



Board of Trustees

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

January 27, 2026 | 4:30 PM

Smith Hall – Main Campus

In Attendance

- Dr. A. Lewis, Chair
- C. Martinez, Vice Chair
- I. Cruz (Via Phone)
- B. Robinson
- J. Zarra (Via Phone)
- M. Townes, Board Counsel
- Dr. A. Boakye, President

Excused

- J. Grimes
- J. Wright

Call to Order/Roll Call

Board of Trustees Chair, Dr. Lewis, called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m. A quorum was achieved with 5 trustees in attendance.

Open Public Meetings Act Announcement

Trustee Martinez read the Open Public Meetings Act into the record. It reads as follows:

In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act of the State of New Jersey, adequate notice of this regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Essex County College was provided in the following manner: Advance written notice of this meeting was filed on December 8, 2025, and written notice for this meeting was provided to the Essex County College Community, indicating that the meeting will be held in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act (P.L. 2020 c. 11.) and Board Policy 1-1. Notice of the meeting was also posted on the College website at www.essex.edu. According to records of Essex County College, we have not received written requests or prepayment from any parties for advance notice of meetings.

Minutes

Trustee Martinez moved to approve the minutes from the December 16, 2025, meeting. Trustee Robinson seconded. ***The minutes were approved unanimously.***

Communications

Trustee Martinez announced that there was no new communication.

Public Comments on Agenda Items

Mr. Lev Zilbermintz submitted his comments as a hard copy and read them into the record:

LEV'S PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Hello, everyone!

We meet again after a nice winter vacation. So yeah, we had a big snowstorm over the weekend. Typical weather for my native Russia, Buffalo, N.Y., Alaska, or Canada, but not New Jersey. Hope you all did well.

I take the opportunity to remark on **3-2.1/Jan-2026, 3-2.2- Jan-2026, 3-2.3/Jan-2026**. It is good

that we have \$59,000,000+ to use. Add another \$4,000,000 this gives a total of \$63,000,000+. This reminds me of a budget from some years back, when we had \$60,000,000 - \$62,000,000. This is very good news, indeed.

I certainly will come to the Board of School Estimate Public Hearing if I am not too tired from playing in a three - day chess team tournament in Parsippany. It lasts Feb. 14 -16, with two games per day. Each team is made of four players, plus an alternate. So they all play each other, winning prizes in various categories.

4-1/Jan-2026 : Finally we get a permanent Chief Financial Officer/Senior Controller! We really need one. There has been a revolving door of CFOs coming and going. He is what, the eighth in ten years? Here is hoping he stays here a long time. After all, that is a nice fat salary the school is paying him.

4-2/Jan-2026 thru **4-4/Jan-2026**: Congratulations to all those appointed to their positions! We would like to express our best wishes to the new legal assistant, the security officer and the new CFO. You are welcome to the ECC family. May you have good luck!

Those retiring and resigning, we would like to thank you for your years of service to Essex County College. Godspeed in your future endeavors. May you also have a happy and pleasant retirement.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my Public Comments on Agenda Items.

Finance Committee Report

Trustee Zarra advised that the **Finance Committee** convened on January 21st and recommended the approval of the following items:

Actions – Submitted for Recommendation for the Board’s Approval

3-1.1/Jan-2026	Resolution Authorizing the Award of a Two-Year Contract for Workforce Development Training RampUp America Corporation , Newark, NJ NJDOLE Pace Grant Funded – Capital Expense	Amount not to exceed \$180,000.00
3-1.2/Jan-2026	Resolution Authorizing the Award of a Two-Year Contract for Removal, Installation, and Fabrication of College Signs American Woodcarving , Wayne, NJ Chapter 12 Funded – Capital Expense	Amount not to exceed \$50,000.00
3-1.3/Jan-2026	Resolution Authorizing the Contract Award for Architecture and Engineering Services for the One Stop Center Project DMR Architects , Hasbrouck Heights, NJ Chapter 12 Funded – Capital Expense	Amount not to exceed \$338,900.00
3-2.1/Jan-2026	Operating Budget Request Fiscal Year 2026-2027	
3-2.2/Jan-2026	Chapter 12 Budget Request Fiscal Year 2026-2027	
3-2.3/Jan-2026	Fixing Date for Board of School Estimate Public Hearing	

Trustee Zarra motioned for the approval of the Finance actions. Trustee Robinson moved the motion for approval. Trustee Martinez seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Personnel Committee Report

Trustee Robinson advised that the Personnel Committee met last week, January 20th, and recommended the approval of the following items:

Actions – Recommended for the Board’s Approval

A. Appointment

- 4-1/Jan-2026 Administrative Confidential
Ketan Gandhi
Chief Financial Officer/Senior Comptroller
Finance
Effective Date: February 2, 2026
Salary \$150,000
- 4-2/Jan-2026 Professional Confidential
Eunice Osei-Wusu
Legal Assistant / Paralegal
Compliance, Equity and Legal Affairs
Effective Date: February 2, 2026
Salary \$60,000
- 4-3/Jan-2026 Support Staff
Dani Ramos
Security Officer
Public Safety
Effective Date: February 2, 2026
Salary \$33,475
- 4-4/Jan-2026 Support Staff
Danny Valladares
Security Officer
Public Safety
Effective Date: February 2, 2026
Salary \$33,475

B. Retirement

- 4-5/Jan-2026 Howard Bouie
Programmer – Financial & Student System
Information Technology
Effective Date: July 1, 2026

C. Resignation

- 4-6/Jan-2026 Deirdre Mackin
Athletic Coordinator
Athletic Department
Effective Date: January 2, 2026

Gretchen Solar
Student Service Representative – International Specialist
Enrollment Services
Effective Date: January 23, 2026

Trustee Robinson motioned for the approval of the Personnel actions. Trustee Lewis moved, and Trustee Cruz seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Townes, Board Counsel, announced that there was a golden rod action for the personnel report, and he read it into the record as 4-7/Jan-2026:

Request for Board Action

Subject:	Salary Increase and Bonus – President Boakye
Contact:	Board of Trustees: Personnel
Meeting Date:	January 27, 2026
Agenda Item No.:	4-7/Jan-2026

WHEREAS, Dr. Augustine A. Boakye has served as the permanent President of Essex County College since November 1, 2021; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Boakye’s employment contract with Essex County College requires the Board of Trustees of Essex County College to provide him with a raise effective January 1, 2026, that is the same as the Administrative Unit for the same year. The Board of Trustees may further award a one-time Merit Bonus not to exceed three percent (3%) annually; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees of Essex County College has determined that Dr. Boakye has satisfactorily performed his duties and that both a three percent (3.0%) raise and a three percent (3.0 %) Merit Bonus are appropriate; and

WHEREAS, Essex County College has determined that the funds are available for this purpose.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: by the Board of Trustees of Essex County College, as follows:

1. The Board of Trustees of Essex County College hereby directs that President Dr. Augustine A. Boakye be paid a three percent (3.0%) raise retroactive to January 1, 2026, and a one-time three percent (3.0%) Merit Bonus based on his positive job performance in accordance with his employment contract.

Mr. Townes motioned for a vote on the goldenrod resolution. Trustee Zarra moved the motion, and Trustee Robinson seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Educational Programs Committee Report

Trustee Dr. Lewis reported that the Educational Programs Committee met last week and recommended approval of the following item.

7-1.1/Jan-2026 Acceptance of Funds: Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education (PACE) Program for \$360,000

Trustee Lewis motioned for a vote on the Educational Programs. Trustee Robinson moved the motion, and Trustee Martinez seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Site, Facilities, and Equipment Committee Report

Trustee Martinez reported that the Site, Facilities, and Equipment Committee did not convene during the previous week and, therefore, had no actions to report.

Policy and Governance Committee Report

Trustee Cruz reported that the Policy and Governance Committee convened on Tuesday, January 20th, to discuss Board Policy 4. There were no actions to bring before the Board at this time.

Community Relations Committee Report

Trustee Lewis stated that the Community Relations Committee did not meet, and there were no actions.

Alumni Association Report

The Alumni Association Report was submitted electronically to the Board of Trustees. A copy of the report is attached as Appendix A.

Student Government Association Report

There was no report from the Student Government Association.

Faculty Association Report

The Faculty Association Report, submitted electronically to the Board of Trustees, was read into the record by Professor Alexandre and is attached as Appendix B.

President's Report

The President's Report was submitted electronically to the Board of Trustees and read into the record by Dr. Augustine A. Boakye, President. It is attached as Appendix C.

New Business

The Board of Trustees reported that there was no new business to discuss.

Public Comments

Four people made public comments:

- Dr. Gandhi thanked the search committee, Cabinet, Board of Trustees, and the President for their trust and for appointing him to the position. He expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to serve as Chief Financial Officer of Essex County College and stated that he was honored to join an institution dedicated to empowering students and strengthening the community through education. He noted that he looked forward to working with the College's leadership and staff to ensure financial stability, transparency, and strategic growth.
- Ms. Eunice Osei-Wusu thanked the Board of Trustees and the President for the opportunity to serve as Legal Assistant/Paralegal and stated that she is available to assist with legal questions.
- Mr. Zilbermintz submitted his public comments as a hard copy and read them into the record as follows:

LEV'S PUBLIC COMMENTS

Hello, Board of Trustees, Faculty, Administration, Student Government, everyone,

We are back after a month of vacation. And what a time it has been! The events in Minnesota, which everyone with a computer on Earth has seen, are horrifying!! My question is, what are we going to do if ICE comes after our students and faculty? I mean, God, they could theoretically even come on campus! If they come into private homes, work, and courts, then where are people safe? The answer is, nowhere.

ICE needs to be reformed, given narrow-focused authority. You cannot go around violating the U.S. Constitution. My family came to the United States in 1975, fleeing a totalitarian regime in the old Soviet Union. I was eight years old. We left on February 7, 1975, came to U.S. via Austria and Italy on May 28, 1975. We had visas.

Okay, with that being said, let me focus on ECC matters. You have \$63,000,000 to spend this year.

My question is, are you going to hire more tenured faculty? Because we need more faculty.

Next, are you going to address the issue of having more electric outlets in the Cafeteria? There is not that many places where you can charge a cell phone, tablet or laptop. I would ask that you bring back electric outlets in walls and floors. What about checking cell phone reception college wide? There are places where reception is poor.

Finally, this year is the 50th anniversary of A. Zachary Yamba Building, which opened in September 1976. Are you going to form a committee to organize celebrations? You know, there is a time capsule buried on campus. It is on the third floor, not far from MPT and the exit. According to the Star-Ledger, it is an old safe filled with various papers and documents from 1976 and earlier. Dr. Mamie Bridgeforth should know its exact location. She was here in 1976 when it was buried and built over.

This concludes my presentation for this month.

- Dr. Khalfani introduced himself and thanked his colleagues for their work during faculty negotiations. He acknowledged the collaborative effort, noting that while discussions became challenging at times, the team successfully reached an agreement. He acknowledged his colleagues for their efforts. Dr. Khalfani also announced that the Martin Luther King Jr. event scheduled for January 27th was postponed due to snow and the Arts High School band's inability to attend. The event is rescheduled to take place on February 12th. In addition, he announced that a flag-raising ceremony in recognition of African Black History Month will be held on February 3rd at 12:00 p.m. to acknowledge contributions, struggles, and shared history.

Notice of Executive Session

Trustee Martinez read the Notice of Executive Session. She read as follows:

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act, 1975 (N.J. Law Chapter 231) permits a public body to exclude the public from that portion of a meeting at which certain topics are discussed:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of Essex County College shall hold, following this meeting and prior to its next scheduled meeting on February 24, 2026, at 4:30 PM, an Executive Session to discuss the following topics, the general nature of which is limited to Collective Bargaining Agreements, Pending and Existing Contractual Negotiations, Litigation and Personnel Matters. The discussion of these said topics shall be disclosed to the public as soon as reasonable.

Trustee Martinez motioned for a vote on the Notice of Executive Session. Trustee Robinson moved the motion, and Trustee Lewis seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Adjournment

Board Chair, Dr. Lewis, motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 5:16 PM by a vote of acclamation.

ECCAA Board of Trustees Report

Submitted by: Shelby Robinson, ECCAA President

In December, the Essex County College Alumni Association successfully completed its Angel Tree Project, a key component of our Give Back Initiative.

Through the collective efforts of our village, we were able to support 43 families during the holiday season in collaboration with the Newark Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery. Families received donated gifts and holiday support, made possible through the generosity and compassion of our extended ECC community.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all who contributed to making this Give Back Initiative a success, including ECC Alumni, ECC Faculty, Staff, Administration, and community partners.

A special thank you is extended to Adewele Tosin Thompson, Alumni Liaison; Bertheleau Ngakam, Alumni Advisor; and Tatanisha Harrell of the Newark Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery. Each went above and beyond to ensure the coordination, collection of donated gifts, and overall success of the program.

Mentorship Program Update: The ECCAA Mentorship Program continues to move forward, with interviews and mentor-mentee matching taking place this week, marking an important step in strengthening alumni engagement and student support.

On behalf of ECCAA, thank you for your continued support.

**Essex County College Faculty Association (ECCFA)
Memorandum**

To: Dr. Arnold C. Lewis, Chair of the Essex County College Board of Trustees (ECCBOT)

From: Jean-Wilner Alexandre, Associate Professor Economics and Finance, ECCFA
Representative to ECC Board of Trustees/ Class of 2003

Date: Tuesday, January 27, 2026

Re: Essex County College Faculty Association (ECCFA) Report to Essex County College Board of Trustees (ECCBOT)

General Comment

Thank you, Mr. Chair; distinguished Trustees; President Boakye; esteemed Cabinet members; and members of the Essex County College community. It is a privilege to appear before you once again on behalf of the faculty and the Essex County College Faculty Association.

1. **First**, on behalf of the faculty, I would like to extend our warmest wishes for a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year. We hope that the winter break and holiday season were enjoyable and restorative for all.
2. **Second**, our members have returned to campus with strong enthusiasm to serve our students. Their passion, dedication, and commitment to student success remain evident across the institution.
3. **Third**, like the rest of the country, our faculty members are closely following national events and the direction of the nation. Given that our faculty, students, and staff include many immigrants, these events are felt deeply within our community. This period has also underscored the importance of democratic checks and balances, as many have expressed concern regarding the performance of our elected officials at the national level.
4. **Fourth**, as mentioned in the previous report, our members remain very appreciative of the new contract agreement, particularly the retroactive compensation that arrived around the holidays.
5. However, this appreciation was tempered by the unexpected increase in insurance premiums. We would like to commend ECCFA President Professor Ming McCall for her decisive leadership in helping members adjust their plans ahead of the price increase.
6. **Finally**, the ECCFA will conduct early elections for all executive positions, with the new Executive Board scheduled to begin its term in September 2026. The decision to hold early elections is intended to facilitate a smooth and orderly transition.

ECCFA Executive Committee Activities

1. The ECCFA held its monthly Executive Committee meeting on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, to plan Association activities. The primary highlight of the meeting was the formal announcement of the upcoming elections for a new Executive Board.
2. The Association held its monthly membership meeting to update the members on the election process and timeline for the new Executive Board.
3. Professor Jean-Wilner Alexandre represented the Executive Board at grievance training on Tuesday, January 13, 2026, in my capacity as the new Chair of the Grievance Committee.

Faculty Members Activities

Dr. Akil Khalfani reported significant academic activities that reflect the high caliber of our faculty and expand the College's visibility and reach within international academic circles.

Personal Report

1. Dr. Khalfani was invited in November 2005 by the H.E. Ms. Selma Bakhta Mansouri, Algerian Secretary of State to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to participate in the Algerian and African Union International Conference on Crimes of Colonialism in Africa, where he gave presentations to a diverse international body. Additionally, he was interviewed by several international media outlets during the conference.
 - a. Sample interview: <https://my.radioalgerie.dz/en/node/45058>
 - b. Presentation of the Algiers Declaration: <https://www.mfa.gov.dz/press-and-information/news-and-press-releases/algiers-declaration>
 - c. Letter of thanks attached from the Secretary of State
2. Dr. Khalfani was invited in December 2025 by the Togo Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Dr. Robert Dussey to present a paper and preside over a Commission for the 9th Pan African Congress that was convened by the Togolese government and the African Union
 - a. Letter of thanks attached from the Minister of Foreign Affairs
3. Dr. Khalfani was invited by the African Union in December 2025 as an international expert to participate in the African Union's inaugural meeting of the African Union's Committee of Experts on Reparations (AUCER). This historic gathering of only 15 members met as a mandate of the African Union's 55 member heads of states.
4. The pictures include Dr. Khalfani with the minister of foreign affairs from Togo, the vice president of Colombia, the former vice president of Costa Rica, The secretary of the African Union commission, and other sessions at the African Union

Africana Institute Report

The Africana Institute held its annual Kwanzaa program, which included participation from students, staff, and community stakeholders. The event was well attended, and feedback indicated that it was well received by all participants.

Business Division

Jean-Wilner Alexandre

Associate Professor Economics and Finance

Professor Jean-Wilner Alexandre delivered an economic analysis in French on the *Haiti Première Classe* television program on Sunday, January 18, 2026. The monthly program is broadcast on Channels 14, 25, and 22 in the Tri-State Area.

Social Science Division

Dr. Bridget Turner

Education Coordinator/Academic Advisor

Assistant Professor of Education

Dr. Bridget Turner invites the college community to participate in our **2nd Autism Conference: “Beyond Awareness: Action, Advocacy & Achievement in Autism”** that will be held on March 28th, 2026. This event will bring together educators, families, professionals, and community partners committed to advancing meaningful support and opportunities for individuals on the autism spectrum.

Whether you are interested in **attending, presenting, or serving as a vendor**, we would be honored to have you join us. Your expertise, services, or presence would add tremendous value to this year’s conference.

Student Development and Career Services

Dr. Victor Stolberg, Associate-Professor, Counselor

Dr. Victor Stolberg, Associate Professor and Counselor, continued to demonstrate exceptional dedication this past month. In addition to fulfilling his duties as a counselor within Student Development and Career Services, he remained actively engaged in his role as Vice President of the Faculty Association.

1. ECCFA Contract Negotiation meetings (12/4).
2. Office of the Secretary of Higher Education: “Some College, No Degree” (12/2).
3. ECEA Legislative Reception (12/2).
4. New Jersey Transfer Counselors Association meeting (12/10).
5. ECEA Professional Development Committee meeting (12/10).
6. Chaired Counselors and Advisors meeting (12/5).
7. Chaired Academic Standards Committee meeting (12/11).
8. Master Articulation Committee Signing between ECC and Montclair State University (12/17).
9. Chaired ECCFA & Senate meetings (12/18).
10. ECC AI Steering Committee meeting (12/19).
11. Secours Catholique-Caritas France: “Recognizing, Referring, and Supporting Victims of Human Trafficking” (12/3).
12. Jed Foundation: “Creating a Community of Care: Providing Effective Mental Health Support for All Members” (12/3).
13. Udemy: “Communicate Like a Leader: How to Get People to Listen” (12/3).
14. Disaster Ready/Cegos: “Leading Remote Meetings” (12/4).
15. SafeColleges trainings: “RespectEdu for Faculty & Staff: Title IX & Cleary Act” (12/4).

Concluding Remarks

On behalf of the ECCFA, we would like to extend our best wishes to the ECCBOT, the President and Cabinet, and the entire college community for a successful Spring Semester and a productive and rewarding year in 2026.

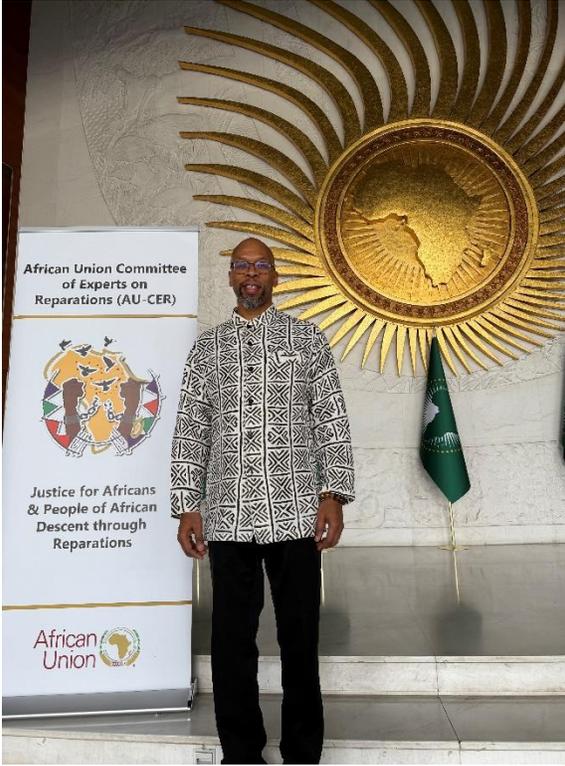
Respectfully submitted,

Respectfully submitted,

Jean-Wilner Alexandre,
Associate Professor economics and finance,
ECCFA Representative to ECC Board of Trustees/ Class of 2003

Appendix





Memorandum

To: Dr. Lewis & the Board of Trustees
From: Dr. Augustine A. Boakye, President, Essex County College
Date: January 27, 2026
Re: President's Monthly Report

General:

Administrative staff returned to campus on January 5th following the Winter Break. Student Services, Enrollment Services and IT supported students enrolled in Winter Intersession classes.

Our Spring 2026 semester began on January 12th. There are 5,795 students enrolled in 58,381 credit hours thus far. Respectively, these numbers are -0.4% and -1.2% lower than the prior year. Recruitment and enrollment activities continue for our February 9th Spring II semester start date.

Academics

- Stockton University & NJPN articulation agreements – approved by the board in December, 2025.

Student Affairs

- We appreciate the support of the campus community in helping students meet their nutrition needs. In December, our Food Pantry registered 80 appointments and walk-ins, distributing 2,184 pounds of food. An additional 174 students participated in the Grab N Go pick-up initiative.

Athletics

- Sophomore Ma-Avian Williams qualified for the Indoor Nationals in the 60-meter hurdles, recording a personal best time of 8.89 and placing 11th out of 51 competitors.
- Freshman men's soccer student-athlete Noel Dreist has committed to Division I University of New Haven for Fall 2026.

The President's December/January Engagements have included:

- December 17th: Participated in the County Executive's Annual Holiday Celebration.
- December 17th: Signed the Essex County College/Montclair State University Articulation Agreement at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Newark.
- December 18th: Staff participated in the Annual President's Holiday Tea event at the Main Campus.
- December 18th: Participated in the LPN Pinning Ceremony in Smith Hall.
- January 6th: Hosted the Three Kings Day Celebration in the Cleo Hill, Sr. Physical Education Building, organized by Councilman-at-Large, Luis A. Quintana.
- January 8th: Attended the Mental Health Summit and the NJPC meeting at NJIT.
- January 14th: Served on the education panel of Invest: New Jersey Leadership Summit in Jersey City.
- January 22nd: Participated in the Essex County Workforce Development Board meeting.

- January 27th: Attended the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial program at the Mary Burch Theater, organized by Dr. Khalfani.

Finances

- The College has completed the FY 27 Budget Proposal and ready to present it to the BOT & the BOSE for approval.
- Our General Ledger team, the Comptrollers and Ms. Perkins are fully engaged with PKF auditors to complete the FY 25 Single Audit Report.
- The College is still pursuing grant search and doing everything possible to draw resources to the College. Last month, we received \$360,000 PACE grant (*thanks to Dean Vieira & her team*) and \$1,000,000 New Jersey Higher Education Capital Facilities Grant of the Higher Education Capital Improvement Fund (“CIF”) and the Higher Education Facilities Trust Fund (“HEFT”) - (*thanks to Dean Seddiki & his team*).
- We welcome Dr. Ketan Gandhi as our new CFO.

Projects:

- We are making tremendous progress on the Center for Technology renovation project.
- The architect is working with the elevator company regarding the delivery and installation schedule. The elevator is currently scheduled for delivery in June, with a minimum of six weeks required for installation.
- Completed a Level III Energy Audit, co-sponsored by ECC and PSE&G, to identify opportunities for efficient energy use management across the Main Campus.

Community Relations:

- Preparations are fully underway for the April 9th Laptop4Learning Scholarship Fundraising at the West Essex Campus.

Continuing Education and Workforce Development:

- Awarded the Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education (PACE) grant to expand equitable, industry-driven workforce pathways for our students and adult learners. I thank Dr. Vieira, Ms. Joana Ramos-Ribeiro and the team for their work on this important grant project.

Join us on:

- February 17, 2026 (12:00 PM) - Board of School Estimate (BOSE) Meeting at the Main Campus in Smith Hall.
- April 9, 2026 (5:30 PM) - Laptop4Learning Scholarship Fundraising at the West Essex Campus.
- May 26, 2026 - Commencement at the Prudential Center.

[Mr. Chair, this ends my report. Thank you.](#)