'OMO

Dell'Omo has served as Rider University's seventh president since 2015. During that time, he has overseen a variety of innovative programs and initiatives such as Our Path Forward – the university's comprehensive multi-year strategic plan; Lifting Barriers – a series of measures intended to strengthen the overall

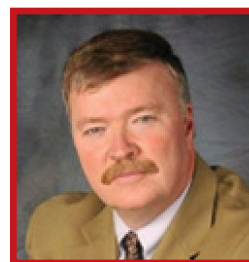


value of a Rider education; the Cranberry Investment program; as well as major fundraising hauls and projects on the physical campus. In May, he was named chair of the Audit Committee for the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, which includes an appointment to the NAICU Executive Committee. "The organization is a critical advocate for private, nonprofit higher education institutions and works to ensure that all students, regardless of income, have access to higher education," said Dell'Omo. "It is an honor to be represented among all these incredible leaders in educa-

tion," said Dell'Omo last year in a statement announcing his inclusion on last year's Power 50 list. "I share this honor with all of my colleagues at Rider who make it such a special place. Our students thrive because of the support they receive from Rider's dedicated community."

### JOHN FARMER JR.

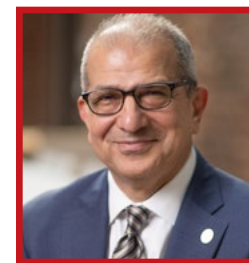
Since 2019, Farmer has led the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University – a leading voice and barometer on state and national political issues. The Institute politics through research, education and public service, linking study with its day-to-day practice. The academic institute branches out to an array of centers, such as the Center for American



Women and Politics, which focuses on studying and promoting greater female participation in public life; the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling that gauges both state and nationwide opinion on public issues; and the Center on the American Governor, which researches and examines the role of the state executives in politics and government. Farmer also continues his leadership of the Miller Center on Policing and Community Resilience, which he has led since its inception in 2015. His career has spanned private practice and the public sector including high-profile government positions and appointments such as serving as New Jersey's attorney general from 1999 to 2002 and as senior counsel and team leader for the 9/11 Commission. Farmer, who decided earlier in the year to step down, now passes the baton of the director role to Elizabeth Matto, effective Sept. 1.

### NARIMAN FARVARDIN

The school year is already off to a good start in Hoboken, where Farvardin leads Stevens Institute of Technology as president. Currently in his third term, he was most recently – and unanimously – retained in the post by

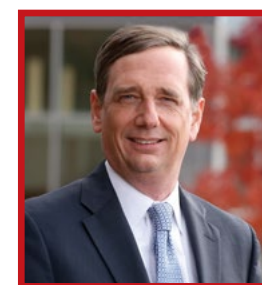


the school's board of governors in 2020. This fall, Farvardin welcomed the Class of 2027, selected from a "record-breaking" more than 14,000 applications, a 13% increase over the year prior. In addition to a 5% increase in applicants for the graduate set, Stevens added 30 new faculty members. Meanwhile, Stevens' construction of the infrastructure to support its growing community continues, including with new classrooms and offices. In September, Stevens also followed up its August placement on The Princeton

Review's best colleges list with the 36th-spot on the Best Colleges in the U.S. list from The Wall Street Journal/College Pulse. The school scored a 96 out of 100 for salary impact compared to similar colleges, tying with Yale, Stanford and Duke universities. All a testament to the transformation Farvardin has led since assuming his role in 2011. In Fiscal Year 2023, Stevens secured \$76.6 million in research awards, besting a record set the previous year; for 2024, already more than \$17 million has been collected. Over the summer, the school netted nearly \$1 million from the federal government that will go toward amplifying research computing infrastructure to support initiatives in AI, flood protection and fintech. Farvardin has also been recognized for the infrastructure he's helped to build behind the scenes at Stevens. Last month, he was recognized with the Chief Executive HR Champion Award, honoring a president or chancellor of a higher education institution who has demonstrated significant support for their school's human resources department. In the announcement, the organization noted "Stevens' institutional transformation during his tenure as president."

### AARON FICHTNER

The New Jersey Council of County Colleges supports the state's 18 such institutions, which together enroll more than 180,000 people each year across credit, non-credit and workforce development courses across upwards of 70 campuses. Fichtner, a former New Jersey labor and workforce development



commissioner, is the president of NJCCC, where he has expanded collaboration among community colleges as well as built partnerships with statewide organizations.

The school's commitment to helping the state reach its goal of hitting 65% post-secondary attainment for New Jerseyans by 2025 is underscored in its Vision 2028 framework, putting people on the path to education. In 2021, NJCCC, with the NJBIA, launched another path with a program to connect residents with work; since then, the New Jersey Pathways to Career Opportunities Initiative has engaged more than 1,200 industry and education partners in addition to connecting and enhancing 22 education and training initiatives to four fast-growing industries. And the program is seeking to continue that growth. At the start of the summer, Fichtner welcomed nearly 200 attendees to the two-day New Jersey Pathways to Career Opportunities Summit in Atlantic City. "[W]e are charting the course for the future of the New Jersey Pathways to Career Opportunities Initiative," he said. "Building on the momentum of the first year ... our conversations with these experts will help us solidify a strong,

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**Merodie A. Hancock, PhD.**  
President, Thomas Edison State University

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flexible, and sustainable infrastructure of collaboration that engages industry and education partners across the state to align education to build an innovative workforce.”

## PERRY HALKITIS

Halkitis is dean of the Rutgers School of Public Health, Hunterdon Professor of Public Health & Health Equity, and distinguished professor of biostatistics and epidemiology as well as the founder and director of the Center for Health, Identity, Behavior & Prevention Studies and a primary member of the Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey and the



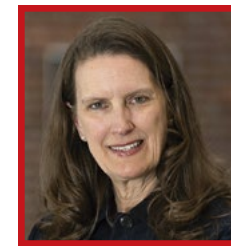
Global Health Institute. He was elected chair-elect of the Association of Schools & Programs of Public Health, beginning a three-year term in March 2022 leading the strategic vision of the board of directors as chair-elect, chair and immediate past chair over the term. Appropriately, Halkitis takes a public-facing approach to his work. Readers perhaps recognize him from media appearances and efforts to spread awareness throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Halkitis also took a public stand in December when the School of Public Health an-

nounced it would leave Twitter in the wake of Elon Musk’s takeover of the platform. Over the summer, he offered context in a piece praising the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s decision to update its blood donation policy to allow gay and bisexual men to contribute – changing a policy “rooted in antiquated science regarding HIV, as well as, in ignorance and hate,” that he – and others – have actively lobbied against since its enactment in the 1980s. Though he noted the shift was “long overdue, yet imperfect,” Halkitis said the move was “a huge step forward in our fight to destigmatize the lives of gay and bisexual men and the LGBTQ+ populations more broadly.” This past spring, Halkitis was recognized by the New Jersey Public Health Association with its highest honor, the Dennis J. Sullivan Award.

## MERODIE HANCOCK

Thomas Edison State University serves a “diverse population, where most students are older,” TESU President Hancock, the school’s fourth leader, explained to NJBIZ earlier this year. “They’re in a different place, compared to many other students. But TESU was founded, 50 years ago, in complete alignment with a career orientation, with a mission of filling in the gaps, especially for adult students. So we’ve always balanced the academic approach with the practitioner’s approach.” And in its

51st year, TESU is still taking those steps for its students. In Fiscal Year 2022, the university awarded more than 250,000 credits through a variety of prior learning assessments and introduced new financial initiatives. The Garden State Guarantee offers full-time students no tuition costs if they have an adjusted gross income of \$65,000 or less during their third and fourth year of study, while



GO-TESU scholarships started in September—marking the first time the school has had state-funded financial assistance for students taking fewer than 12 credits. In addition to state supported aid, the university recently disbursed the largest ever amount of private scholarship monies raised by its foundation, with more than \$563,000 going out to over 400 students. On the horizon, and marking one of the largest grants its ever received, TESU will use \$2.8 million from the U.S. Department of Labor to expand nursing in high-need areas—a concern locally with an estimated 14,000 open nursing positions in the state, and more broadly across the U.S. The program seeks to support public-private partnerships that expand and diversify that workforce, with a particular focus on developing professional pathways for frontline

mental health professionals to advance in their careers.

## RICHARD HELLDOBLER

In 2018, Helldobler assumed the presidency of Wayne-based William Paterson University – one of the state’s largest and diverse public universities. He brings more than 30 years of higher education experience to the role and, like many William Paterson students, is a first-generation student of immigrant heritage. Since taking the helm as the school’s eighth president, Helldobler has established



new programs to expand access, increase retention and completion and make the university more equitable and inclusive. Some of the efforts he has spearheaded include the Pledge 4 Success program, which fills the gap between tuition and fees and aid for qualifying students; the implementation of new first-year experience program; an expansion of the Wayne campus; the launch of WP Online; and more. Last month, William Paterson announced the establishment of a dedicated School of Nursing as its program has grown to one of the largest in the state and amid staff-

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ing shortages in the sector, with Dr. Minerva Salinas Guttman serving as founding associate dean. “Our nursing programs have experienced tremendous growth in recent years, demonstrating how vital William Paterson and our graduates are to the future of New Jersey health care,” Helldobler said in a statement. “[O]ur new School of Nursing will allow us to sustain and leverage that growth to expand strategic partnerships with health care providers and better serve our students and alumni.”

## JUNE HUH

A mathematics professor at Princeton University, Huh made headlines last fall as one of the 25 recipients of a fellowship so prestigious it’s informally known as the “genius grant.” Joining a cohort that includes scientists, authors, artists and activists who have demonstrated exceptional originality and dedication to their creative pursuits, Huh was selected as a 2022 MacArthur Fellow for “reinvigorating the



field of geometric combinatorics and inspiring a new generation of mathematicians” through his “innovative approach and fruitful collaborations with others” and will receive a no-strings-attached

\$800,000 grant over the next five years. Born in California, Huh and his family moved to Seoul, South Korea, where his father taught statistics and his mother taught Russian literature. He went on to receive a bachelor’s degree and master’s degree from Seoul National University and a PhD from the University of Michigan. Despite having won numerous accolades, Huh didn’t always have an interest in math. As a child, Huh enjoyed puzzles and logic games, but did not like math as it was taught in school. While he did well in most subjects, Huh did not excel in math and even briefly dropped out of high school to become a poet, according to *The New York Times*. However, his outlook on math changed after meeting Heisuke Hironaka, the 1970 recipient of the most prestigious prize in mathematics – the Fields Medal – as an undergraduate. Prior to joining the Princeton faculty in 2021, Huh held positions at Stanford University and the Institute for Advanced Study.

## TONY IACONO

As the third president of the County College of Morris, Iacono is widely recognized as one of the most esteemed leaders in New Jersey higher education. Since his arrival in 2016, he has been instrumental in building partnerships that help promote career education, including tie-ups with the Morris County Chamber of Commerce and the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program. A community college graduate himself, Iacono believes the institution has the ability to strengthen

lives and communities through academic programs that are affordable, as well as for being able to create a pipeline of highly skilled workers for business and industry. In addition to involvement with numerous associations, both in education and business, Iacono has



served as an advisor to the U.S. Department of Education, Florida Department of Education and various national educational reform organizations. Before becoming president at CCM, Iacono spent 17

years at Indian River State College in Florida, starting as an associate professor of history and rising to become vice president of academic affairs.

## CINDY JEBB

Ramapo College of New Jersey’s first woman president, Jebb began leading the Mahwah-based public liberal arts institution in 2021, succeeding Peter Mercer. Appointed unanimously by the board of trustees, Jebb is a retired U.S. Army brigadier general whose 39-year-career in the service included being the first woman dean at the United States Military Academy at West Point. So far, her tenure at the state’s premier liberal arts college has included the development of an operations plan to ensure a healthy, safe and vibrant student experience while embracing a culture of dignity and respect. Moreover, under Jebb’s leadership, the college is launching its next strategic plan, *Boldly Ascending*, focused on fostering academic excellence and student success, an inclusive community and stewardship. Jebb believes the 54-year-old college “has an essential role as a public institution



that promotes the liberal arts” and “the idea of thinking from all different angles and having an interdisciplinary take on those challenges that require innovative solutions.” As such, Ramapo has leaned

into new programs and opportunities, while exploring ways to become more affordable, accessible, diverse and equitable. Post-pandemic, Jebb thinks it’s more important than ever to become attuned to the needs and well-being of its community, capitalizing on technology and finding new ways of accomplishing its mission of ensure students are prepared to thrive in a changing world.

## JONATHAN KOPPELL

Koppell took the helm as Montclair State’s ninth president in August 2021, following a successful stint in leadership at Arizona State University. He is known as a visionary leader and nationally recognized scholar on policy, organization and management with an emphasis on public service and solutions-oriented com-

munity engagement. Koppell described joining the school as the opportunity of a lifetime. “At a pivotal moment in higher education, this university – with its deep commitment to serving the public interest and advancing student



success – has an opportunity to define the future,” Koppell said in his welcome message to the MSU community. “I am confident we can build on the University’s strong foundation of excel-

lence in bold, imaginative ways to contribute to the prosperity, health, and well-being of New Jersey and the nation.” Evidence of his innovative thinking was on display as he helped spearhead the Montclair State and Bloomfield College merger, which was announced last October. “Students enrolled at Bloomfield College will benefit from a distinctive educational environment offering a supportive, small college experience enhanced by the resources of a comprehensive public research university,” Koppell said at the time. “This partnership would serve as a new national model for how institutions with similar missions can innovate through integration and become partners in ensuring student success instead of competitors.”

## PATRICK LEAHY

Since joining Monmouth University as its 10th president in 2019, Leahy has been a busy man – leading the school through the throes of the pandemic while also securing record philanthropic hauls and implementing an ambitious five-year strategic plan – “Access. Excellence. Ambition.” He led Monmouth’s move to join the Coastal Athletic Association last year – one of the top mid-major athletic conferences in the country. And Leahy has overseen efforts to physically transform the West



Long Branch campus through a number of investments and projects while Monmouth also continues to shoot up the rankings of top colleges in national publications. “Our remarkable coastal loca-

tion is the perfect launching point for students to reach beyond their own perceived potential. As we embrace the privilege and responsibility of becoming a university on the leading edge of learning and research, our future is even brighter,” Leahy writes in his welcome message on the school’s website. “We will continue to build on Monmouth’s reputation for excellence – especially through our nationally recognized centers of excellence, including the Urban Coast Institute, Monmouth University Polling Institute, and the Bruce Springsteen Archives and Center for American Music.” Leahy serves as chair of the Springsteen Center.

## REGINALD LEWIS

Since 2020, Lewis has served as the executive director of the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership and Adjunct Professor at Seton Hall University. The Center, which moved to Seton Hall in 2019 following a national search, is the leading international nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the awareness, understanding, and practice of servant leadership. Lewis brings extensive experience from the philanthropic, nonprofit, government, and higher education sectors to the role. His career has spanned a number of notable chapters and roles, including being appointed by President Barack Obama to the U.S. Commission on

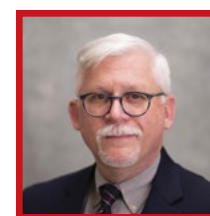


Presidential Scholars and being appointed by Gov. Phil Murphy to serve as co-chair of one of five working groups for the implementation of the New Jersey Higher Education Plan. “When I re-

fect on the opportunities I’ve had across various sectors, I feel grateful,” Lewis said in a 2020 Seton Hall spotlight on his arrival at the Greenleaf Center. “Because we’re here in the New York/New Jersey Metro Area, we have an opportunity to build and strengthen our regional constituency base of people interested in servant leadership. And Seton Hall has longstanding values around servant leadership and creating graduates who are not just competent in their chosen disciplines but are also conscious about creating a better society. So, considering the values that we profess at Greenleaf, I see only synergies moving forward.”

## MARK MCCORMICK

Since his appointment as president of Middlesex College in July 2018, McCormick has focused on providing wider access to college, improving student success outcomes, and preparing graduates for success. Under his leadership, Middlesex College has significantly lowered the tuition rate, doubled participation in dual enrollment and created pathways to a degree while students are in high school. He has also championed the transition to free and low-cost alternatives to high-cost textbooks, including the development of Open Educational Resources. An advocate for



student success, McCormick encouraged and supported faculty in the reform of developmental education, leading to improved success rates in gateway courses in English

and mathematics, shortened time for students to complete an associate degree, and higher graduation rates. He also believes in the value of preparing students for careers by engaging them in experiential learning and equipping

them with skills that are valued by employers. Over the summer, Rutgers Athletics and Middlesex County entered into a letter of intent that includes designating the future Multipurpose Community Venue on Middlesex College's campus as a home field for Rutgers Baseball, starting in 2026.

## MARGARET MCMENAMIN

Since becoming the first female president of Union College of Union County in 2010, McMenamin set an agenda centering on improving student outcomes. She revitalized student services, strengthened advising, and joined with faculty to improve teaching and learning. As a result, the college has more than quintupled its graduation rate. This year, the school was named one of the top 25 community colleges in the U.S. by the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. In 2020, McMenamin was named the Marie Y. Martin CEO of the Year by the Association of Community College Trustees. In 2019, she served as chair of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.



Currently, she serves as vice chair of the Advisory Board of the Higher Education Research and Development Institute, and a member of the executive committee of the

NJ Presidents' Council, the NJCAA Presidents' Advisory Council, and the board of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities. Outside the college, McMenamin is involved with community organizations, including the boards of Trinitas Hospital, Union County Crime Stoppers, Elizabeth Development Co., the NJ-PBS Community Advisory Board and other organizations.

## PATRICK MURRAY

Buckle up, political pundits and other polling fans – the next two years are going to be wild. All eyes will be focused on the presidential campaign next year and a gubernatorial campaign for an open seat in 2025. And of course, there's are legislative elections this year and another set of contests in 2024 over some of the most highly competitive congressional districts in the country. So for the foreseeable future, the state will be awash in a sea of public opinion surveys. And Murray runs



the gold standard Monmouth University poll, one of the most highly regarded measures of opinion in the country. In fact, it is one of a handful

of top polls; Monmouth is recognized as rigorous and reliable, consistently receiving an A rating from 538.com. Murray himself routinely

appears on television news programs covering national elections and is a go-to source for political journalists. Each month, the pollster and his team survey hundreds of people on topics from politicians to pandemic woes to spending plans.

## SAYMAH NAH

Nah is the executive director of Gateway U, a hybrid college experience that offers one-on-one support to learners enrolled in Southern New Hampshire University's accredited degree programs and is committed to supporting students traditionally underserved by the post-secondary system. A Newark native, Nah saw the recurring cycle of poverty within a large segment of the Black community, the trauma it inflicted and its connection to systemic racism. She dedicated herself to finding methods that increase upward mobility in the Black community and to maneuver the system in ways that would verily change it. Gateway U is the first of its kind in New Jersey and Nah's



work is divided into three sectors: administration, community engagement and student development. Unlike other hybrid colleges, Gateway U

offers a community-based approach to challenging the notion that degrees attained virtually are not accredited. The hybrid college model exemplifies that there is more than one way to achieve a four-year degree, one that is more accessible and more affordable than traditional institutions.

## CHRIS REBER

Reber is the sixth president of Hudson County Community College, taking on the role in one of the most densely populated and diverse areas in the U.S. in 2018. Under his guidance, the school serves more than 18,000 credit and non-credit students and employs over 1,000 people across three urban campuses. And from his post, Reber has been instrumental in connecting HCCC to its communities through a series of local, regional and national partnerships. In the spring, the school signed an articulation agreement with Felician University to streamline degree access for accounting and business students. Other partners include New Jersey Reentry Corp.,



which announced with HCCC at the start of the year a new program for Phlebotomy Technician Certification. HCCC has shown progress in gaining

back students lost during its virtual pivot due to the pandemic, with Reber telling NJBIZ in February that the college was up about 4% overall for enrollment with a 20% increase in new students. Last May, HCCC had a record 1,500

graduates. Reber has said the school is working on the way it delivers its courses – with online and hybrid formats – and on building services for students. All work that is being done intentionally. “Here, we have the opportunity where we're able to grow ... progressively,” Yeurys Pujols, vice president for diversity, equity, inclusion at Hudson County Community College said during a recent NJBIZ panel discussion, calling attention to the role Reber has played in making that happen. “The board wanted a president who would promote diversity, equity and inclusion, who would champion diversity, equity and inclusion. When Christopher Reber was appointed president, he quickly framed the guiding principles for the college as student success and diversity, equity and inclusion. And every plan that we have at the college is framed from those angles.” Pujols' position – in fact – is proof of that commitment; a product of an advisory council recommendation that Reber acted upon, in addition to launching an office dedicated to DEI. “This position is the first one-of-its-kind in the State of New Jersey for a community college,” Pujols noted.

## LAMONT REPOLLET

Since becoming president of Kean University in 2020, Repollet has launched several initiatives to not only raise the profile of the Union County-based public institution, but build a stronger, more vibrant community. During the second year of his presidency, Gov. Phil Murphy signed legislation designating Kean as the state's first urban research university. Now a state-designated public research university – joining a group that includes Rutgers, NJIT, Rowan University and Montclair State – Kean's status has been given a boost. Along with enhanced faculty and student recruitment, the designation increases student Tuition Aid Grant awards and helps steer re-



search grants to the school. Other achievements include the College of Business and Public Management's recent accreditation by the prestigious Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of

Business, as well as more than \$18 million in grant funding secured by faculty over the last year. During his annual Opening Day address earlier this month, Repollet said Kean is “on a transformational journey” along a path “full of innovation, progress and success.” As he begins his fourth year leading Kean, Repollet, the institution's first Black president, said he is “filled with a renewed sense of purpose and determination” and believes the university will “continue to break new ground” in a “new era marked by growth, innovation and equity.” Among the next initiatives on tap are the creation of a Student Bill of Rights for Advising, a revised general education curriculum, the launch of the Moon Shot for Equity initiative to

close equity gaps in higher education, and additional resources devoted to ongoing health and wellness programs.

## JEFFREY ROBINSON

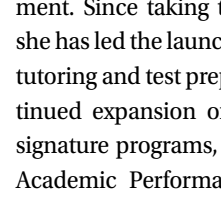
Speaking at the reopening of JBJ Soul Kitchen at Rutgers University-Newark last fall, college provost and executive vice chancellor Robinson remarked that the venture from Garden State rocker Jon Bon Jovi and his wife Dorethea was “a fantastic example of social entrepreneurship in action, when you build a restaurant that is meeting a social need, you demonstrate the power of a double bottom line.” And entrepreneurship in action is something the academic, author and advocate knows well. Robinson's research is focused at the intersection of business and society, with projects and initiatives addressing diversity, economic inclusion, inclusive entrepreneurship, and innovation. At Rutgers, the school's recent collaboration with Fiserv on the Fiserv-RU-N Program for Inclusive Innovation is just one



example of such practical applications at work. Robinson is also a professor at Rutgers Business School, the co-founder and academic director of the Center for Urban Entrepreneurship and Economic Development and serves as Prudential chair in business at RU-Newark, a position he assumed last fall that employs a multidisciplinary approach to business education. Upon his appointment in the latter position, RU-N Chancellor Nancy Cantor said Robinson was the “perfect match” for the role, describing him as “a pioneer in social entrepreneurship and a steadfast builder of inclusive innovation.”

## ANNE HUNTINGTON SHARMA

The president of Oradell-based Huntington Learning Center – the nation's leading tutoring and test prep provider – Sharma oversees business strategy and growth initiatives, including partnerships, marketing, digital and technological transformation, as well as franchise develop-



ment. Since taking the role in October 2019, she has led the launch of the company's virtual tutoring and test prep platform, as well as continued expansion of several of Huntington's signature programs, including Study Hall and Academic Performance Coach. Founded in 1977 by her parents, Eileen and Ray Huntington, the business now has over 300 franchise and company-owned locations across the U.S. The second generation family leader of the company, Sharma joined the business nine years ago as a director. She went on to hold

positions as head of public-private partnerships and then as vice president of business development, a role in which she worked to develop and execute programs and partnerships that positioned the company to help more students. Additionally, Sharma is active within arts, education and business organizations, including the Learning Disabilities Association of America, NYC's Coalition for the Homeless, Women's Franchise Committee for the International Franchise Association, International Director's Council at the Guggenheim Museum and the Future Leadership Council at the Whitney Museum. She is also involved in the arts as a collector, producer, philanthropist, curator and founder of AMH Industries, a creative agency for contemporary art and culture. In addition to curating more than 30 exhibits across the U.S. and raising over \$30 million for philanthropic causes, Sharma served as an associate producer for two documentaries, "The Art of Making It," and "The Price of Everything," which scored an Emmy nomination.

## MONIKA WILLIAMS SHEALEY

Previously the inaugural senior vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion at Rowan University, Shealey was appointed in July as dean of Temple University's College of Education and Human Development. Her departure comes after a decade at Glassboro-based Rowan, where she began as the first African American dean of the College of Education. She was then tapped in 2019 by President Ali Houshmand to lead a new Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, a first-of-its kind initiative in the region that



strives to be a model for systemic change in higher education that results in equitable outcomes for students, faculty and staff. As senior vice president for DEI, Shealey worked directly with the Division's leadership team to facilitate and oversee a DEI council and support the development of departmental strategic action plans. Earlier this year, she was named as chair of the board of directors for the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. Considered the leading voice on educator preparation, the organization represents more than 800 postsecondary education institutions. In announcing the successor of interim CEHD dean James Earl Davis, Temple University Provost Gregory Mandel described Shealey as "the perfect person" for the role and cited her past experience with strategic planning, innovative program development, community engagement and higher education leadership. He added, "At Rowan, she led a 3,000-student college with a mission that aligns closely with our College of Education and Human Development. At Temple and CEHD, we promote education as a primary mechanism for social mobility and social justice for all learners.

Monika's vision and career track record as a leader in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion align beautifully with that."

## SEAN SPILLER

As president of the New Jersey Education Association, Spiller leads the largest and most politically influential union in the state, with 200,000-plus members. After being reelected to the post by acclamation – which occurs when only one candidate files petitions required to run – Spiller began his second term in office Sept. 1 and will helm the union through August 2025. While testifying before the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee, Spiller outlined several organizational priorities in the coming fiscal year, including the need for increased investment in community colleges, financial support for retired educators who have not received a cost-of-living adjustment for many years, and more resources for educator recruitment and retention. Spiller also addressed the need for emergency assistance for districts affected by S-2 state aid reductions. After completing undergraduate studies at Rutgers University and

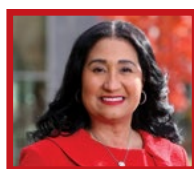


earning a master's degree from Ramapo College of New Jersey, Spiller taught at Wayne Valley High School for several years. Also the mayor of Montclair, Spiller is an up-and-

comer in the Democratic party and widely rumored as a 2025 gubernatorial candidate. In October 2022, Spiller launched Protecting Our Democracy, a 501(c)(4) issue advocacy organization that he says aims to "restore confidence in government and unity in our country." The issue advocacy group's founding donor is the NJEA.

## CATHERINE FRUGÉ STARGHILL

As vice president of the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, Starghill leads a statewide coalition of industry and education partners for the New Jersey Pathways to Career Opportunities initiative aligning education to the needs of the workforce to build a stronger economy. Created in 1989, NJCCC provides statewide leadership and support to the 18 community colleges across the state. With over 180,000 students enrolled annually in credit, non-credit and workforce development courses at more than 70 campuses throughout the



state, community colleges are uniquely positioned to help the economy grow, industries thrive and people succeed amid an era of rapid economic, social and technological changes. Starghill is also executive director of the New Jersey Community College Con-

sortium for Workforce and Economic Development, which is a subsidiary of NJCCC that works to bring together community colleges as a collective to provide workforce development training and solutions. The consortium also administers the renowned Workforce Literacy and Basic Skills training program at no charge to employers for current employees statewide. Before being named to those posts in September 2022, Starghill was director of strategy, outreach and communications at NJCCC, as well as the consortium's senior director of strategy and workforce partnerships.

## BRIAN STROM

As chancellor of the Rutgers School of Biomedical and Health Sciences, Strom is at the center of a major development project in New Brunswick. Back in March, the Rutgers University board of trustees cleared the way for construction to begin on first of three buildings in the transformative New Jersey Health + Life Science Exchange, better known as HELIX. The move followed approval from the university's Board of Governors



for a tentative \$567 million funding plan covering the school's contribution to the public-private endeavor that will house the Rutgers Robert

Wood Johnson Medical School and a Rutgers translational research facility. Funding also includes a \$200 million state appropriation from American Rescue Plan dollars and \$367 million of long-term debt, of which state authorized tax credits – under the New Jersey Economic Development Authority's Aspire program – will amortize approximately \$190 million. Rutgers said it will finance the remaining \$180 million of the cost through tax-exempt and taxable bonds. In total, the HELIX effort is estimated to cost \$732 million. "With the boards' approval, we will begin to bring together higher education institutions, health systems and the life sciences industry to revolutionize clinical and translational research – turning our groundbreaking research into care and cures," Strom said at the time. "Moving the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School into one state-of-the-art campus will improve medical students' experience through holistic medical education and opportunities for clinical experiences in all four years of medical school."

## ANTONIO TILLIS

After assuming the post of chancellor at Rutgers-Camden in July 2021, Tillis initiated a five-year strategic plan, "15 in 5," focused on enhancing the student educational experience and supporting growth and development of faculty and staff. As part of that plan, the university launched the Chancellor's

Mayoral Internship Program, which offers students the opportunity to work alongside civic leaders. Rutgers-Camden also rolled out expanded course offerings and international initiatives, as well as new graduate programs in finance wealth management and prevention science. A Carnegie R2 research institution, Rutgers-Camden brought in \$22.6 million in research funding last year, a 16% increase over funds awarded during the prior



year. Despite a challenging economic climate, Tillis reported during his Spring 2023 address that the university is experiencing a sharp increase in new student applications and that

he's confident it will achieve stronger enrollment in coming semesters because of efforts by deans, their teams and the school's enrollment managers. Before Rutgers-Camden, Tillis was interim president of the University of Houston–Downtown. His background also includes serving as dean of the School of Languages, Culture, and World Affairs at the College of Charleston in South Carolina, chairing the Department of African and African American Studies at Dartmouth College and serving as the inaugural director of the Latin American and Latino Studies Program at Purdue University. Regarded as a noted scholar in Afro-Hispanic studies, Tillis is also the co-editor of several books and publications, including the Afro-Hispanic Review.

## OYA TUKEL

Tukel is dean of the Martin Tuchman School of Management at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, having been named to the post in 2019. "I wanted to try the dean position before I retired," she told NJBIZ earlier this year. "I had 10 years of being a department head, and then I became an associate dean and I wanted to see what opportunities were out there for me to actually have a say in how the school will move forward." Now, she runs a school training a new generation of business leaders, including



young women seeking the same opportunities Tukel had. "Our priority is, of course, placing our students in the right jobs. Not any job, but the job where their background relates to

the requirements. So, the quality of the job matters and the quality of the student background matters. That match is very critical for us. That's the big thing right now – the perception [of] higher education," Tukel said. She joined NJIT after 27 years at Cleveland State University, where she developed considerable expertise in supply chain management, a subject now recognized as being critically important to the state and national economy.

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