

# A YEAR OF **CHANGE** AND **NEW BEGINNINGS**

Annual Report 2020



Sussex  County  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE



## A Letter from **Dr. Jon Connolly,** **President**

Dear Friends of Sussex County Community College:

This last year has been unlike any other in the history of higher education, and Sussex County Community College's mission has never been more important.

What we experienced this past year makes it clear that Sussex can meet the needs of our students and our community, even during times of significant challenge, disruption, and uncertainty. I am proud to present this report that looks back on the 2020-2021 academic year and everything we have accomplished to innovate and move forward as a united community.

Sussex strengthened safety protocols during 2020-2021 and made the campus safer for students, faculty, and staff. We worked with community organizations to offer resources and support while delivering programs that supply local businesses and employers with an educated workforce. We created more Career and Technical Education pathway programs from high school to the College, established new internship opportunities with employers, and launched innovative programs such as Electrical Lineworker and Medical Assisting.

To support our array of academic programs, we maintained a focus on renovating and innovating campus facilities. We completely transformed the Media Center during the Fall 2020 Semester. This state-of-the-art Center now includes an editing lab, green screens, and modern broadcasting equipment. Construction of the new Academic Center concluded during the Spring 2021 Semester and now houses Engineering and a Robotics program. This building extension includes the College's first lecture hall, modern makerspace, and high technology equipment supporting collaborative learning and modern curriculum. Additionally, the long-awaited Culinary Institute at the McGuire Technical Education Center broke ground in spring 2021. This new culinary space will include a training kitchen and indoor/outdoor restaurant.

The 2020-2021 academic year was historic for Skylanders athletics, with new football and wrestling programs. The addition of football marked the first time in New Jersey history that a two-year college offered football as an intercollegiate sport. We also sent our first wrestler to nationals in Iowa. In addition, men's soccer made it to the national tournament for the third time in the last five years.

Throughout the 2020-2021 academic year, the Sussex community persevered with dedication and an unyielding commitment to education. From the students to the faculty and staff, each member of the Sussex community exhibited character and determination in the face of insurmountable obstacles to keep the College going.

As a college community, we found success after success, despite many barriers. While we are not out of the COVID-19 challenge yet, we are more educated and better positioned to adapt to changing circumstances so that we can continue to educate our future leaders.

With gratitude,

Jon H. Connolly, Ph.D.

President



## Sussex Administration

Dr. Jon Connolly, President

Ketan Gandhi, CFO and Executive Vice President of Administrative Services

Dr. Kathleen Okay, Senior Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs

Sherry Fitzgerald, Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Arts and Humanities

Cory Homer, Associate Vice President of Student Success and Institutional Effectiveness

Nancy Gallo, J.D., Dean of Professional Studies, Social Sciences, and STEM

John Kuntz, Dean of Student Affairs and Director of Athletics

Jason Fruge, Dean of Technical Occupations

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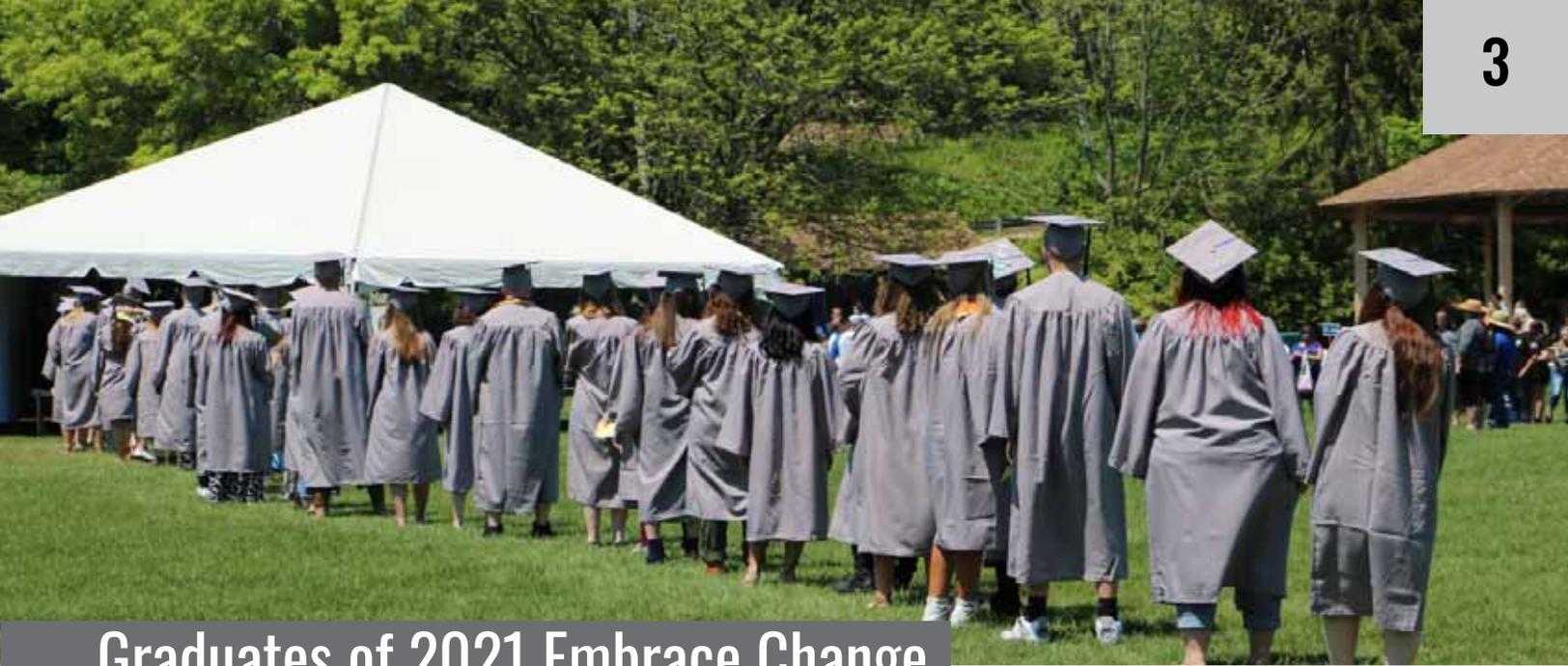
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## Sussex County Community College Vision

Sussex County Community College will be a leader in NJ Higher Education as a premier provider of 21st-century learning opportunities, professional training, and skills development to meet the needs of the people of our community in a globally competitive environment.

## Sussex County Community College Mission

We transform lives by providing lifelong learning opportunities through high quality academic, career and enrichment programs in an accessible and supportive environment to ensure student success.



## Graduates of 2021 Embrace Change

With the challenging year facing so many of us, it was no different for the spring '21 graduates.

Students at many colleges spent much of their time learning remotely while missing the traditional college experience. This was disappointing for many students.

Sussex was fortunate to have a committed and hard-working group of students who knew that the best way to prepare for success was to stay engaged and on track with their studies. Thanks to their remarkable level of dedication and perseverance they were able to earn their degree.

As the 2021 Commencement grew closer, it was apparent that many of the students would have the traditional commencement experience they had hoped to receive. Students heard their names read, received their diplomas from President Connolly, and walked across the stage as planned.

Pictured: Graduates from the Class of 2021 and the administration at the May Commencement Ceremony.





## Achievements, Honors, and Awards

### Sussex Celebrates the Nursing Graduates at the 26th Annual Ceremony

On January 11, 2021, Sussex recognized ten students at a Nurse Pinning Ceremony in the Performing Arts Center. Pinning the nurse graduates this year was Catherine Nelms, Sussex Assistant Professor of Nurse Education and Sussex Instructor Patricia Aprile.

At the awards ceremony there was a candlelighting and the recitation of the International Council of Nurses Pledge. Remote congratulatory speeches were given by President Connolly, PCCC President Rose, and administrators from both Sussex and Passaic County Community College.

### Sussex Unveils New Honor Society, Focusing on Leadership and Success

The Campus Life Office added a new addition to the Honors Society programs at Sussex. They worked with the National Society of Leadership and Success to bring a Chapter to the College. In December, Campus Life received a grant to implement the Honors Program.



This program is for members who look to build their leadership skills through participation at their campus or online. Upon completion of the program, members receive their leadership certificate and take their place among the top student leaders at Sussex and across the country.

Top Left Image: Nursing graduates back row, left to right: Jonathan Miebach, Hollie DeBlock, Christy Smetana, Elizabeth Publik, and Jennifer Fattorusso  
Front row, left to right: Shannon Mahoney, Kirsten Go, Alondra Lorenzo, Victoria Haltner, and Michelle Franco

Top Right Image: Iliana Woodhall and Rhianna Bender pose with their Phi Theta Kappa medallion at the May Commencement Ceremony.

### Sussex honors Phi Theta Kappa Students

The New Jersey Council of County Colleges honored 37 students from the state's 18 community colleges who were named to the 2021 New Jersey All-State Academic Team for their outstanding academic achievements and exceptional service to their communities and colleges. These students are members of Phi Theta Kappa, International College Honor Society. Sussex students Iliana Mendoza Cobos and Rhiannon Bender received this honor.

"Serving my community and school has been rewarding, and I owe my success to all the support I have received from my professors and peers. This honor has made me realize that this joy I feel is not about what I have accomplished for myself, but it is about all of those who I have inspired along the way, especially my daughter," said Iliana.

"Phi Theta Kappa has given me the ability to grow as an individual into a community that is much greater than myself. I will always be thankful for and proud of this gift of academic honor and the chance to make a difference. My goal will always be to leave the world better than I found it," said Rhiannon.

### Students Make the Dean's List

The College was proud to announce that 470 students, who showed the academic achievement required, made the Dean's List for the spring 2020 semester and 465 students for the fall 2020 semester. For a student to be named on the Dean's List, they must have a semester (full-time students) or cumulative (part-time students) grade point average of at least 3.5.

# Sussex Breaks Ground on the Culinary Institute

The College's announcement about beginning a new expansion project for the Culinary program comes with tasty news.

Renovations at the College's McGuire Technical Education Center on Main Street in Newton, began on June 7th and is anticipated to be ready for classes in early 2022. In addition, the Sussex Culinary Institute will include a training kitchen, commercial kitchen, and a restaurant that will be open to the public.

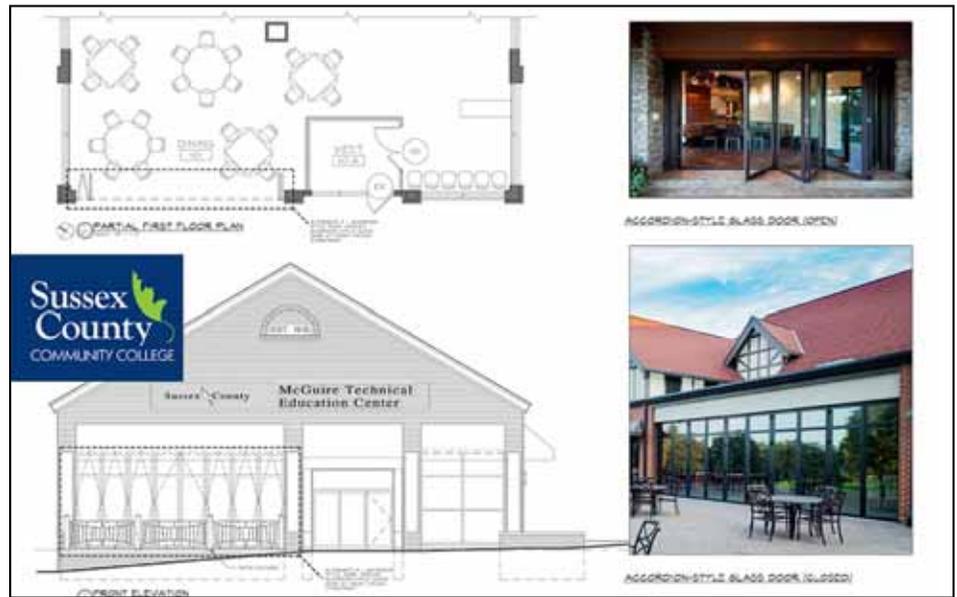
"I am thrilled this project is getting underway," said Martin Kester, Supervisor of Culinary Arts and Hospitality at Sussex. "It's going to be a truly unique facility for its size and scope. Small enough to be very approachable and student-focused but have the means to accomplish anything we can imagine."

The dining room will feature accordion-style glass doors to allow for more spacing and outdoor dining in warmer weather. The restaurant will host special events, guest-chef dinners, and cooking workshops open to the community.

"It's going to be wonderful, not just for the College but also for the community at large," said President Connolly. "The Institute will have a life of its own and be a feeder for restaurants throughout the county and beyond."

It is anticipated that the restaurant will be open to the public on Thursdays and Fridays for lunch and dinner services, with a seating capacity of about 30-40.

"We want to create a challenging real-world scenario for the students while providing true hospitality to our guests," said Kester. "The goal is to have this be completely student-driven."



**"Our number one priority is to equip students with the tools necessary to be successful in the industry and to retain them with employment locally," said Kester. "Hospitality is a key part of our regional economy, and we aim to support that in any way we can."**

The menu will likely be a 3-course fixed-priced menu. The meals will be seasonally influenced, based on locally grown produce or by the Sussex Agriculture program, a tie-in with another Sussex program that has become widely popular.

While running a restaurant is nice, the end game provides a feeder job market for others.

Tammie Horsfield, President of the Sussex County Chamber of Commerce, agrees.

"This can assist local restaurants in attracting millennials and others to fill chef's positions," Horsfield said. "It may be an important piece of a restaurant's long-term business plan in the future. Not only will the program assist students in becoming professional chefs, it gives them a deeper appreciation for food, while learning about the health benefits it may bring to our community."

Top Right Images: A floor plan and exterior images show what the new space may look like. The renovation project is underway with interior views of the space.

# Celebrating Our Heroes

Thank you to the Sussex graduates and all essential workers who worked, and continue to work, on the frontline during the pandemic.



**Tara McGovern - 2015 Sussex Graduate**

Tara is currently working as a CLA at Newton Medical Center Laboratory.

Tara originally graduated in 2006, but returned to get her Medical Office Administration certificate in 2015. She has continued her education through the hospital since her graduation.

"I receive specimens into the laboratory and prep them for the laboratory scientists. I work directly with doctors and nurses to help them order tests properly, get the results and answer questions" stated Tara. "I started at the hospital as an intern for the MOA program, and I've never looked back. I know I am doing my part to assist with the pandemic."

**Brittany Carr - 2016 Graduate**

Brittany has been working as a Public Safety Telecommunicator, or more often known as a 911 Dispatcher, for the Sussex County Sheriff's Office since 2017. Her duties included dispatching Fire and EMS, the Sheriff's Office, and a municipal police department.

"COVID-19 has been a special time for everyone in Public Safety and Healthcare Public Safety is always an amazing job, where we have to adapt to certain situations immediately to provide the best response and care for our callers," stated Brittany. "While COVID-19 has brought out many changes, two things will not change: we will always answer the call, and we will always send help."



**Kim Rochette - 2017 Sussex Graduate**

Kim received her Liberal Arts Degree from Sussex, then transferred into the Passaic County Community College's Nursing Program on the Sussex campus. She has been working as a nurse at Newton Medical Center since 2018. Recently, Kim earned her BSN from the College of Saint Elizabeth.

"Being a nurse is one of the most difficult things I have done, but it is also the most rewarding," said Kim. "I felt prepared after graduating from the nursing program and I am thankful for my education at Sussex. Although I never anticipated having to work during a crisis like COVID, I am proud to stand alongside my coworkers at NMC."



**Frank Gallichio - 2010 Sussex Graduate**

Frank, who recently retired, has worked for the U.S. Post Office as a letter carrier for the past 32 years. He dedicated his service to help the community during the pandemic outbreak.

"I feel my work helped to flatten the curve. I was able to deliver important items that people needed for their daily lives, while keeping them safe at home," stated Frank.





### Scott Baker - 2006 Sussex Graduate

Scott graduated from Sussex with an English and Secondary Education degree. He transferred to a four-year college where he earned his bachelor's degree in English from Montclair State University.

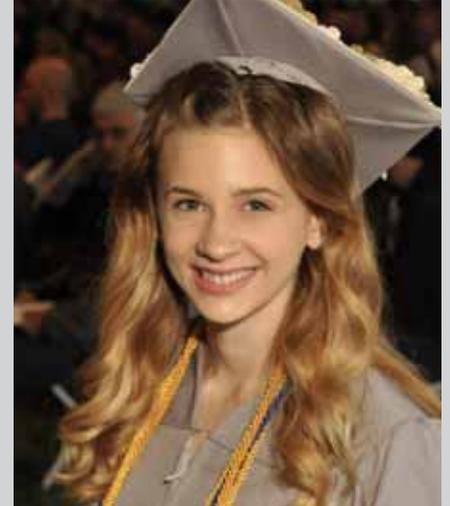
Scott has been a Police Officer for the past six years with the Parsippany Police Department.

"Working during the pandemic has been a challenge for first responders across the nation," said Scott. "We have had to change our plan of action when taking care of our daily calls. Keeping our community members safe is our top priority."

### Sussex Graduate Overcomes All in Pursuit of Her Education

When Ivy Kellenberger, a graduate of Sussex and senior at Centenary University, makes up her mind to do something, there's nothing that can hold her back.

The 20-year-old single mother has earned numerous prestigious scholarships at Centenary University, where she is currently pursuing her bachelor's degree in Education, with a special education certification. But getting there wasn't easy.



In 2017, Ivy was a 17-year-old honors student at Sussex County Technical School. She was also pregnant. Her dedication to school and outstanding grades meant that she could graduate a full year early, and she knew she had to take the opportunity.

Ivy began taking classes virtually upon graduation from high school and earned 12 college credits through Sussex's Jump Start program. Her pregnancy was difficult, and though she was in and out of the hospital, she finished her first semester at Sussex with all A's. She gave birth to her daughter a day after the semester ended.

Her personal life during her years at Sussex was chaotic. Not only was she raising a baby while attending college, but she was also the victim of domestic abuse.

"My time was often spent focusing on how I could better my future as well as my daughter's," Ivy stated. "In those two years, I came into contact with Sussex professors who inspired me personally and encouraged me to keep pushing despite how hard it had been."

Where support mattered most, Sussex provided Ivy with the motivation she needed.

Ivy became the first person in her family to graduate from college, with high honors, and earned her associate degree in August 2019.

"After I graduated from Sussex, I had gained the academic advantage I needed in my life, as well as the courage to become a single mother."

Ivy's efforts have been duly recognized. She has been awarded a prestigious Belle Ella Boutique Empowerment Scholarship from a Utah-based online women's boutique. The scholarship recognizes college women who have overcome adversity to pursue their dreams through higher education.



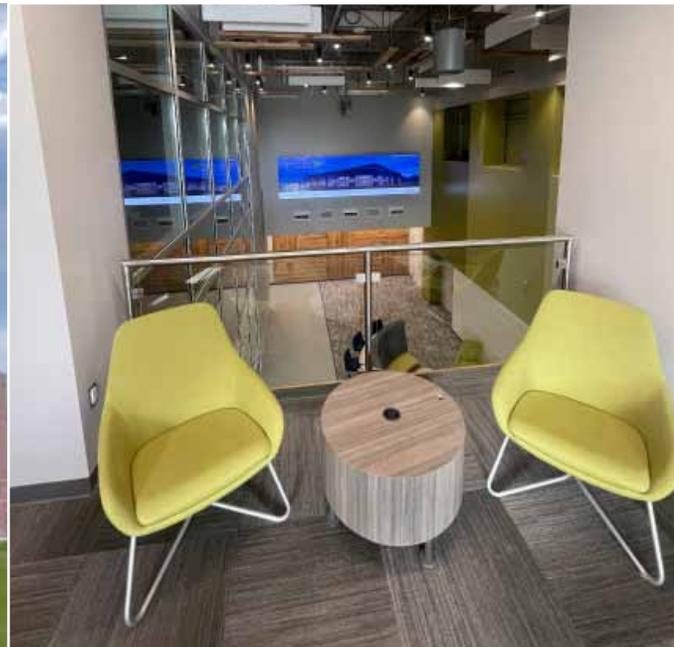
## New Academic Center Opens for Students

### A hands-on learning environment makes the new Center unique

After months of design, planning, and preparation, the new Academic Center at Sussex is open to students.

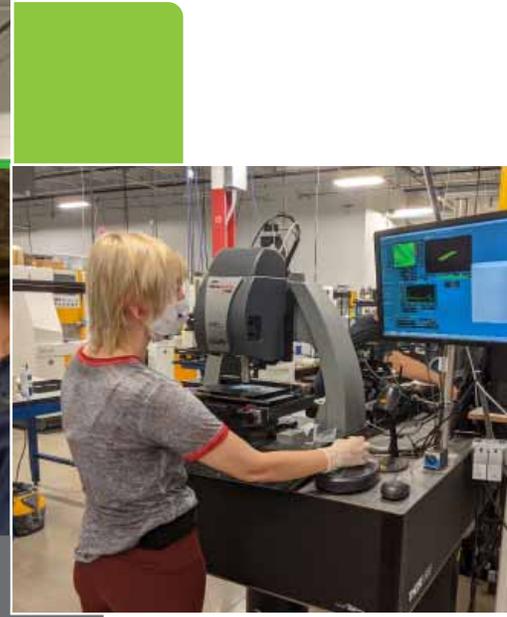
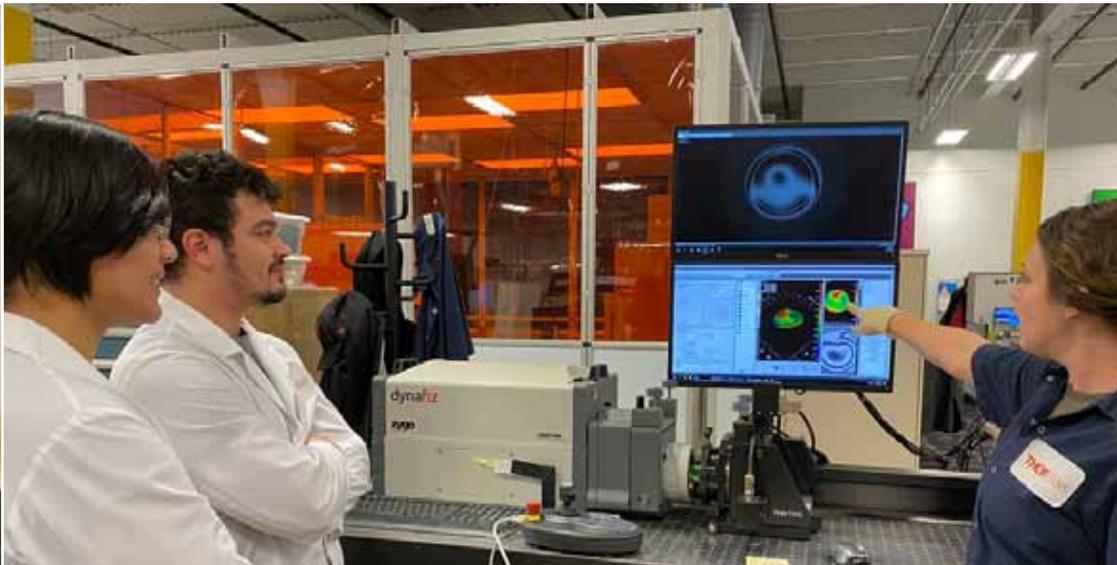
With the new makerspace, students will be able to focus on their creativity in an educational setting. Hands-on projects will allow students to solve a real-world problems and demonstrate their knowledge to solve problems and become innovators. The space will be utilized for engineering, optics, and much more in the coming months.

The new lecture space, classrooms, and lounge areas are all designed to provide students with a rich and inviting atmosphere to learn.



### Studio 20/Media Center Opens for Classes

The New Media Center opened in the fall of 2019 and has allowed the College to build its streaming options and change the recording workflow. Students in the media programs get a hands-on look at modern production methods, including streaming to multiple destinations and live mixed-media production. In addition, the College will be exploring and procuring equipment that will allow students, faculty, and staff to record and stream in full 4K. This modern environment will prepare media students for the expectations in the workplace.



## Sussex Partners with AmeriCOM Under a 34 Million National Effort Funded by the DoD

The American Center for Optics Manufacturing (AmeriCOM), a nationwide organization working with the Department of Defense (DoD), has embarked on a \$34 million project to help strengthen the domestic precision optics industry, including helping more people get into these high-paying jobs.

With all S.T.E.M. (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) sector industries facing a shortage of skilled workers, the first step AmeriCOM is taking is to partner with community colleges in key areas of the nation to secure educational opportunities for students, making them eligible for employment in the Optics industry.

Sussex is the first community college in the nation to partner with AmeriCOM. AmeriCOM has subcontracted with Sussex to expand educational opportunities in Optics Technology. The College will receive \$2 million to support the Optics Program by creating a state-of-the-art lab, distance learning courses, and dual-credit programs in local high schools.

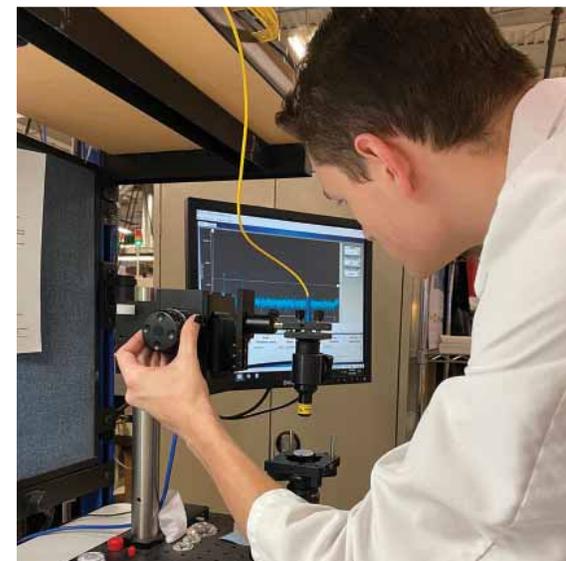
**“The 21st Century is the century of the photon, just as the 20th century was the century of the electron,” said Tom Battley, Vice President of Government & Partnerships at AmeriCOM. “There is not an industry on the face of the planet that is not using optics and photonics in some way.”**

“Given the nature of technology today, I cannot think of an industry sector that has not incorporated optics technology into the core of its products,” said President Connolly. “Sensors, detectors, measurement, transmission of light, signaling, photography and video of every type, are present in essentially everything we use today such as automotive, biomedical, aerospace, research, and consumer products. This proliferation of optics applications has not been met with a proliferation of workers to produce these instruments and devices. Without these workers, the industry is crippled. We are thrilled to be able

to partner with AmeriCOM on this all-important sector of the economy and to purchase the necessary equipment to train the current, and next generation, of workers in optics technology.”

Sussex looks to meet the nationwide demand and model the successful program provided by Monroe Community College in Rochester, NY. MCC remains one of the nations’ leading colleges for precision optics. Sussex will also aim to expand their Optics on campus and with new equipment provided by the grant.

Pictured: Students in the Optics Program learn about the equipment that will advance them in the field. Classes are held at Thorlabs in Newton, NJ.



# The College Community Changes to Meet the Demands of the Pandemic

At the start of the Pandemic, the College jumped into action to roll out plans for the safety and well-being of the College community. The resilience of the campus community, all working together, has been unprecedented.

A weekly Pandemic Taskforce was established to discuss and assess the changing environment due to COVID-19, from alternate classroom settings to campus health precautions. The immeasurable efforts made by the administration, faculty, and staff on these campus transformations were a true testament to the dedication of those at Sussex.

In the spring of 2020, the College moved to remote learning for the semester. In addition, graduation was canceled, but it celebrated graduates with an online video. Moving through the summer, the College laid out plans for a partial and safe return to campus for the fall of 2020.

By the fall of 2021, the College was able to bring more students back to campus and return to a semi-normal state of operation.



Top Right Image: The Performing Arts Center on a spring day.

Bottom Right Image: 2021 Ambassadors welcome students back to campus during Orientation.

## CARES ACT Aids Students

Sussex was able to distribute more than \$500,000 from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to aid students and bolster the academic community. The distribution of funds supported students in their education.

The emergency funds were allocated from Sussex's portion of more than \$12 billion in funding for institutions of higher learning from the CARES Act. This funding was used, in part, to provide direct emergency cash grants to students and offset tuition costs.



Top and Middle Left Images: Makeshift classrooms were set up in the cafeteria and in tented areas on campus.

Bottom Left Image: Degree-up students raise awareness for suicide prevention.

Top Right Image: Sussex welcomed new students during five Orientation Days.

Middle Right Image: A football student returns to campus.

Bottom Right Image: Ambassadors welcome students back to campus with welcome bags.



# Sussex Forms Many Partnerships



## Sussex Tech and Sussex Combine Efforts

Sussex County Technical High School and the College strengthened their already strong partnership in various ways that will benefit students at both schools.

Plans for objectives and goals to enhance students' education is underway. The "Securing our Children's Future" bond act will help support a shared vision for career and technical education in Sussex County. A few areas currently being discussed include Engineering, Optics Technology, and Exercise Science.

Working together is nothing new for these schools. Over 30% of Sussex Tech graduates enroll at Sussex.

## Sussex and ESU Sign Transfer Agreement in Exercise Science

Sussex signed an Agreement for the Exercise Science Program with East Stroudsburg University in its ongoing effort to provide smooth transitions into local, trusted bachelor's degree programs.

Under the new Agreement, students graduating Sussex with an Associate in Exercise Science degree can transfer up to 60 credits to the Exercise Science bachelor's degree at ESU, allowing for a timely graduation.

Sussex prepares students to transfer to a four-year institution who wish to complete a Bachelor of Science degree in exercise physiology, strength and conditioning, pre-physical therapy, or other health- and fitness-related program. Classes utilize the Fitness Center, Gymnasium, and Human Performance Lab to teach students how to work with equipment commonly used in the fitness field.

Top Right Image: Seated left to right: Sparta Acting Superintendent Patrick McQueeney and Sussex President Connolly. Back Row left to right: Sparta High School Principal Ronnie Spring; Sparta Supervisor Mathematics grades 6-12 Laura Kasa; Sparta Supervisor of Social Studies, World Language, and ESL Scott Kercher; Sparta Supervisor of Science Marisa Wilson; Sussex Assoc. VP of Student Success Cory Homer; Sparta Supervisor of English Mary Hassenplug and Sussex SR Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs Dr. Kathleen Okay.

Bottom Right Image: Sussex Exercise Science Program Supervisor, Nicholas Lionetti, instructs the class on the new equipment used in the Performance Lab.



## The College Partners with Sparta High School

A new partnership between Sussex and Sparta High School is paving the way for Sparta students to earn a degree and get on the road to success.

The Early College Advancement Program (ECAP) will allow Sparta High School students to earn college credits toward a general Liberal Arts degree. The program will launch for the 2021-2022 school year and follow a structured curriculum set forth by the College.

"Joining ECAP is a stepping stone for high-achieving students who want to turn their high school credits into a career-enhancing degree," said Associate Vice President of Student Success Cory Homer.

Credits can be earned through AP equivalency courses and concurrent courses at the high school along with courses on the Sussex campus.





## Students Spur Efforts to Assist First Responders

Two Sussex students, who are part of the College's Entrepreneurial initiative on campus, took their lessons learned to another level.

Lillian Kornmeyer and Scott Raghubir, both of whom worked in the College's Campus Store, assisted with a plan to get N95 masks into the hands of first responders and to the Atlantic Health System. The students asked donors to help support this fundraiser through the College's Foundation.

The students worked with Executive Vice President of

Administrative Services Ketan Gandhi and Faculty Advisor Anita Collins as part of the Entrepreneurial program.

The masks were delivered to first responders and hospital workers in the county on behalf of the College and the donors to the program. Masks and *Thank You Heroes* bracelets were distributed. Their efforts ultimately helped hundreds of first responders.

Donations supported the project and the Foundation under a special fund for students at the College who were impacted by COVID-19.



Top Left Image: Lillian Kornmeyer and Scott Raghubir hold the masks that were donated to first responders.

Top Right Image: Scott stands with local health care workers who benefitted from the mask donation.

Bottom Left Image: A local police officer tries out the new Firing Range at the PSTA.

## Students Answer the Call with a New Skylanders Cafe Food Truck

With the College cafeteria closed, due to the pandemic, student leaders jumped into action. A new food truck was purchased and wrapped with the College branding. The food truck, known as the *Skylanders Cafe On the Go*, offered the option to purchase breakfast and lunch items for the campus community. The truck was run solely by the student body.



## PSTA Gets Firing Range Upgrade

The Firing Range at Sussex's Public Safety Training Academy (PSTA) received an upgrade that allows local law enforcement to complete additional training at the site.

The backdrop was upgraded with rubber from ground up tires to assist with better air quality in the range. It can also be used for a broader range of firearms, allowing local law enforcement to complete firearms training and requalification at the academy. In the past, officers would have to travel outside of the county to other facilities for this necessary training.

The PSTA encompasses the firing range, fire academy, and classrooms used by the College and other emergency services for county training.



## Suicide Survivor Shares Her Story to Help Others

Chloe Bellerby started getting panic attacks by the time she was 16 years old. She recalled how her emotions boiled over and overwhelmed her.

Chloe started cutting herself, bingeing and purging, and had suicidal thoughts. Her wardrobe at the time covered her marks to hide them from her parents.

Looking back to August of 2016, Bellerby recalls the time she left her house, downed 100 pills, and was rushed to the hospital. This would be the first time she disclosed the mental illness that she suffered with throughout her young life.

"It felt like something switched in my brain and it was a downward spiral from there," said Bellerby. "I didn't see a purpose or a reason to be alive anymore. I didn't want to socialize or play sports. I became a shell of a person."

Bellerby was diagnosed with depression but refused future counseling. She was already planning a second suicide attempt.

But Ricky O'Sullivan, the coordinator of sport studies at Rossett School in Harrogate, where

Chloe lived, wouldn't let her walk away from her life again. He told Bellerby she wasn't alone.

"She didn't really say anything that day," O'Sullivan recalled in a Zoom call. "I gave her time to go away and think about it. She eventually came back and she stepped up."

**"Every single day I still battle, even with suicidal thoughts," Bellerby said. "Knowing I'm helping others gets me through it."**

Bellerby has become an advocate for mental health awareness both in her native England and while at Sussex. She was able to help other students through the Degree Up program on campus.

Bellerby made others aware of mental illness by starting the following:

- launching social media accounts

dedicated to sharing her mental health struggle where she posts positive messages to encourage others to share their struggles

- organizing a 205-mile fundraising walk that raised more than 10,000 pounds for MIND, a mental health charity in England and Wales

Bellerby was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2019, before the soccer season began. Aside from her family, her Sussex soccer team rallied around her. When she returned to the field that fall, she inspired both her teammates and opponents.

Bellerby was able to play that season and was named the coaches' Player of the Year.

The President of the Student Athletic Council named Bellerby *Sussex Woman of the Year* before she graduated in May of 2020. She is now attending Bloomfield College.

Top Left Image: Chloe is a standout on the Soccer team.  
Top Right Image: Center Forward, Chloe, looks at the National Junior College Athletic Association Regional Region XIX trophy won by the Sussex Women's Soccer Team in 2019.



## Sussex, First Community College in N.J. to Begin Football Program

Sussex became the first junior college to offer football in the state of New Jersey for the 2020 season. The Board of Trustees unanimously approved the new football program on November 26, 2020, during their monthly meeting. Data presented to the board estimated that the team could yield a 3.5% increase in student enrollment over the next four years.

A preliminary survey showed overwhelming support for a two-year college football program.

Football has been instrumental in driving enrollment for colleges, but it can also support student retention. Student-athletes who complete their degree at Sussex can look forward to the possibility of participating on a team at a four-year institution.

The Skylanders Football team enrolled 75 new students

for the fall semester and was able to play their season opener on the Newton High School football field. With three junior college football teams within a two-hour radius along with local four-year college junior varsity teams, Sussex was on the schedule for the 2020 season. It became apparent that the COVID pandemic would halt the fall season, but the season was rescheduled for March of 2021.

in addition, Sussex added a new wrestling team due to its popularity in high schools throughout the county. Women's athletics will also have the opportunity to compete in women's volleyball in 2022.

### Academic Honors Among Sussex Athletes

The Garden State Athletic Conference and NJCAA Region IX named their academic honors for the spring semester of 2020. To be nominated to the GSAC and Region XIX Academic Teams, student-athletes must have achieved at least a 3.25 GPA for the spring semester, compete in their respective sport during the semester, and complete at least 12 credits. Sussex had 25 student-athletes make the list to the Garden State Athletic Conference and NJCAA Region XIX Academic Teams.



## Skylanders Wrestler Invited to Nationals in Iowa

When Taylan Zafis stepped off the plane in Iowa for the national junior college wrestling championships it would also be another step in his determination to overcome the odds. Zafis, a Sussex sophomore, earned a spot to the championships through a special coach's recommendation. This process was implemented this year because of pandemic restrictions. Zafis is the only wrestler from Sussex to get the recommendation. He plans on wrestling at East Stroudsburg University in the fall.



## Skylanders Lacrosse Advances to NJCAA Tournament

In a year of firsts, the Skylanders Lacrosse offense set a team record with scoring seven goals in the quarter. The team defense slammed the door on Del Tech to the tune of 2 goals in the second half. The 21-11 win advanced the team to the NJCAA Tournament in Batavia, NY, to face nationally ranked Genesee. Possessions were plenty for Sussex, and the Skylanders came on strong for the win and the right to move on to the 2021 Region XIX NJCAA Tournament.



## Bellerby Named Women of the Year

Sussex student-athlete, Chloe Bellerby, was honored as Sussex's *Woman of the Year* at the National Association of Girls and Women in Sports Day held at Seton Hall University. The annual event hosted over 900 students in recognition of this award from every high school, college, and university in New Jersey. Chloe was an integral part of the Sussex Women's Soccer program and helped them win the NJCAA Region XIX Title and advance to the semi-finals of the NJCAA Northeast District Tournament.



## Athletic Signing Day, Connecting Incoming Athletes

Sussex held its first official Signing Day for incoming athletes on February 5th. Parents, students, and coaches gathered in the Performing Arts Center for a meet and greet, official signing, and tailgate-inspired evening. Students from area high schools signed their Letter of Intent to play on various athletic teams for the upcoming season. Students also committed to the College for the fall season. President Connolly and Athletic Director John Kuntz welcomed guests to the event.





## A Remote Event Keeps Scholarships Center Stage

Each fall, Sussex County Community College's *Funding Their Future* raises money for student scholarships and other College programs. This year's event carried on the tradition from afar.

*Funding Their Future* was a virtual event held on Thursday, November 12. The event was hosted by the College Foundation, which supports the mission of the College through fundraising and community outreach.

During the virtual event, guests were able to relax and enjoy:

- "farm to table" cooking demonstrations which featured the Sussex Agricultural and Culinary Programs
- student musical performances
- special video from student-athletes

Additionally, guests were welcomed with a special message from President Connolly and the Executive Director of the Foundation Stan Kula.

A silent auction was available for both guests and non-guests, with winners announced after the event.

Gold sponsors included Thorlabs and Provident Bank, silver sponsor was Elizabethtown Gas, and bronze sponsors were Mr. & Mrs. Isaacson, Fitness Haven, Lakeland Bank, and The Bell Team at Morgan Stanley.



### New Executive Foundation Director

The College welcomed Stan Kula as the new Executive Director of the Foundation. Stan brings an extensive fundraising background to this position.

For his part, Kula is "absolutely thrilled" to bring his expertise to the College Foundation and become a member of the President's executive team. The College Foundation is the fundraising branch of the College, which supports student scholarships and programming, infrastructure, and expansion.

Kula stood out in the search for a new Executive Director in many ways, but also for his community-based approach to fundraising.

Locally, Kula has been a reliable public figure in Sussex County since moving here in 2000. He has served as Mayor on the Hardyston Township Council, sharing his knowledge on several committees over the years.

The first goal as the new Executive Director was to assess which tools the Foundation had at hand. Stan now plans to work with President Connolly and the Foundation Board to set fundraising goals and establish an attainable plan.

Top Left Image: The theme for the Virtual Foundation Event for 2020.

Top Right Image: New Foundation Director, Stan Kula.

# Sussex programs get a fresh look

## New Student Farm Creates a Real Learning Environment

The Sussex Student Farm, a five-acre plot in Newton, leased through the Food Shed Alliance, is part of the College's SAgE project (Sustainable Agriculture Enterprise). The project's objective is to provide students interested in the farming industry with hands-on experience. Following organic farming standards set forth by the USDA, the farm is essentially an outdoor classroom.

During the year, the farm harvests an array of vegetables including onions, potatoes, cabbage, broccoli, peppers, carrots, pumpkins, and flowers. The produce makes its way to the Foodshed Alliance for distribution, along with a farm stand on campus. The College's Culinary Program will ultimately benefit from the Student Farm at a new learning and dining facility at the McGuire Technical Education Center in Newton. Completion of the new facility is set for spring of 2022.



Top Right Image: Professor Erin Collins (kneeling front left) shares her passion for farming with her students on the Student Farm.

## MA Program Returns to Sussex under the Innovative Eye of a New Director

Dr. Susan Melik joins the Sussex community as the new Medical Assistant (MA) and Allied Health Program Supervisor. She will begin her position overseeing the MA program and maintaining its accreditation. The College is one of only five programs in New Jersey accredited by CAAHEP, the largest accrediting body for Medical Assistants in the nation.

Dr. Melik's long-term plans include expanding the program to allow for more training in the Allied Health field. In addition, career paths in physical therapy, dental hygiene, phlebotomy, diet, and nutrition are being explored.

The start date for the Medical Assistant program began September 2021. The College has also established a scholarship by Bill Kulsar, in memory of his wife Nancy, called the Nancy Kulsar Memorial Scholarship.



**"I love being a part of the Agricultural program, it's so important and a very underestimated career. I wasn't sure what to expect, but I have learned so much. There are many Agricultural classes that work within your schedule. I received a scholarship that allowed me to continue my studies and benefit from the funds provided by the College Foundation."**

**Nicole, Agriculture Student**



## Sussex Receives Donations from Local Businesses for Welding and Automotive Programs

Sussex praised local businesses and the community for donations that allow students to receive valuable experience in the Automotive and Welding Programs.

The College received vehicles, engine assemblies, transmission assemblies and components, and

additional funds to support these programs.

The donations came from Franklin Sussex Auto Mall, McGuire Chevrolet, Subaru and an adjunct professor. Program instructors will use the vehicles to simulate real-life scenarios for students.

In addition, Airgas donated 1,000 pounds of medium grade steel plates, which will help train students in a variety of welding methods.

Jason Fruge, supervisor of trade programs at Sussex, said the donations will benefit both programs equally.



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