

## President's Report

---

TO: Atlantic Cape Community College Board of Trustees  
FROM: Dr. Barbara Gaba  
DATE: June 24, 2025  
(Mays Landing Campus)



### *Commencement*

- Atlantic Cape celebrated its 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Commencement Ceremony on our Mays Landing Campus on May 22. Over 890 students were eligible to graduate this academic year, and 887 students earned their associate degree and 37 were awarded certificates. In attendance at the ceremony were 431 graduates and their families who celebrated their academic accomplishments.
- Eric Scheffler, the Executive Director of the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA), delivered the Keynote Address, advising graduates to remember the strength of kindness and to be kind in their pursuit of their dreams and life moving forward as they move on from Atlantic Cape. The student speakers, SGA President Juwan Torres and 4.0 High Honors student Roman Segov, had inspiring remarks for their fellow graduates. Trustee Rev. Dr. Thomas Dawson delivered the Invocation and Benediction, and the Director of Student Support Services, Rashawn Martin, sang the National Anthem.
- Since 2018, Atlantic Cape Community College has partnered with local high schools to offer Early College programs, allowing students to earn college credits while still in high school. Through dual credit, concurrent courses, articulated credit, and associate pathways, students can save time and money,

get a head start on a degree, and transfer credits—all at reduced tuition. To date, 208 students have graduated from the program.

#### *Academy of the Culinary Arts Award Ceremony*

- The *Academy of Culinary Arts Awards Ceremony* was held on May 21 to recognize students with medals and certificates for completing their programs.

#### *Nursing Pinning Ceremony*

- The *Nurses Pinning Ceremony* was held on May 21 for the nursing graduates who received their pins, took a vow to care for the sick, recited the Florence Nightingale pledge, and received awards and honors.

#### *Trustee Spotlight*

- **Chairperson Daniel Money** was awarded the *2025 New Jersey Council of County Colleges Distinguished Alumnus Award* by the New Jersey Council of Community Colleges (NJCCC) at their *NJ Pathways to Career Opportunities Summit* on June 5, 2025 at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Atlantic City.

#### *Inlet Development Corporation (CDC)*

- Atlantic Cape’s Inlet team met with Ocean Casino leadership on-site to deliver a comprehensive update on the Atlantic Cape Inlet CDC’s initiatives on June 10. **Dr. Natalie Devonish** presented a detailed review of the project's progress since 2023, highlighting significant milestones and their impacts. The meeting also provided a special opportunity to express gratitude to Ocean Casino for their continued sponsorship, marking the second consecutive year of valued partnership.
- Atlantic Cape’s Inlet CDC sponsored the annual Juneteenth celebration at McClinton Park in Atlantic City on June 19. In partnership with the College’s Recruitment team, they also hosted an information table to share educational and workforce development resources with community members.

#### *Leadership Spotlight*

- **Dr. Natalie Devonish, Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management**, recently participated as a panelist at the NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) Convening for the “Some College, No

Degree” initiative. During the session titled “From Stagnation to Success: How Policy Adjustments Can Support ‘Some College, No Degrees’ Students’,” Dr. Devonish highlighted our strategic efforts in process mapping and re-engaging adult stop-out students.

- **Vanessa O’Brien-McMasters, Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and Chief Strategy Officer**, led a panel discussion at the NJCCC Summit along with representatives from Hudson County Community College, Union College of Union County, and the New Jersey Council of Community Colleges (NJCCC) on how to effectively serve adult learners. She shared the strategic initiatives implemented by Atlantic Cape to improve enrollment and retention rates for adult learners.

### *Alumni Spotlight*

- Former Alumni Trustee, **Hailie Nguyen**, graduated from Rutgers Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy with a Bachelor of Science in Healthcare Administration on May 18. Hailie graduated with Magna Cum Laude (High Honors).
- **Marissa Kozlowski**, an alumna of Atlantic Cape Community College and former student athlete, has been named head coach of the Harford Community College women’s volleyball team. A former NCAA Division I athlete, Kozlowski returned to the court at Atlantic Cape before completing her collegiate career at Rutgers University–Camden. She brings over a decade of coaching experience, including leading Maryland Juniors teams to multiple USAV National qualifications. Kozlowski now takes the helm at Harford, aiming to build on the program’s recent success.



### **Grant Updates**

- Atlantic Cape Community College has been awarded **\$1,550,319** as part of the *U.S. Department of Labor’s Strengthening Community Colleges (Round 5)*

grant, through a partnership led by Ocean County College. This funding will support workforce training in high-demand healthcare fields, including Practical Nursing, Paramedic, EMT, Phlebotomy, and Medical Assistant programs. The initiative aims to meet industry needs and enhance workers' skills in alignment with the goals of the national Strengthening Community Colleges initiative.

- Atlantic Cape has been awarded up to **\$1 million** in grant funding from the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The funding will support the *Digital Equity Training Program initiative*, which aims to enhance digital literacy and technology skills among the WorkFirst New Jersey population in Atlantic and Cape May counties. The program will run from June 1, 2025, through May 31, 2026.
- The College has also been awarded **\$474,227** from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for our *Advanced Technological Education (ATE)* Grant application. Professors **Dr. Otto Hernandez, Dr. Bojan Zilovic, and Michele Togashi** developed a grant proposal to initiate the creation of an *AI/Machine Learning Degree option and Certificate program* at the College, providing more opportunities to the community we serve in this growing industry.
- The Atlantic Cape Community College Foundation is among 37 organizations that received grants this week from the Atlantic City Community Fund, in partnership with the Community Foundation of South Jersey. The recipients were recognized during a celebration at Cardinal Restaurant in Atlantic City, honoring their contributions to the community. Established in 2017, the fund supports initiatives in education, youth development, arts, public health, and community services.

### **Community Outreach – Cape May**

- The Cape May County Campus hosted a workshop for graduating seniors from Lower Cape May Regional High School, sponsored by New Jersey Statewide Student Support Services (NJ4S) and Acenda Health, as they transitioned from high school to college or the workforce on May 28. The event featured

discussions on mental health awareness, personal safety and self-defense training, Narcan training, and much more.

- **Chris Stenger, the Director of the Cape May County bizHub, and Krista McConnell, the Director of the Cape May County Campus and Community Outreach,** visited the Middle Township Senior Center on May 21. Krista introduced the Senior Adult Gaining Education and Stimulation (SAGES) program, which allows senior adults to earn college credit or professional development through courses and workshops offered by Atlantic Cape. Chris highlighted the unique services provided by the Cape May County bizHub for business owners and entrepreneurs located on our Cape May County Campus.
- **Krista McConnell and Chris Stenger** also attended the Cape May County Chambers of Commerce Summer Kick-Off Mixer on June 3. This event provided an excellent opportunity for Krista and Chris to meet new business owners starting their first summer season in Cape May County and share with them the resources that Atlantic Cape and the Cape May bizHub have to offer as they begin their first summer at the Jersey Shore.

### **Student Engagement**

- Atlantic Cape's Pride Club hosted a flag-raising ceremony to commemorate *Pride Month* on our Mays Landing Campus on June 3. The event celebrated diversity, inclusion, and the LGBTQ+ community, bringing together students, faculty, and staff to show their support and solidarity.