

THE MAGAZINE OF FARMINGDALE STATE COLLEGE

FSCNOW²⁰²⁵

BUILDING A CULTURE OF OPPORTUNITIES

FATOMA RAD: COMMITTED TO
STUDENT SUCCESS

SHAPING NEXT- GEN SCHOLARS

Inclusive Programs and Hands-On
Mentorship Transform the Student
Research Experience

LEAVING A LEGACY

Laura Joseph, '84, Has
Made an Enduring Impact
on Her Alma Mater

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

FSC's Growing Partnerships With
Schools, Health Care, and Government
Shape Long Island's Future

ONE YEAR IN

and so far, so good! Before I assumed the presidency at Farmingdale State College, 12 short months ago, I had expectations about what I would find once I arrived, expectations based on advance studies and inquiry. As a scientist, I reviewed all the information I could find and hypothesized about what I signed up for. I am thrilled to share that all I expected has been confirmed—FSC is a college on the move, a college that offers students unending opportunities, and a college that helps reimagine what is possible.

In our 113th year, emerging from a prominent agricultural school to the largest tech school in the State University of New York System, how do we define ourselves? There is no end to the marketing rhetoric to help promote an institution of higher learning. However, it takes true marketing savvy to help find the language that best characterizes a school. In this issue of *FSCNow* you'll hear directly from students and alumni, folks who have "been there, done that," how Farmingdale "allows someone to really excel," "has been incredibly supportive," "gives everyone a chance to not only succeed, but to achieve any dream...they can think of," how alumni "loved the professors" and "thrived in the environment" with "professors (who) truly cared and wanted us to succeed." From my vantage point, and confirmed by students past and present, praising FSC is easy. It's easy because of the outstanding programs that support our students, the phenomenal support from alumni and industry, and the ultra-dedicated faculty, administration, and staff. From the roots of our Research Aligned Mentorship Program, to studying in Madagascar, to RamChella, and to our Visiting Scholars Program, Farmingdale is the "go to" for an outstanding education in a supportive environment.

The mechanics of "running" a college are complex. The pieces don't simply merge, and new programs don't just appear. In this issue, you'll read about the hard work of our faculty, staff, and administrators that keeps us moving forward. This issue of *FSCNow* speaks to the all-important accelerators pushed by alumni, who serve as role models, mentor students, and help ensure our growing success—alumni and donors like Murray Pasternack, whose more than \$8M in giving will make a difference to innumerable future engineers, and partners like Henry Schein, Inc., whose generosity will enable sensory challenged individuals to get appropriate dental care.

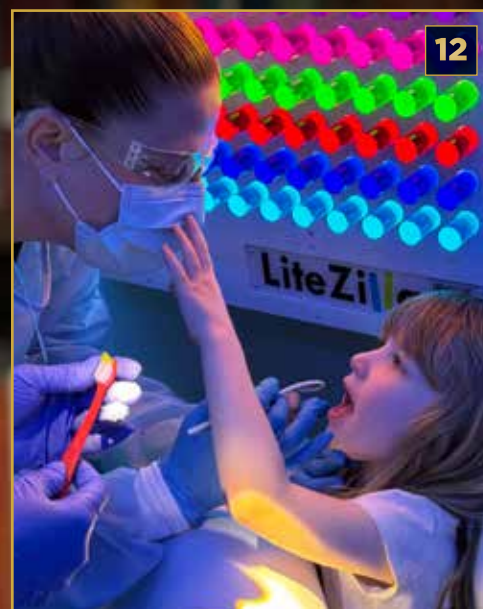
The possibilities at FSC are palpable, and the uniform focus on our students is a point of pride. That pride is richly sprinkled in the pages to follow. The smiles you'll see are genuine and are a reflection of the success we see in our students, the scholarship of our faculty, the partnerships with our communities and industries, and the knowledge that Farmingdale will continue to prioritize learning, discovery, and well-being.

Read on and Go Rams.



Robert S. Prezant, PhD
President, Farmingdale State College





FSCNOW

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SETTING A NEW PRESIDENT

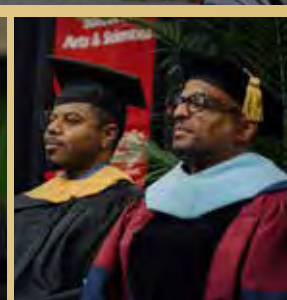
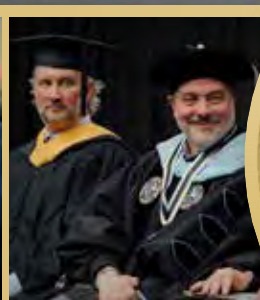
In August 2024, Farmingdale State College (FSC) welcomed its 10th president, Robert S. Prezant, PhD, joining FSC from Southern Connecticut State University, where he most recently served as provost and senior vice president.

Over the last year, President Prezant has become a familiar face on campus and immersed in the FSC community as he met with almost every department on campus, attended countless athletic events, shared his research, conducted townhall meetings with students, faculty, and staff, met with local and state government officials, and set up his own research lab, all while launching new initiatives focused on promoting research and scholarship, community outreach, industry engagement, and more.

President Prezant was officially inaugurated on April 11, 2025, at the Nold Athletic Complex following a week-long campuswide celebration of leadership and community. In his inaugural address, he acknowledged the many “shoulders” that have helped him move forward throughout his career and shared about FSC’s remarkable history, his first eight months in office, and his vision for the years ahead.

“Higher education represents the very best of the future,” he said, “and the best of the future will be built on a diversity of thoughts and perspectives. This has always been Farmingdale. And this will continue to be Farmingdale. This is one of our core values. And this is a moment when higher education can shine, as we help our students and our communities understand that we educate not for college life, but for the life that comes tomorrow.”





Unlocking the NF2 Gene: Exploring Function in *C. elegans*

Viviana Rodriguez Torres and Michael Bodrick
Molecular Biology

Farmingdale
State College
State University of New York

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the NF2 gene, associated with Neurofibromatosis Type 2, using *C. elegans* as a model organism. By utilizing RNA interference (RNAi), we will knock down NF2 expression, and analyze phenotypic outcomes related to cell signaling, apoptosis, and tumor suppression. Techniques such as polymerase chain reaction (PCR), gel electrophoresis, gelatin zymography, and Sanger sequencing will employ various methods to characterize the NF2 gene and its *C. elegans* homolog, *emx-1*. We expect to observe developmental defects, changes in cellular morphology, and altered signaling pathways, both in gene knockout and overexpression conditions, providing insights into NF2's role in disease and therapeutic potential.

HYPOTHESIS

Knocking down the expression of the NF2 gene in *C. elegans* will lead to developmental defects, altered cellular morphology, and disrupted signaling pathways, while overexpressing its homolog *emx-1* will produce compensatory phenotypic changes, providing insights into NF2's role in disease and potential as a therapeutic.



ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no significant ethical concerns as *C. elegans* are non-sentient organisms. Data collection and analysis will be conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines, ensuring that all data is confidential. The study will be conducted with findings shared responsibly, with privacy where needed.

GENERAL INFORMATION

This study is important because it helps us understand the role of the NF2 gene in *C. elegans*, which could provide insights into human gene function and opening up new research on how genes affect cellular processes, including genetic diseases.

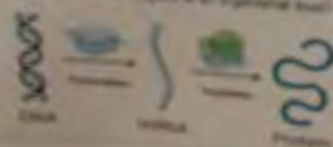
Other types of research that are related to this study include knowing how genes affect cellular processes, including genetic diseases.

INTRODUCTION

Neurofibromatosis Type 2 (NF2) is a genetic disorder caused by mutations in the NF2 gene, leading to tumors in the nervous system, particularly in the brain and spinal cord. Understanding the molecular function of the NF2 gene is crucial for advancing therapeutic strategies for NF2 and related disorders. Previous studies have shown that NF2 plays a key role in regulating cell signaling, apoptosis, and tumor suppression, but the precise mechanisms remain unclear. Research on *C. elegans*, a model organism, has revealed conserved functions, making it a valuable model for studying NF2's molecular pathway. Our study hypothesizes that manipulating *emx-1* expression will produce phenotypic changes linked to NF2's role in disease, offering potential insights for future treatments.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How will the knockdown and overexpression of the *emx-1* gene affect *C. elegans* at an organismal level?



PROPOSED METHOD

Source/Participants:

Data will be obtained from *Caenorhabditis elegans* (*C. elegans*) strains, including RNAi knockdown and overexpression of *emx-1*, the *C. elegans* homolog of the NF2 gene. Worms will be sourced from a laboratory stock collection and cultured under standard conditions.

Timeline:

The experiment will take place over several months, with RNAi knockdown and overexpression experiments conducted concurrently. Phenotypic changes will be observed within the progeny of affected *C. elegans* and recorded weekly.

Procedure:

- 1. RNAi Knockdown and Overexpression:** *C. elegans* will be exposed to RNAi feeding expressing double-stranded RNA targeting *emx-1* for knockdown. Overexpression will be achieved by exposing worms to RNAi expressing *emx-1* cDNA.
- 2. Independent Variable (X):** The manipulation of *emx-1* expression levels through RNAi (knockdown) or overexpression.
- 3. Dependent Variable (Y):** Observed phenotypic outcomes, including developmental defects, changes in cellular morphology, and apoptosis, will be measured using microscopy, image analysis, and protein assays.
- 4. Molecular Analysis:** PCR, gel electrophoresis, and Sanger sequencing will be used to verify the knockdown and overexpression of *emx-1*, confirming changes in gene expression. By comparing the phenotypic and molecular effects in RNAi-treated, overexpressed, and wild-type *C. elegans*, we will assess the functional role of NF2 in development, cell signaling, and disease mechanisms.

SHAPING NEXT-GEN SCHOLARS

Inclusive Programs and Hands-On Mentorship Transform the Undergraduate Research Experience

BY DANIELLE DIMURO

Farmingdale State College (FSC) is reimagining research to reflect broader access and deeper student engagement. By opening doors across all disciplines and prioritizing support for underrepresented communities, FSC is building a more inclusive, student-centered research culture. Students are finding new ways to engage, discover, and lead through various academic opportunities like the Research Aligned Mentorship (RAM) Program, the IGNITE Symposium, and the Summer Undergraduate Research Institute (SURI).

EXPANDING ACCESS THROUGH RAM

Launched in 2015 with a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the RAM Program was created to support first-generation, low-income, and historically underrepresented students by giving them early access to mentored research.

Nearly a decade later, RAM is expanding its reach. The program now works alongside other support services to connect even more students to research opportunities, regardless of major or academic background. The goal is simple—to help every student see themselves as a researcher and a scholar.



“Research consistently shows that undergraduate mentorship not only keeps students engaged, but also increases graduation rates, GPA, and overall academic success. When students connect with research that inspires them, it changes everything,” said Dylan Gafarian, PhD, acting dean of extended and experiential learning.

IGNITE: CELEBRATING STUDENT DISCOVERY

Now in its third year, the IGNITE Symposium provides a dynamic platform for students to present research, civic engagement experiences, and applied learning projects to the broader campus community. In spring 2025, more than 120 students shared 80 posters, representing a wide range of academic interests and collaborative efforts. Four “Spark Speakers” also took to the microphone at the “green dot” to share their work through short, impactful presentations.

Jhoanna Ortiz earned recognition from faculty evaluators for a project on the impact of recycled plastics in recycled concrete aggregate, completed under the mentorship of Shohana Iffat, a professor in the Civil Engineering Department.

The event showcases individual and team achievements, creating a space for students to inspire one another, share ideas, and gain confidence as scholars.

SUMMER IMMERSION THROUGH SURI

SURI offers a 10-week summer research experience that pairs students with faculty mentors for focused, hands-on learning. Participants spend 15 to 20 hours per week on their research, building critical thinking skills and exploring topics in depth.

Milan Gayle, a mechanical engineering major, completed a SURI project on acoustic impedance tube modification to improve recording studio panel measurements. The work was completed under the mentorship of Kimberly Riegel, a professor in the Department of Physics.

The project explored real-world applications of academic coursework, helping to shape Gayle’s academic and career goals. With its emphasis on small student-mentor pairings, SURI provides meaningful opportunities for mentorship and discovery that often continue into the academic year.

REDEFINING WHAT STUDENT RESEARCH LOOKS LIKE

At FSC, research isn’t limited to labs and technical fields. Faculty in areas such as business, psychology, health sciences, and the arts are guiding students through both everyday “little r” research experiences and more formal, scholarly “big R” projects.

By prompting students to investigate real-world questions and use research methods across disciplines, FSC is broadening the scope of research and increasing the number of individuals who can lead it. FSC prepares graduates who think critically, solve creatively, and lead with purpose.

COMMITTED TO STUDENT SUCCESS

“The College’s commitment to student success is steadfast, and our work is essential in preparing today’s students for work, life, and citizenship. Helping students apply their knowledge in meaningful ways is paramount. This would not be possible without the dedicated faculty and staff who embrace Farmingdale’s mission. It is through their efforts that students are guided to grow and thrive as both scholars and professionals,” said Laura Joseph, EdD, recently retired senior vice president and provost.

FSC’s investment in access, equity, and innovation continues to shape a new chapter in undergraduate research, a chapter in which every student can contribute, every voice is valued, and every idea has the power to spark change.

A FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE TECHNOLOGY

Farmingdale Breaks Ground
on New \$75 Million Computer
Sciences Center

BY KAREN V. CONTINO

In a move that will propel Farmingdale State College (FSC) into the digital future and address growing technology and workforce needs for the region and beyond, New York State Governor Kathy Hochul recently joined FSC President Robert S. Prezant, PhD, to officially break ground for the College's new Computer Sciences Center.

Gathered beside FSC's Great Mall, between Sinclair Hall and a row of stately oak trees, the morning event's nearly 100 attendees included FSC administration, faculty, staff, and students, as well as FSC President Emeritus John S. Nader, PhD, government partners, and representatives from the Empire State Development Board, the State University of New York (SUNY), organized labor, and Urbahn Architects.

"In New York, we are shaping our students to be the next generation of leaders," Governor Hochul said. "Our SUNYs and CUNYs (City University of New York) provide an exceptional and well-rounded education for New Yorkers to explore science and technology research—the groundbreaking of the Computer Sciences Center at Farmingdale will uncover technological advancements and advance economic opportunities in our state; that's how we build a better New York."

The \$75 million project, funded through \$30 million from the Empire State Development's Long Island Investment Fund (LIIF) and \$45 million from the SUNY Construction Fund, "will attract students, with the potential to double program enrollment over the next several years and thus impact workforce and economic development in our region," said President Prezant.



"This is a very proud day in Farmingdale State College history," he said. "So much more than a building, the center will provide a hub of advanced technology education and programming, enabling interdisciplinary and collaborative innovation, research, and learning. It will also allow us to support increasing enrollment in our technology programs, with a focus on workforce development."

"Long Island's future depends on the ability to attract and retain the next generation of workers, homeowners, and community leaders, and I'm proud to have secured significant funding for this project, which continues our commitment to Farmingdale State College as an economic and educational engine for our entire Long Island region for generations to come," said New York State Assemblyman Steve Stern.

The beautifully designed three-story structure, the first zero net carbon ready building on FSC's campus as well as the first in the SUNY system, will house the College's incipient Division of Computing, which has experienced a 40% increase in enrollment over the past five years, demonstrating the demand for resources and facilities to integrate several closely related programs including Computer Programming and Information Systems, Computer Security Technology, and Artificial Intelligence Management, as well as the College's graduate program in Technology Management.



"The Computer Sciences Center is a visionary investment in technology education on Long Island," said Kenneth Lee, PhD, PE, dean of the Pasternack School of Engineering Technology. "It will empower our faculty and students to explore cutting-edge fields like AI and cybersecurity in a space designed for interdisciplinary collaboration and hands-on problem-solving."

"At the end of the day, it's about our students and providing them with state-of-the-art facilities, the most talented faculty, and the best opportunities to succeed, here and in their professional and personal lives," agreed President Prezant.

"This extraordinary project is part of our larger efforts to reimagine and continue innovating the Long Island economy," said Governor Hochul. "And with this project and more students discovering Long Island they are going to stay here; they are going to build their families here and continue to enrich our local communities overall."





SMILES AHEAD

FSC Opens Leading-Edge Henry Schein Cares Sensory Unit for Patients With Special Needs

BY KAREN V. CONTINO

The Farmingdale State College (FSC) campus community is celebrating the new Henry Schein Cares Sensory Unit in Gleeson Hall. Carefully designed to support provider training and care for patients with special needs, the spacious room provides a sensory-controlled environment with a variety of extraordinary features for patients with learning difficulties, developmental disabilities, or impairments. The room is the latest addition to the College's Dental Hygiene Care Center, which offers services to the community and enables students in FSC's dental hygiene programs to earn clinical hours.

"With the generosity of Henry Schein Cares, we have been able to create a space for caring and teaching that's unique to our region—in fact, the first on Long Island in a public-facing, educational clinical setting—where specialized health is accessible for so many who struggled to receive it," said Matthew Colson, vice president of development and alumni engagement.

"People with autism spectrum disorder, sensory processing disorders, or heightened sensitivity can experience greater oral health care challenges, which are often associated



with heightened responses to sensory input,” said Susan Vogell, EdD, chair of the Dental Hygiene Department. “Traditional dental offices have bright lights and loud sounds, which can be overwhelming and can cause the patient to experience anxiety or become uncooperative.”

“This is a model for others to follow; it’s groundbreaking and very much appreciated on behalf of the community and parents.”

Todd Schall, father of Henry Schein Cares Sensory Unit’s first pediatric patient

With features such as interactive custom light effects, visual mobile relaxation devices, fiber-optic curtains, soothing wall art, portable equipment, and communication software for patients who are nonverbal, the Henry Schein Cares Sensory Unit is designed to help patients feel more comfortable and relaxed. Noise-canceling headphones, fidget toys, sunglasses, alternative seating, and calming music are also available to enhance a patient’s experience and ensure they receive the care they require.

Before its official opening this summer, the impact of the room’s quiet charm was clear when 6-year-old Emily Schall became its first patient.

“One of the biggest things was the year before, she could not, at all, handle the dentist,” shared Emily’s mother, Megan Goff. “But when we came here, they were able to do pretty much a full workup on her as well as clean her teeth. And for me, that was huge because I never thought that my child with special needs, with major sensory issues, could ever be

examined in a billion years. She was able to sit in something other than a dental chair and play with the lights and get breathers when she needed it. Regular dental offices are just not able to give that.”

“We are so appreciative of Farmingdale State College and their outreach to children,” added Emily’s father, Todd Schall. “And this is just a step up, with the benefit of Henry Schein Cares, to bring about a more inclusive environment for children with special needs and without. This is a model for others to follow; it’s groundbreaking and very much appreciated on behalf of the community and parents.”

In addition to serving special needs populations, “we are educating our students to become more knowledgeable and competent clinicians,” said Vogell.

Emily ten Hoopen, ’25, who received an AAS in dental hygiene, shared that seeing the room come to fruition was a moment of deep pride.

“As students we’ve seen the effort that went into creating this room,” she said. “We could see it come together. It was really special to be part of the process and see the excitement in our professors. I think it’s so important to be inclusive and be able to give everyone the treatment that they need.”

For Justine DiPasquale, ’25, who received an AAS in dental hygiene, seeing the room open has been both “very refreshing and rewarding. This new facility is inspiring,” she said. “It’s unlike anything else that I have seen. It’s wonderful to be able to serve more people in a better way. And I think that as word spreads, it will have a ripple effect into the community.”

Colson agreed, “We are grateful to Henry Schein Cares for making the world gentler for so many patients, one visit at a time.”

REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

Todd Traynor-Corey, '05, Soars From “AvGeek” to Airline Exec

BY KAREN V. CONTINO

Growing up on Long Island’s South Shore, when many teens were riding their bicycles to the movies or the beach, Todd Traynor-Corey was on his way to Long Island MacArthur Airport.

“There was this new airline that was starting to fly to Islip, and I wanted to see the first plane take off,” he said. “It was very early in the morning on a Saturday, and I just got on my bike and rode there. By car it was about 20 minutes from our house, but by bike it was almost two hours. But that’s how geeky I was about air transportation. From the earliest memory I have, I remember being just fascinated with it.”

On Sundays, Traynor-Corey’s father would often take him to John F. Kennedy International Airport’s bustling terminals to take in the action on the tarmac, play games memorizing each airplane’s livery, and collect “anything that I could take that was free, like bag tags or these little brochures they used to have with the flight schedules in them. I still have everything—all organized in an old beverage trolley that I bought at a thrift sale.”

After high school, Traynor-Corey, a self-professed “AvGeek,” chose Farmingdale State College (FSC) for its renowned Department of Aviation, earning a BS in aviation administration and later an MBA from Roosevelt University. Over his high-flying career, he has lived in five U.S. cities and held leadership roles at several top companies, including United Airlines, Northwest Airlines, Delta Air Lines, and JetBlue Airways.

In 2017, Traynor-Corey joined Alaska Air Group, the fifth-largest airline in the United States, where he was recently promoted to vice president of guest products and experience. He shares that his foundation at FSC has been pivotal to his rising success.

“Personally, I thrived in the environment at Farmingdale,” said Traynor-Corey. “And I really fell in love with the faculty. The professors truly cared and wanted us to succeed. Many were teaching classes while working in the industry. So, there are things I learned that I use even today, in my everyday world, like with airline operations, doing the right thing, being safe, and taking care of the

customer. It went beyond just passing the class. I got to experience people who were really doing it—not just the theory of it, but doing it. And that inspired me.”

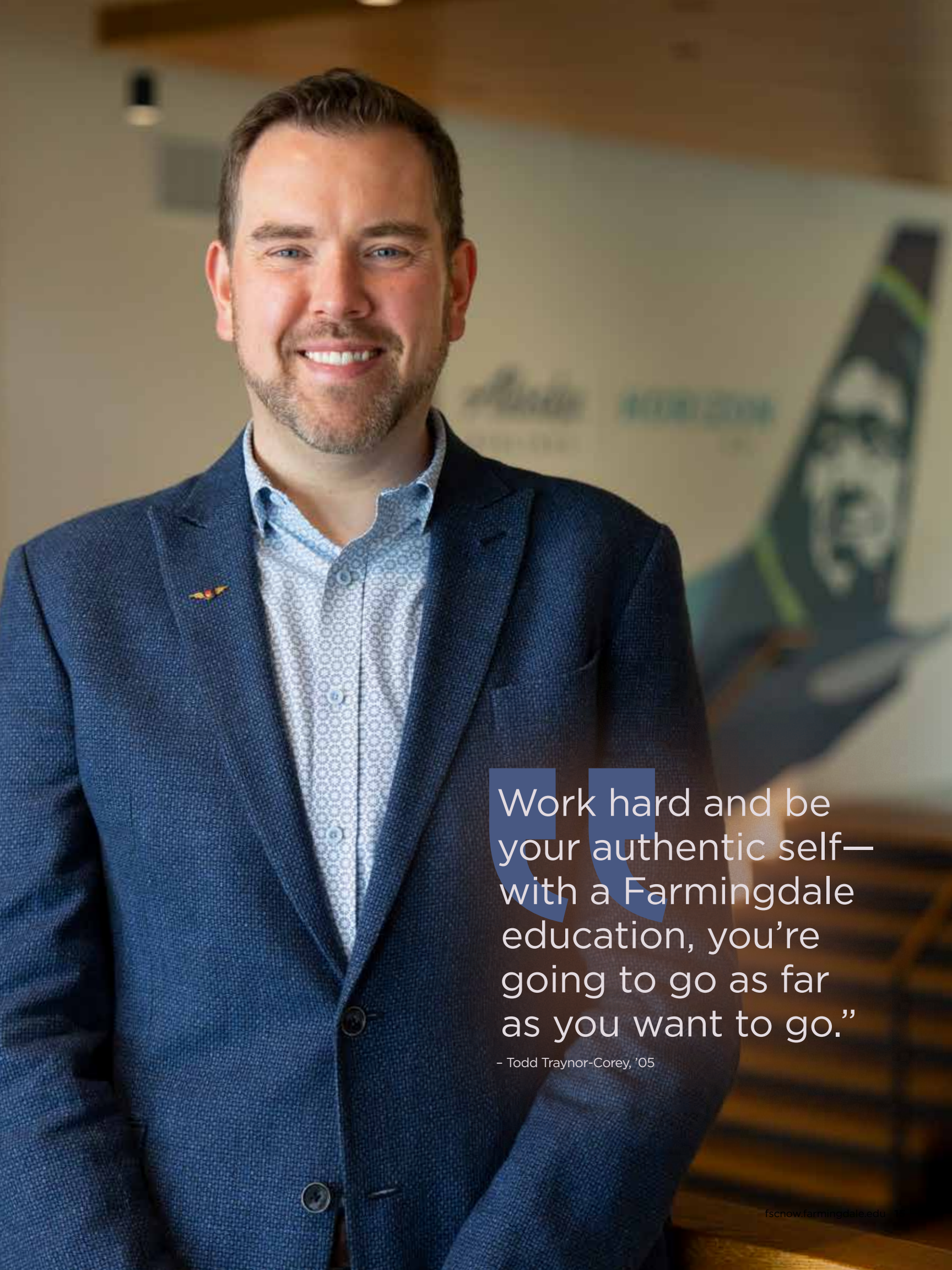
“It’s wonderful to see that Todd has not only applied the Aviation Department’s practical ‘real world, hands-on’ learning, but also skillfully applied our professional advice to advance and be successful in the exciting field of aviation,” said Department of Aviation Associate Professor Louis Scala, who taught several of Traynor-Corey’s classes.

In his current role based in Seattle, Traynor-Corey oversees the strategic vision, operational execution, and delivery of best-in-class guest products and overall experience for more than 41.5 million travelers per year.

“My team and I consider every detail that a guest may see or interact with,” he said. “It’s a lot of pressure, but at the end of the day, it’s about getting in the right mindset. I love making an impact on people’s lives and being able to bring moments of joy when they’re traveling. Whether it’s our amazing cup of coffee or our signature fruit and cheese platter, so much thought and care go into creating this great experience they’ll remember. It’s a privilege to be able to do that...I do love my job,” he added.

“Todd stands out for many reasons,” said Shelby Shenkelman, commercial manager of lounges at CAVU. “He is performance-driven yet patiently leads, providing his team with the space and support they need to learn and grow. Working with him has always been easy, thanks to the open and collaborative environment he fosters. I’m proud to call Todd a friend and even prouder of all he has accomplished.”

For FSC students looking to elevate their own professional journey, Traynor-Corey offered powerful validation. “Look for that spark, something that lights you up,” he said. “You’ll start to find pieces of things that fall into place for you, and that turns into a pathway. Work hard and be your authentic self—with a Farmingdale education, you’re going to go as far as you want to go.”



Work hard and be
your authentic self—
with a Farmingdale
education, you're
going to go as far
as you want to go.”

– Todd Traynor-Corey, '05

SERVICE & LEADERSHIP

Kevin Spiegel, '76, Makes a Difference in Health Care and His Community

BY KAREN V. CONTINO

From his start as a liberal arts major at Farmingdale State College (FSC), Kevin Spiegel, now a highly accomplished health care executive, has stood out for his leadership and passion for health and human services.

As an FSC student, Spiegel was actively involved in the campus community, where he served as president of both the Student Government Association and a chapter of the Circle K International club, and worked in the College's Disability Services Center. Those experiences, he says, taught him key "skills that I carry and still use today."

"I really flourished at Farmingdale," added Spiegel, who grew up in Plainview, New York. "I am so grateful for my time there. It was definitely a career growth opportunity in my life."

A Distinguished Service Award recipient and a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives, Spiegel now serves as chief executive officer of Florida Medical Center (FMC) in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, a 459-bed acute care hospital that serves more than 50,000 admitted patients per year.

"I'm excited to be here," said Spiegel, who joined FMC in early 2025. "We've been seeing a dramatic improvement in the operation of the hospital, and we are connecting with our service partners and the local government. I'm attracted to the challenge of difficult organizational issues, and I believe in fostering education among our physicians and creating a collaborative environment. We're training the doctors of tomorrow. And when you're providing a better level of service and improving the health status of that community, everybody wins."

Throughout his exemplary career, Spiegel, who went on to earn a BA in psychology from the State University of New York at New Paltz and an MBA in health care administration and finance from Adelphi University, has held numerous clinical teaching positions and executive leadership roles in health care systems across the United States. Drawing from his FSC campus community engagement and professional success, Spiegel encourages others to pursue purposeful participation and meaningful connections.

"I loved the professors at Farmingdale," he said. They were warm. And they were always available to help you and mentor you. I also got involved in all the activities at Farmingdale, and that 100% made for a positive experience. Farmingdale has so much to offer. As a student, I think you have to get involved. Then you find your strengths, and it helps define you as a person."

In his personal life, Spiegel values community-leadership service and has devoted his time to several organizations, including serving on numerous boards, as a past regent for Tennessee with the American College of Healthcare Executives, and as a member of the Regents Advisory Council. He is especially honored to have served on the New York City 911 Board, the Suffolk Regional EMS Council, and as commander for the NY-2 National Disaster Medical System-Disaster Medical Assistance Team.


In 2021, Spiegel's family experienced profound heartbreak when his wife of 40 years, Judy Spiegel, was among the 98 people killed in the collapse of the Champlain Towers South condominium complex in Surfside, Florida. Through the devastation, Spiegel sought to make a difference in the lives of others.

"I had a catastrophe in my life, but during this catastrophe I worked with a lot of community groups and organizations," he said. "And I became a volunteer chaplain where I helped provide counseling, psychotherapy, and support, both for national and international disasters."

Today, Spiegel serves as director of strategic development for the First Responders Special Unit of the United States Chaplain Corps (USCC) and was recently honored with a USCC Passion Award.


"I first met Kevin during the Surfside disaster," said Chaplain Mendy Coën, USCC director-general. "He has a unique ability to calm people down, including myself. And not only has he come to be a close friend, but he is also a mentor to me. He has made a lasting impact in the work he does every single day both professionally and personally."

"I've always had a sense, a passion, for helping and caring for people," Spiegel said. "I love it. I mean, I could do this forever."

A man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a light blue patterned tie, is smiling at the camera. He is standing in a modern office hallway with glass-walled rooms in the background. The lighting is bright and even.

I really flourished
at Farmingdale...
It was definitely
a career growth
opportunity
in my life.

– Kevin Spiegel, '76

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a peach-colored sleeveless dress and light-colored pointed-toe pumps, stands on a paved sidewalk. She is smiling and looking off to the side, with a dark blue jacket draped over her left shoulder. In the background, there is a brick building with large windows, a tree, and a bench. A sign with a wheelchair symbol is visible on the left.

I have seen the College through every lens. And at each level, you have a different view of how you can advance the College through your efforts.”

- Laura Joseph, EdD, '84

LEAVING A LEGACY

A Champion of FSC, **Laura Joseph, '84**, Has Made an Enduring Impact on Her Alma Mater

BY KAREN V. CONTINO

A prolific scholar, educator, academic leader, and licensed dental hygienist, Laura Joseph, EdD, has a legacy of making smiles.

An East Northport, New York, native, and Farmingdale State College (FSC) newly retired senior vice president and provost, Joseph recalls an early passion for dental care that was rooted in health promotion.

“As a young woman graduating high school, it was time to think about a career,” she said. “Throughout school I always gravitated toward science. And I was always drawn to dentistry. I don’t know why I was so drawn to it, but I always loved going to the dentist. I loved the dental hygienist. I liked the health care environment, and dentistry excited me.”

A first-generation college student, Joseph carefully considered health science programs at multiple institutions as well as “all the employment advertisements in the newspaper that my mom would save for me,” before choosing FSC for its prominent Dental Hygiene Program.

After earning an associate degree from FSC in 1984, Joseph began working in a local dental office as a hygienist. But she didn’t stop there. “I wanted to do more,” she said. “I told my parents, ‘I’m going to continue my education and get my bachelor’s degree.’”

Joseph went on to receive BS and MS degrees in science from Old Dominion University, and later an EdD in higher education and academic leadership from Columbia University. Along the way, “great mentors opened my eyes to a career in education” and encouraged her to pursue her passion for research. Focused on studying epidemiology, health promotion and wellness, and disease prevention, Joseph took on consulting work overseeing clinical trials across the United States and abroad.

In 1991, Joseph’s career came full circle when she accepted a full-time faculty position in FSC’s Dental Hygiene Department, where she rose to chair, serving from 2003 to 2013. Joseph shares that rejoining many of her former professors as a colleague was a rewarding experience.

“Everyone was encouraging and respectful,” she said. “Being engaged in research allowed me to bring some of the newer knowledge and cutting-edge methodologies back to the department. So, they were looking to me to help move the program forward.”

Over the years, Joseph has served as acting assistant dean of the Santmann School of Health Sciences, as associate provost for academic affairs, and in her most recent role as provost since 2015. In spring 2024, after 35 years of distinguished leadership and dedication, Joseph announced her retirement, which became official one year later.

“I have seen the College through every lens,” she said. “And at each level, you have a different view of how you can advance the institution through your efforts. Both challenging and rewarding, I’ve enjoyed all the work that we’ve accomplished together. It has truly been an honor and a privilege to serve in all these different ways and to contribute to the success of the institution and the success of the students, which is really what it all comes down to.”

“We should be proud of where Farmingdale is,” she added. “The College is thriving with a great future ahead.”

As FSC’s chief academic officer, Joseph guided the College to an abundance of FSC achievements, including the launch of the Nexus Center for Applied Learning and Career Development and the Office of Distance Learning, the creation of the Honors Program, advancements in accreditation and institutional assessments, and numerous new academic programs, student support services, and microcredential certificates.

“During her tenure here, this institution has truly evolved,” said FSC President Robert S. Prezant, PhD. “It has become a scholarly juggernaut. With a focus on our students and on faculty and staff development—Laura has been at the heart of all of it. She has a deep-seated love for FSC, and it’s palpable. It shows in everything she does.”

“Laura came to work every day with three things on her mind: benefitting our students, benefitting



our faculty and staff, and advancing the mission of this institution that she believes so deeply in,” said Psychology Professor Michael Goodstone, PhD. “Every day she put us first, and she did it with grace. And we all owe her a great debt of gratitude.”

“Whatever the level or the activity, she is always thoughtful in what she does,” said Bill Steedle, ’81, assistant dean for the School of Business and associate professor of visual communications. “Laura considers all the sides of any decision that has to be made, and most importantly, she always leads with her heart. She has left such a big, lasting impact on this College. She will be missed by all of us.”

Outside of FSC, Joseph served as chair of the State University of New York (SUNY) Chief Academic Officers’ Association from 2021 to 2023 and as a long-time member of its executive committee, with significant contributions to SUNY’s mission and operations through her work on multiple task forces. Joseph also served as liaison to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and as commissioner for the American Dental Association’s Commission on

Dental Accreditation, where she helped author accreditation standards for dental education programs across the United States.

“Laura considers all the sides of any decision...and most importantly, she always leads with her heart. She has left such a big, lasting impact on this College. She will be missed by all of us.”

Bill Steedle, ’81, assistant dean, School of Business and associate professor, visual communications

Joseph has been recognized as a recipient of the prestigious SUNY Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching and recently with the FSC President’s Award for Academic and Professional Leadership for her “ongoing loyalty and commitment to this College she calls home,” said President Prezant. “At the end of the day, each one of her accomplishments created new opportunities for our students, and her astute leadership has impacted thousands of Farmingdale students’ lives and will have a lasting impact for years to come.”





GIVE THE GIFT *of a* DENTAL HYGIENIST'S PIN

The Farmingdale Alumni Association invites you to welcome our next generation of dental hygienists by gifting students their RDH pin at their final pinning ceremony. These coveted pins serve as a tangible reminder that the FSC community has supported them in their journey to become the best dental hygiene professionals they can be!

This gift is a great way to welcome brand new alumni into our FSC Dental Hygiene family to show them that the circle of support that surrounds them is strong! All donors will receive a personal note of thanks from their student and an invitation to attend the pinning ceremony to meet their student.

Support a Future Dental Hygienist!

Visit **farmingdale.edu/dental-hygiene-pin**



INVESTED IN STUDENT SUCCESS

FSC Students Gain Hands-On Experience Managing a Live Portfolio

BY DANIELLE DIMURO

One year after launching the Student-Managed Investment Fund, Farmingdale State College (FSC) is seeing strong returns, not just in financial performance, but also in student development and alumni engagement. The fund is managed through the Business Internship course, an upper-division experience that immerses students in applied finance under the guidance of faculty and industry professionals.

Established by a generous gift from alumnus Murray Pasternack, Class of 1960, and his wife, Judy, the fund also helped create a state-of-the-art trading room on campus. The space features 16 Bloomberg Terminals, real-time stock ticker displays, and access to premier financial publications, bringing Wall Street tools to FSC.

Each semester, eight students are selected through a competitive application process to participate in the course, co-taught by Garrison Song, PhD, CFA, assistant professor of finance, and Meeghan Rogers, PhD, assistant professor of business management.

Students manage a \$500,000 portfolio, executing trades through Charles Schwab and using Bloomberg data to monitor trends, analyze performance, and adjust strategies in real time.

“The first cohort began in fall 2024 and immediately moved beyond textbook theory,” said Song. “They applied what they learned in class to real decision-making in portfolio construction, security selection, and risk management.”

“It’s what students would see at a major equity firm, and they rise to the challenge,” added Rogers.

In addition to tracking stock performance, students conducted in-depth analysis on how political developments influence market behavior. This spring, they studied the impact of policy shifts such as tariff announcements and economic uncertainty on investor sentiment and portfolio valuation. By examining the connection between market volatility and political events, students gained a deeper understanding of how perception, not just fundamentals, can drive investment decisions.

“One of the biggest takeaways was recognizing how perception, and even political rumors, can affect stock prices,” said Rogers. “The students didn’t panic; they saw it as a buying opportunity.”

The course emphasized research, economic awareness, and strategic thinking. Rather than chasing trends, students built their strategies on data and analysis, learning that smart investing is rooted in insight, not instinct.

Students presented their findings and performance outcomes to alumni and faculty during two spring semester events.

“This experience isn’t just about trading,” said Rogers. “It’s about building confidence, presenting to professionals, and preparing for careers in finance.” That preparation is already paying off. Two students from the inaugural class secured internships at private equity firms, and others reported increased interest in finance-related career paths.

Presentations engaged donors, faculty, and industry professionals, including a mentor from Charles Schwab who helped onboard students and provided real-time guidance throughout the semester.

The Murray Pasternack '60 Finance and Trading Room serves as a hub for applied learning, networking, and professional preparation. As the program evolves, it remains a powerful example of how FSC provides real-world experiences that build student confidence and shape their careers.

PASSPORT

TO LEARNING

Study Abroad Takes Off at FSC

BY CHRIS MAIO



Study Abroad at Farmingdale State College (FSC) is really taking off, with new leadership, a renewed vision, and new ways for students to experience the world while learning and earning credit toward their degrees.

The program offers transformative educational opportunities around the world while creating an environment of global learning on campus. FSC recently tapped Eric De Sena, PhD, to lead the office. Before joining FSC, De Sena taught classical studies in Rome and led field schools in Italy and Romania, where students gained valuable experience at archaeological sites. Since joining FSC in fall 2024, he has built awareness, created and managed new programs, and extolled the many benefits of studying abroad.

FSC's Study Abroad Office currently offers traditional semester and summer programs at partner universities in Nicosia, Cyprus; Florence, Italy; Rennes, France; and Barcelona, Spain. Edinburgh, Scotland, is in the works. De Sena continues to build partnerships to provide a broader range of options tailored to students' interests. In addition, students can apply to another State University of New York (SUNY) institution if they prefer to study at a different location or during a different academic term.

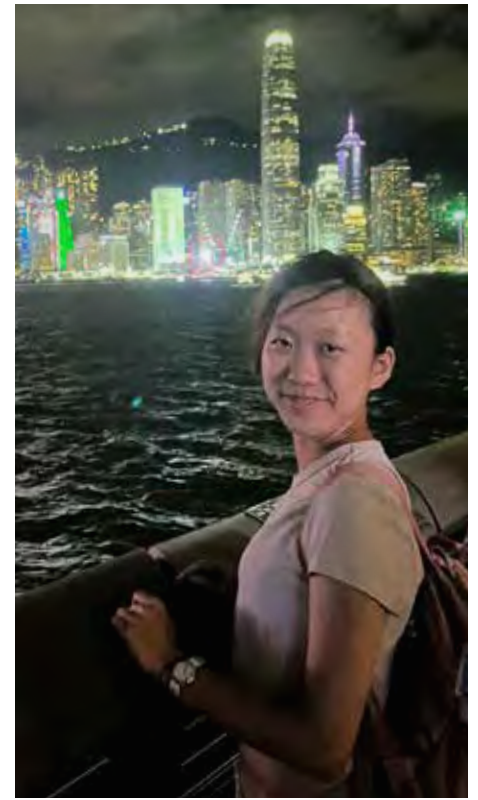
Sabrina Achille, '25, a computer programming and information systems major in her senior year, participated in two study abroad trips while at FSC, visiting Egypt in 2024 and Madagascar in 2025. Achille chose more remote destinations for something new and diverse.

"This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," she said. "I wanted to go outside my comfort zone and experience something totally different."

As a study abroad student ambassador, she talks to students in the Campus Center every Thursday. "I tell students, do your own research and don't let anybody make that decision for you," she said. "We have the resources to help students make a sound decision."

De Sena is also engaging with FSC professors with expertise in certain regions or areas of study to curate faculty-led programs during the summer and winter terms, including summer 2025 programs scheduled for Taiwan and Hong Kong, South Italy, and Edinburgh, and a winter 2025-2026 seminar in Ghana. Faculty-led programs are ideal for students who prefer to travel in a group, have a shorter experience, or study specific or integrated topics. In addition to the worldly experience, students gain resume and skill-building advantages.





“That’s going to give them an edge if somebody has an equal work or education experience,” De Sena said. “In certain cases, they can even do internships overseas. So, they’re really developing their skills.”

“For Madagascar, I was able to do independent research in my field. So, that’s something that makes my resume stand out,” Achille concurred. “Plus, it’s a fun talking point I’ll always have.”

The Study Abroad Office works with students to develop an action plan based on their goals, individual circumstances, and financial considerations. One-on-one assistance and resources help guide students in planning, funding, and preparing for their experience.

Because students receive credit for their coursework abroad, financial aid may be applicable, and the Study Abroad Office actively maintains a comprehensive list of scholarships available to students. In fact, a record number of FSC students have applied for the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship in spring 2025. In the last two years, SUNY provided funding options for Educational Opportunity Program and first-generation students, as well as Pell Grant recipients.

“It’s really a life-changing experience. I’ve literally seen thousands of students go overseas, and they’re all transformed in some way,” said De Sena. “They come in with fresh haircuts, nice clothes, and maybe a little naive. They go through this transformation, and they come out of it as more worldly. Their hair is grown out, their clothes are wrinkled, but they’ve all absorbed in their own way the local culture.”

Drawing on her personal life experiences, Achille said that studying abroad changed her perceptions. “My family comes from Haiti, and media often only shows the poor regions. Visiting some of these more remote regions, I could see for myself what it’s really like there. It’s good to gain your own experience and form your own opinion.”

“People told me to ‘travel while you’re young, explore the world,’ and that’s what I tell other students,” Achille said. “The more life experiences you gain, the richer you get.”

As De Sena tells students, “just go for it.”



Photos clockwise from left: Giza, Egypt, courtesy Sabrina Achille, '25; Florence, Italy, courtesy Ryan Delgenio, '25; Florence, Italy, courtesy Liana Bordonaro, '25; Hong Kong, China, courtesy Qing Ai, associate professor; Cairo, Egypt, courtesy Sabrina Achille, '25

WELCOME TO THE RAM'S DEN

BEYOND PROGRAMMING

Student Activities Builds Community, One Event at a Time

BY NICOLE MILLER

As primarily a commuter school, keeping students engaged and involved is not the easiest of tasks, but for Lukas Miedreich, director of student activities at Farmingdale State College (FSC), the task has proven to be straightforward. With more than 100 events happening on campus over the last year, Miedreich and his team made sure there was something for everyone.

Hosting events such as Hispanic Heritage Block Party, Soul Food Café, and Black Empowerment Gala helps to ensure all students feel represented and celebrated on campus. The team goes the extra mile, incorporating cultural elements like women-owned food trucks for Women's History Month and Hawaiian poke bowls for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Month.

Aside from FSC's diverse student population, most of its student body are commuters, with about 75% working while attending classes and managing extracurricular activities. "Some students may only have an hour in their day to engage in a student activity-related event," said Miedreich. "So, we make sure there is always something for them to do, even if it's a food truck so they don't need to stop somewhere to grab lunch."

"We want to make sure students feel comfortable here," said Miedreich, which means being intentional and inclusive, such as having brown paper bags available at events during Ramadan so students can pack a meal for later. The Office of Student Activities (OSA) is committed to fostering a strong, connected FSC community, bringing students together through engaging events and initiatives.

"OSA has provided incredible support to the student body, from giving us autonomy as student leaders to flourish and explore within our clubs, to supporting the student body with campuswide events. They are truly bringing the community together," said Aliyah Adan Khan, '26, an applied mathematics and applied psychology major who serves as president and founder of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), and as secretary of the Supporting Women in Computing Club (SWiC).

How was OSA able to handle such growth? They leaned into their student programming assistants (SPAs), who coordinate events with vendors, handle setup and cleanup, and ensure a smooth event execution.

"This role has been invaluable in preparing me for my future as a program manager, teaching me how to manage multiple tasks simultaneously, work effectively within a team, and meet critical deadlines," said SPA Kellie Wylie, '25, a mechanical



engineering technology major. “It has deepened my passion for higher education, giving me insight into the structure and operations of a college.”

Each May, OSA hosts RamChella, a high-energy festival featuring carnival rides, food trucks, and top-tier musical acts like Swae Lee, Metro Boomin, Two Friends, Daya, and most recently Quavo. Since its 2022 comeback after a two-year hiatus, attendance has more than doubled, with 2025 marking its largest crowd yet. With bigger artists and an electrifying atmosphere, RamChella continues to be the highlight of the year.




“Student activities are not just a break from academics, but represent the heartbeat of campus life, helping college students build leadership, community, and a sense of purpose beyond the classroom,” said Ron Jackson, EdD, vice president for student affairs at FSC. “Through involvement, students discover their voices, broaden their perspectives, and gain the confidence to shape the world around them.”

Miedreich credits his team for fostering campus partnerships as a key factor in the success of student engagement. “We have amazing support from administration and departments like Facilities, Event Management, University Police, and Marketing and Communications,” he said. “Our success in enhancing the student experience is truly a team effort.”

So, what’s next for OSA? They plan to review a recent assessment that was administered to the student body. The objective of the assessment was to look at what the office is producing as a whole—what their strengths are and where they can improve next year to better meet and address student needs. “We never want to be complacent. We also want to level up and see what we can do better next year,” said Miedreich. With the office continuing to “level up,” the campus community cannot wait to see what they have up their sleeves next.





FSC HAS BEEN
INCREDIBLY
SUPPORTIVE OF MY
JOURNEY IN STEM.
HAVING A CIRCLE
OF PEOPLE WHO
BELIEVE IN YOU
MAKES ALL THE
DIFFERENCE.”

– Aliyah Adnan Khan, '26

A RAY OF SUNSHINE

Aliyah Adnan Khan, '26, Shines Brilliance and Makes a Difference at FSC

BY KAREN V. CONTINO

Aliyah Adnan Khan's light burns bright, serving as a beacon for others across the Farmingdale State College (FSC) campus community and beyond.

"I'm kind of known for being the positive person," she said. "I need to make the most of life. And once I have my mind set on something, I have to do it. I will push for it."

Adnan Khan's remarkable spirit has been the driving force behind multiple campus initiatives benefiting dozens of fellow students in academics, community service, and mental health. She shares that her resolve, ambition, and compassion for others arose after overwhelmingly losing both her biological parents nearly a year apart when she was just 6 and 7 years old.

"It's a big part of me," said Adnan Khan, who was adopted by her aunt and uncle and grew up the youngest of four in Dix Hills, New York. "It's part of my story and part of what I want to do in the future." She adds that the care and attention she received from her family, as well as at school, helped her heal while forging aspiration.

"I'm endlessly grateful to my family. Their love gave me strength and reminded me that even in the hardest moments, I was never alone," she said. "Everything I do is a reflection of the support they gave me. And I had two really impactful teachers in my life. They both made me feel like they stood by me. Children spend more than half of their waking hours with their teachers, so teachers can play a pivotal role in a child's life. That's a big, big deal. I'm really passionate about that. And I know I want to be that kind of teacher who's able to help someone through challenges."

Now an FSC dual degree student in applied mathematics and applied psychology, Adnan Khan is a standout in the College's Honors, S-STEM Scholarship, and Research Aligned Mentorship Programs. She received an FSC Community Service Award in 2023 and an FSC Phenomenal Womyn Award, a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellence Student Leadership Recognition Award, and the United University Professions College Scholarship Award in 2024.

"FSC has been incredibly supportive of my journey in STEM," she said, referring to the acronym for science, technology, engineering, and math. "As a dual degree student, I'm able to complete both degrees within four years. This has been made possible thanks to the outstanding administration and student opportunity programs at Farmingdale. Having a circle of people who believe in you makes all the difference."

On campus, Adnan Khan leads as founder and president of the College's National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) chapter, which was voted 2024 Best New Student Organization of the Year and Adnan Khan the 2025 Club President of the Year. She is also co-founder and co-president of the Honors Student Association and co-secretary of the Supporting Women in Computing Club.

"Aliyah brings so much heart to everything she does, especially through her work with NAMI," said Lukas Miedreich, FSC director of student activities. "She's created a much-needed space where students feel safe, supported, and genuinely heard. On top of that, her leadership shows just how committed she is to building inclusive, empowering communities across campus."

"What makes Aliyah stand out is her dedication," agreed Sarina Turbendian, RAM Program operations manager and academic advisement assistant. "Aliyah truly goes above and beyond in everything she pursues."

"There is no end to what Aliyah is capable of accomplishing in this life," said Dylan Gafarian, PhD, acting dean of extended and experiential learning.

Beyond FSC, Adnan Khan plans to pursue a doctorate in education, stay resilient, and continue making a positive impact in her community.

"I want to make a meaningful difference in people's lives, just as my teachers did for me," she said. "I want to be able to help make the world a better place—it's just something that's always been very dear to me. And it's something that I want to continue to do throughout my life."

BORN TO FLY

Ethan Bassis, '25, Pilots an FSC Aviation Administration Major Toward a Bright Future

BY KAREN V. CONTINO

"I was about 5 when I randomly went up to my mother and asked for a flight lesson."

Ethan Bassis, '25, recalls the youthful moment his passion for aviation took off.

"I remember coming up to her when she was cooking in the kitchen," added Bassis, who grew up the oldest of three in Stony Brook, New York. "I had just finished watching some sort of video about an airplane, and for some reason, I was very intrigued by that."

His "extremely supportive" parents quickly set up his first flight session, booster seat and all. "The flight instructor was next to me, teaching me how to land, and I said to the control tower, 'Air traffic control, we landed!' And because I'm 5 years old, everyone was laughing. But that was my first real taste of real flying, of real aviation. And that has catapulted me into everything I'm doing right now."

Bassis set his sights high, and after earning his Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) private pilot certificate in high school, he is now a resolute aviation administration student at Farmingdale State College (FSC)—one of the largest collegiate flight schools in the Northeast and the only four-year aeronautical science degree program in the State University of New York (SUNY) System. He shares he chose FSC "because of the opportunity to be a leader" and "build a name for myself."

"Farmingdale State College's community allows someone to really excel, especially in aviation," he added.

"I had Ethan as a student in his first semester at FSC, and it was clear from the start that he was a stand-out student," said Department of Aviation Professor Jeanne Radigan, EdD, who noted Bassis' impressive confidence and public speaking skills. "Ethan quickly rose to the rank of president in the FSC student chapter of the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE). The chapter has flourished under his leadership. Ethan has taken advantage of every opportunity that has been presented. He is very driven and well respected by faculty and his peers."

Through his involvement in the AAAE, Bassis has helped host several high-level industry professionals as campus speakers, including executives from Delta Air Lines, JetBlue Airways, British Airways, JFK International Air Terminal, and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

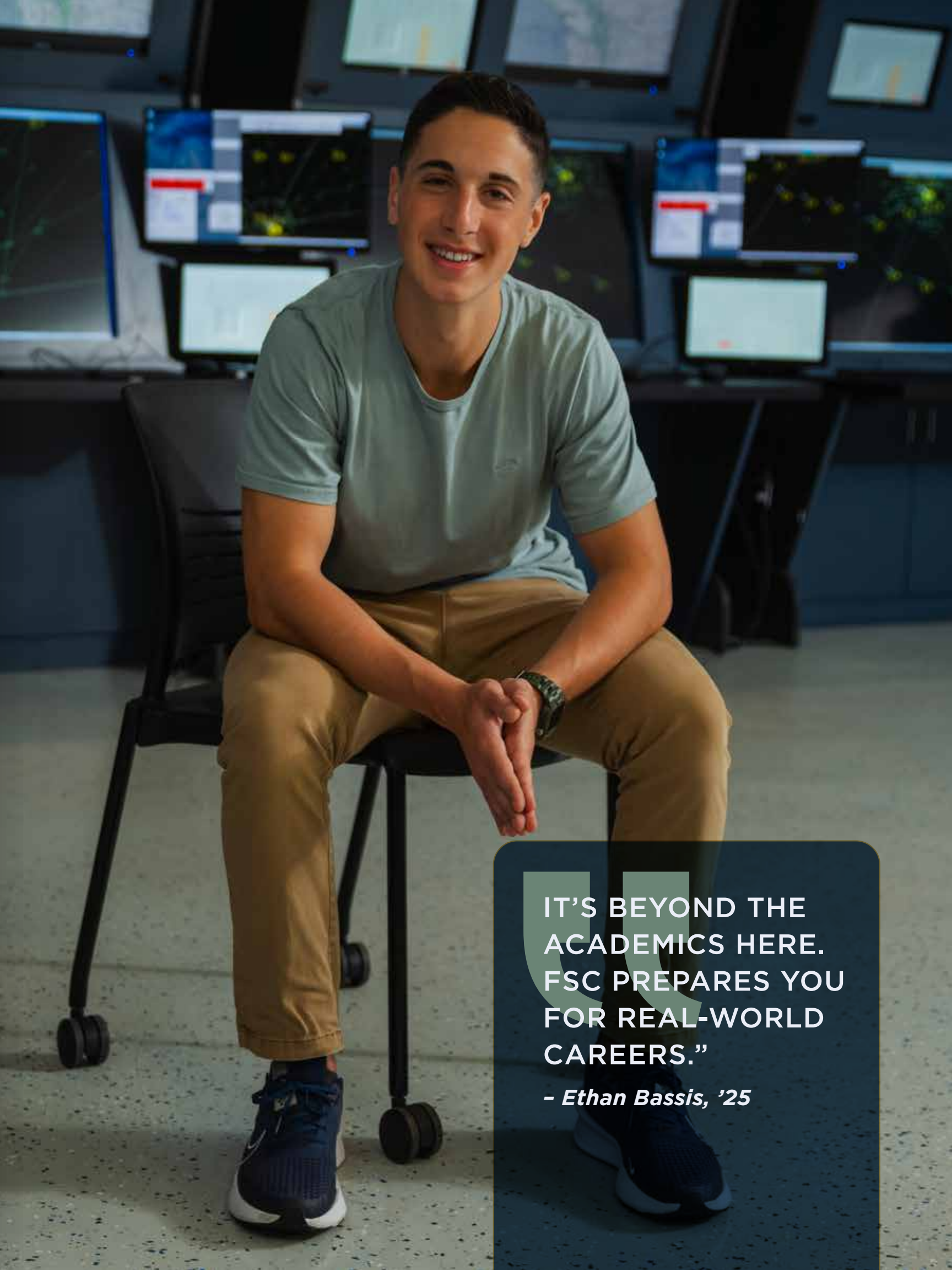
"I love our club's creativity," said Bassis, who worked to expand the club's board with new positions in marketing, advertising, and outreach. "Planning these beautiful events as a team has been very fulfilling. AAAE's success has been because of our enthusiastic members, forward-thinking student leadership, and supportive advisors. And New York is home to so many fantastic aviators, so many amazing companies within aviation. We have several airports within just a 50-mile radius of Farmingdale. So, the most rewarding aspect has been the number of connections we have built between nearby corporations and Farmingdale."

Also a member of FSC's Student Government Association and the New York Aviation Management Association (NYAMA), where he acts as a liaison between NYAMA's executive team and the College, Bassis recently completed an internship at Long Island MacArthur Airport and will soon be interning in Allegiant Air's finance division.

"I've had internship opportunities, consistent job offers, have been able to go to conferences across the country, all thanks to the support that Farmingdale State College offers," said Bassis. "So, it really is a testament that it's beyond the academics here. FSC prepares you for real-world careers."

Looking toward the horizon, Bassis plans to pursue a career in aviation management, where his talent and ingenuity can take flight.

"I love being in the cockpit, but in management I can create a vision," he said. "Whatever I dream of, I can make it a reality. You have to reach for the sky."

A young man with dark hair, wearing a light blue t-shirt, khaki pants, and dark sneakers, is sitting on a black office chair. He is smiling and has his hands clasped in his lap. Behind him are several computer monitors displaying various data and graphs, suggesting a technical or academic environment like a computer lab or a control room.

IT'S BEYOND THE
ACADEMICS HERE.
FSC PREPARES YOU
FOR REAL-WORLD
CAREERS."

- Ethan Bassis, '25



I KNOW THAT BOTH FARMINGDALE AND ACE HAVE MY BACK, AND WITH THAT, I AM DESTINED FOR SUCCESS...FSC GIVES EVERYONE A CHANCE NOT ONLY TO SUCCEED BUT TO ACHIEVE ANY DREAM OR AMBITION THEY CAN THINK OF."

- Kelile Rogers, '28

ACE-HIGH

Kelile Rogers, '28, Has a Winning Hand With Ambition and FSC's Student Support

BY KAREN V. CONTINO

Soon after choosing Farmingdale State College (FSC) for its “top rankings and tight-knit community,” Kelile Rogers found the Accelerate, Complete, and Engage (ACE) Program, a new State University of New York initiative focused on meaningfully improving student support through holistic services like individualized counseling, career development, and peer mentorship.

“I immediately knew it was the right fit for me,” said Rogers, now an FSC first-year student pursuing an applied economics major. “It was obvious that this program provided the most personalized support to assist me throughout my degree and create lifelong connections along the way.”

Rogers admits he was also drawn in by the program’s “family vibes.”

“Coming into college, I knew I was interested in joining a student support program because it was familiar,” he said. “I grew up in a family that instilled a supportive mindset in me, teaching me that it is not only important to help others, but to accept help when I need it. And the program has already helped me so much. I feel like I’ve been given an opportunity to reach more opportunities. And now that I am living on campus away from my family, ACE has become my Farmingdale family.”

Over the past year, Rogers, who was recently awarded the first-ever 2025 ACE Go-Getter Award, has become a tremendous advocate for the program that “is there for me when I need it the most.” In fact, he has spoken publicly at a variety of campus community events, including a recent ACE celebration ceremony and the College’s annual legislative breakfast, where he addressed elected officials, government partners, and local leaders in business, community, organized labor, and industry from across Long Island.

“From the moment Kelile joined the ACE Program, he has been a true source of joy and inspiration to the ACE team and his peers,” said ACE Director Georgia Kalamidas. “His exceptional drive and determination have set him apart, and his passionate advocacy for ACE shines a spotlight on the vital work we do and our deep belief in our students’ potential.”

“Kelile stands out as a remarkable force on campus,” agreed ACE Success Coach Katie Travers. “And not just because of his academic achievements, but because of the way he champions the ACE Program and supports his peers. His leadership and genuine care for others make him a tremendous asset to everyone at ACE, as well as the whole FSC campus community.”

“FSC gives everyone a chance not only to succeed, but to achieve any dream or ambition they can think of,” said Rogers.

Growing up in Canarsie, Brooklyn, Rogers excelled in sports, including lacrosse, basketball, karate, and skateboarding, and enjoyed making connections with people in his neighborhood. He credits his mother with instilling his hallmark drive and determination, witnessing her industriousness and perseverance firsthand as she worked multiple jobs to support him.

“Before she had me, she was a chef,” he said. “And seeing my mom, seeing her struggle so much—she had to use little things to make great things. Watching her, I learned to make traditional ramen out of just a packet of ramen, or rice and peas with this little packet of rice and a little bit of peas and seasoning. So, always seeing that, she taught me that mindset—how to keep going.”

“That’s why I work so hard,” he added. “Because I know how hard my mom is working for me, and I know how proud she is. I just have to keep making her proud. And this is just the beginning.”

A member of FSC’s Cru Club, Rogers looks forward to getting involved with more campus organizations and internships as he grows his college career. After graduation, Rogers plans to pursue an MBA and is interested in a career in finance. Wherever he goes, he knows he’ll “ace” it.

“With the support I’ve received from ACE and the entire FSC campus, I’m now aiming higher than I ever thought,” he said. “I know that both Farmingdale and ACE have my back, and with that, I am destined for success.”



EMERGE-ING OPPORTUNITIES

FSC Launches New Program Focused on Educational Milestones
in Enrollment, Retention, and Graduation Excellence

BY KAREN V. CONTINO

"I'm excited to join a college that values academic success and provides meaningful opportunities for students."

Guerold Plaisime, '27, a transfer student now enrolled in the Computer Security Technology Program at Farmingdale State College (FSC), shares what drew him to FSC and its new, Emerge, Strive, Own (ESO) Program.

Welcoming its first cohort of 150 first-year and 100 transfer students this fall, the ESO Program provides personalized services and resources to help incoming students of all majors thrive at FSC and beyond. Program participants who have demonstrated need—including first-generation college students, low-income students, and English language learners—gain exclusive access to holistic wraparound support, such as academic

and wellness success coaching, leadership and career development, peer mentoring, learning communities, and interactive workshops and events. By cultivating an inclusive environment, this "one-stop shop" for student opportunities will empower incoming students to *emerge* with confidence, *strive* for excellence, and *own* their academic journey.

"The program feels special and personalized," said Plaisime. "And as a transfer student, I felt that the program was a great fit for me. I was especially interested in the academic and wellness coaching, early class registration, leadership and career development, and peer mentoring. These services match exactly what I need to succeed. I'm looking forward to fully experiencing the program once school starts...I believe it will make a big difference in my college journey," he added.

"The thing that drew me into the ESO Program was all the support that was offered," agreed Piper Godsey, '29, a visual communications: art and graphic design major. "I've taken college-level courses all throughout my high school career, and none of them offered much support of any kind. But my FSC experience so far has been nothing but positive. In meetings with EMERGE staff, they've done a wonderful job explaining processes and just the way things work through the program. I'm most looking forward to knowing at least one of the staff members personally, so I don't feel so new and alone on campus."

"As our students start their Farmingdale journey, EMERGE serves as the delivery system of hope and community."

Bryan Garcia, director, EMERGE: Office of First-Year and Transfer-Year Experience

The powerful initiative is offered through the College's newly formed EMERGE (Educational Milestones in Enrollment, Retention, and Graduation Excellence) Office, which is designed to break down barriers that traditionally underserved students may face in pursuing their degrees. The office is funded through a five-year, \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education under the Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program authorized by Title V. The largest in the College's history, the federal grant is intended to be a transformational change agent for receiving institutions.

"Building EMERGE has been really exciting and rewarding," said Bryan Garcia, director of EMERGE: Office of First-Year and Transfer-Year Experience. "We're calling it the front door of the College because our team is essentially creating a home base for every single student. Overall, we want our students to have a clear sense of belonging. They'll feel that Farmingdale has their back, and they're going to do meaningful work while they're here. And that footprint starts with EMERGE."

As the EMERGE Office expands, it will also offer a fully integrated, campuswide first-year experience course, in addition to a transfer-year experience course, to ease the higher education transition and eventually touch every incoming FSC student. By 2029, EMERGE aims to equitably serve a total of 1,250 students and 100 faculty, building a thriving network of support and mentorship across campus.

"College administration and EMERGE staff have been amazing. Everyone has already jelled really, really well as a team and with our students," said Garcia. "We are focused on three main connection themes. First, connection to self. Students are going to learn about themselves a bit more and learn how to set goals and embrace challenges. They're going to make important connections to others, their peers, faculty, and staff. And they're going to make connections to the broader campus environment. As our students start their Farmingdale journey, EMERGE serves as the delivery system of hope and community."



BUILDING A CULTURE OF OPPORTUNITIES

Fatoma Rad: Committed to Student Success

BY NICOLE MILLER

Farmingdale State College (FSC) Associate Librarian Fatoma Rad attributes her passion for mentoring students to her mother, who came to America in 1985 working as a jewelry maker. Determined to give her children a chance for opportunities she never had, she made higher education a top priority.

Born in New Jersey and raised in Queens, New York, Rad and her siblings were encouraged by their mother at a young age to pursue and invest in their education. “My mother was a refugee from Afghanistan and never had the opportunity to get a degree for herself, so it was always a desire of hers that my siblings and I graduate from college,” said Rad. As a first-generation college student, Rad navigated through unsupportive guidance counselors, complicated paperwork and applications, and financial obstacles. But she was determined.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in comparative humanities from the State University of New York at Old Westbury, she went on to pursue a master’s in library and information science from the Pratt Institute and a master’s in higher education administration from Stony Brook University. Rad worked as a medical librarian at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and for non-profits such as the Afghan American Conference (AAC) and the Muslim Interscholastic Tournament (MIST).

This meaningful work brought out Rad’s passion for helping students. Recognizing the importance of fostering an inclusive academic environment, Rad spearheaded efforts to develop a comprehensive collection of print and electronic resources in Spanish. This initiative enhanced access to culturally and linguistically relevant materials, supporting the diverse needs of FSC’s Hispanic and Spanish-speaking communities.

“In recent years, the term ‘student-centered’ has become little more than an empty buzzword in higher ed—but not for Professor Rad,” said Danielle Apfelbaum, scholarly communication librarian. “Every project she takes on has at its core, the goal of supporting student success at Farmingdale State College and beyond and

every single day I feel extraordinarily privileged to have the opportunity to work alongside such a passionate educator.”

Rad’s passion for helping others shines through in her efforts to mentor FSC students. “The idea of helping others was present throughout my entire upbringing by both parents, and there was an emphasis on the idea that you do not lose anything by helping others, but rather it is a blessing to be the one to be able to help someone,” explains Rad.


As the primary supervisor for Greenley Library’s student employees, Rad encourages them to treat their library job as an opportunity to gain employment skills that they can take with them when they leave.

“Fatoma has built a culture of student employment in the library that makes it a place that students want to work,” said Karen Gelles, library director at FSC. “She empowers students to take on projects or tasks that might be new to them and involves them in her work building library collections.”

She has led initiatives to provide students with professional attire, including ties, portfolios, and pocketbooks, to support their preparation for job interviews. Additionally, in collaboration with students, she recently organized an event that facilitated access to professional headshots for LinkedIn profiles, enhancing students’ professional branding and career readiness.

“Professor Rad invests in us, challenges us, and believes in our potential all while expecting nothing in return but our growth. Her impact is immeasurable, and her kindness is a lesson in itself,” said Kenia Sanchez, FSC senior and student assistant for the library.

What’s next for Rad? She is planning to focus on research to explore the impacts of on-campus student employment, with a focus on retention and community building. Having observed the positive effects of on-campus work for students, she is eager to examine the mutual benefits for both the campus and its students.

A portrait of a woman with dark hair, wearing a dark blue hijab and a white vest over a dark blue long-sleeved shirt. She is smiling warmly at the camera. The background is a library with tall bookshelves filled with books of various colors.

You do not
lose anything
by helping others,
but rather it is
a blessing
to be the one
to be able to
help someone.”

- Fatoma Rad, *associate librarian*

AIRPLANES, AIRPORTS, AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

Passion and a Competitive Spirit Land **Meron “Ron” Lindenfeld** in a Game-Changing Position

BY CHRIS MAIO

In his eight years on the Farmingdale State College (FSC) faculty, Meron “Ron” Lindenfeld, EdD, associate professor in the Pasternack School of Engineering Technology’s Aviation Department, has advanced game-changing initiatives so the College may provide additional educational opportunities. This started in 2021 when he served on a team of faculty that helped FSC receive Air Traffic Collegiate Training Initiative (AT-CTI) program status from the Federal Aviation Administration for its Professional Pilot and Aviation Administration degree programs. In 2024 Lindenfeld joined countless faculty and staff to celebrate the ribbon-cutting for FSC’s new Air Traffic Control (ATC) Lab, made possible by a \$430,000 New York state investment he was instrumental in securing.

However, the only child of immigrant parents was not always a high achiever. He struggled with academics in middle and high school, ironic considering he grew up on the Michigan State University campus while his parents completed their PhDs.

His passion for aviation started early. He recalls an overseas flight to visit his grandmother when he was about 5 years old.

“We got on a 747 and I just remember feeling the rush of acceleration on takeoff, and watching the world from a high altitude, and looking out at all these cool things happening on the wings, and wondering what it was like to be at the flight controls,” Lindenfeld reflected. “After that, I was just obsessed.”

The family moved to Long Island, where his mother built a career caring for geriatric veterans as an administrator for the Department of Veterans Affairs, and his father taught mathematics at various universities including the Fashion Institute of Technology and Touro College.

“Between my mom’s work ethic and my dad’s generosity and devotion to his students, I feel like I’ve taken those things, particularly later when I found my path in life,” Lindenfeld said.

His career in higher education seemed like a natural progression, but he needed more encouragement. To counter his lackluster academic motivation, he excelled in sports, particularly in baseball.

“I was very, very competitive, mostly with myself,” he recalled. “Every time I went out and did something, I wanted to always do better than I did the last time.”

That drive pushed Lindenfeld to go back to school to obtain a degree despite experiencing a catastrophic injury that left him hospitalized for six months. While rehabilitating, he watched a video with tandem two-seater high performance gliders that had hand controls for people with limited mobility. After completing an associate degree, he learned to fly gliders in the Freedom’s Wings International program, inspiring him to pursue a four-year aviation degree.

“I couldn’t believe that I was going to class, parking my van, wheeling to the building with airplanes flying right over the school, where I’m sitting in a classroom that’s overlooking the airport, and I’m getting college credit for learning about airplanes,” he said. “It was just the coolest thing.”

“I have never, in my 20 years of teaching, woken up saying, ‘I don’t want to do my job today.’”

Meron “Ron” Lindenfeld, associate professor, aviation administration

Lindenfeld earned a spot on the flight team and competed for the next four years in flight simulation events, placing first regionally in three out of four years and in the top 10 nationally.

“When I played baseball, I loved the pressure of being at the last half of the inning with runners in scoring position with our team down and trying to come through and get the win,” he said. “This was the first time I felt that rush again, and it was just awesome.”

He continued on to earn a master’s degree and a doctorate at Dowling College, where he also began a teaching career before coming to Farmingdale in 2016 as an adjunct, which led to a tenure-track faculty position.

Fayaz Nasery, a senior in the Aviation Administration Program, was in Lindenfeld’s ANV101 course as a first-year student and later was hired as an assistant



in the ATC lab. He describes Lindenfeld's high standards, both those that he holds himself to and those he expects from students.

"He is always looking for improvements, even the tiniest thing in the lab, to make things more seamless or more efficient, and better for students," said Nasery. "Dr. Lindenfeld has always pushed me to find ways to improve, both in class and other areas of my life. I've adopted that mindset from him."

Nasery has applied for a load planner position at a major commercial airline and credits Lindenfeld with the encouragement and support that got him to where he is today.

"He puts in countless hours, making sure everything is perfect for the students. It's really motivating for me to work with someone like him," said Nasery. "It makes me want to get up and get after it!"

"I come to work and I talk about airplanes, airports, and air traffic control, and they give me money for that. It's awesome. I have never, in my 20 years of teaching, woken up saying, 'I don't want to do my job today,'" Lindenfeld reflected. "I've always wanted to fly. I've always wanted to fly an airliner. I couldn't do that after my injury, but what allowed me to get past that was using my talent and ability to teach that I never knew I had. My mission in life is to help other students that have a passion to get to that point."



FULL CIRCLE

Alumni Return to Serve the Next Generation of FSC Students

BY KAREN V. CONTINO

L-R: Bryan Etienne, '17, admissions advisor; Bill Steedle, '81, assistant dean and associate professor; Tevin Foster, '19, associate director of digital content; Pete Greco, '02, chief information officer; Caitlyn Urban, '22, coordinator of programming and organizations

When it comes to knowing what support incoming Farmingdale State College (FSC) students need most, Bryan Etienne knows firsthand. Years before joining FSC as an admissions advisor in 2022, he was an incoming FSC student himself, and walked through the same doors he now opens for hundreds of new students every semester.

“My favorite memory as a student at FSC is also my very first experience at the College,” said Etienne, '17, a science, technology, and society graduate. “After graduating high school, I was uncertain about which college to attend. With my mother’s guidance, we visited the office where I now work. As I spoke with FSC staff about the College, I was met with warmth and encouragement. I felt a sense of excitement as I decided to attend Farmingdale State College.

“Looking back, it feels like a full circle moment to now be working in the very office I once visited, unsure of my next step,” he added. “FSC has changed my life in so many meaningful ways. And I am committed to giving back to FSC for all it has offered me, in my current role.”

Etienne’s experience is echoed across campus, where FSC’s professional team of alumni has more than doubled since 2018 to comprise 98 of 375 full-time professionals in fall 2024.

“As a student, I became very involved in campus life and loved how easy it was to get involved and make connections,” said Caitlyn Urban, '22, coordinator of programming and organizations for the Office of Student Activities (OSA), who joined FSC professionally in 2023. “My favorite campus memory is serving as one of the student chairs on the RamChella Committee. I am so grateful that I now get to plan RamChella as a member of FSC’s OSA staff.”

After earning an associate degree in advertising art and design in 1981, Bill Steedle, assistant dean for the School of Business and associate professor of visual communications, was immediately offered a position as an instructional support assistant, “and 43+ years later, I’m still here—and I’m quite happy with how things turned out. It has been rewarding to give back to the College in a variety of meaningful ways,” added Steedle, who contributed significantly to the development of the College’s visual communications curriculum, including its recent national accreditation. Among his numerous honors and accolades, he has received the FSC Alumni Association’s Excellence in Service Award, a Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Faculty Service, and the President’s Award for Academic Leadership.

University Police Department Officer Connor Coghlan, '18, who recently received a State University of New York Police Chief Life Saving

Award for his heroic actions while responding to an emergency call last summer, shared that “serving and protecting the students and campus community at my alma mater is a great honor.” After serving as an emergency medical technician and New York City Police Department officer, “it’s come full circle, and I’m so happy to be back,” said Coghlan, who joined FSC professionally in 2023.

Chief Information Officer Pete Greco first joined FSC in 1993 as an instructional support technician for the Visual Communications Department before earning an associate degree and a bachelor’s degree from FSC in 1995 and 2002, respectively.

“FSC IS SPECIAL BECAUSE OF THE PEOPLE WHO WORK HERE AND ALL THE CARE THEY PUT IN. AND ALUMS MAKE IT EVEN BETTER BECAUSE WE ESPECIALLY WANT TO GIVE BACK TO WHERE WE CAME FROM AND SEE FSC CONTINUE TO GROW.”

– Tevin Foster, '19,
associate director of digital content

“Going from being a student, to a staff member, to teaching classes, and finally to becoming an administrator has allowed me to experience the campus firsthand and all that it has to offer,” said Greco, who won a Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Professional Service in 2012. “It has helped me understand what students look for and expect when they come to campus, and I bring all of those experiences into what I do every day... Farmingdale has become a second family to me, and I truly feel like I belong here. Being both an alum and an administrator in a department that connects with every area of the campus has made my work incredibly rewarding.”

“It’s the best of both worlds,” agreed Associate Director of Digital Content Tevin Foster, '19, who joined FSC professionally in 2022 and recently received a 2025 SUNYCUAD Award for Excellence in Photography. “FSC is special because of the people that work here and all the care they put in. And alums make it even better because we especially want to give back to where we came from and see FSC continue to grow.”



THIS OLD CAMPUS

Facilities Operations at FSC

BY GREGORY O'CONNOR, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Within a week of joining Farmingdale State College (FSC) in 2017 as vice president for administration and chief financial officer I was treated to my first emergency. A payload moving through a construction site behind Ward Hall had crushed a gas line. When I arrived on the scene, I found at least 20 people, some rushing in one direction or another with very long valve tools and crudely drawn maps, others blocking off the area from pedestrian traffic, and a few talking hurriedly with official-looking

workers in hard hats and reflective vests, all while a plume of natural gas spewed from the ground, stirring up dust and debris. In a word, it was chaos.

Amidst this, then-Director of Physical Plant John Dzinanka loomed large. His commanding presence embodied a calm serenity that only comes from years of experience and the fact that no matter what was going on, he'd seen it all before. He was issuing directives (barking orders, if you knew John),



THE WORK OF FACILITIES OPERATIONS RANGES FROM THE EMERGENT TO THE MUNDANE, AND OCCASIONALLY THE COMICAL... THERE IS NOT A SINGLE PERSON ON THIS CAMPUS WHO DOESN'T BENEFIT FROM THE WORK OF THIS DEPARTMENT EACH AND EVERY DAY.

directing traffic and coordinating with each emergency crew arriving on the scene, all while relaying information to me, the president, and University Police. There could be no doubt, he was in charge. To my unconditioned eyes, this was an extraordinary situation, but, after eight years on the FSC campus, I've learned that this was just another day for the Facilities Operations crew.

Since that sunny afternoon in June, FSC has seen significant change, from new programs and new facilities to new organizational structures and now a new president. FSC continues to evolve, and through it all we are fortunate to have the support, the dedication, and the unwavering professionalism of the Facilities Operations team, led by Director Mark Orlich, '83, '87.

The work of Facilities Operations ranges from the emergent to the mundane, and occasionally the comical. From chasing gas leaks or escaping rodents to shoveling snow or changing light bulbs, there is not a single person on this campus who doesn't benefit from the work of this department each and every day.

Yet, so much of their work happens under the radar and outside the immediate view of the larger campus community. As it should, says Orlich. From the depths of the sanitary sewer system or the dark recesses of the campus steam tunnels, our dedicated employees endure harsh and inhospitable conditions so that the rest of the campus can live, work, and learn in relative comfort.

Few tasks are as critical, and environmentally challenging, as the process of clearing the snow from the nearly 400-acre campus. Preparations and planning begin days in advance of a pending weather event, and plow crews are often called in to respond in the middle of the night, starting work at 2 a.m. so the campus can open that morning.

Nature isn't the only challenge the campus faces. Whether it's steam leaks, water main breaks, electrical outages, or mechanical failures, the FSC campus always has a surprise in store. Tracking down and repairing the infrastructure that keeps this campus running is a 24/7/365 job.

The Facilities Operations Department, a talented team of plumbers, electricians, carpenters, and HVAC technicians, is at the heart of everything we do on campus. They truly keep our world running. They keep our buildings clean, relocate campus staff from office to office and building to building, and ensure that our offices, classrooms, and labs are safe, comfortable, and secure, all while ensuring compliance with a wide range of policies, regulations, and guidelines.

In recent years, we have turned more focused attention on energy use and ways to promote more sustainable practices on campus. Whether it's the new air-source heat pump chillers, planned geothermal projects, and the adoption of LED lighting technology or efforts to improve recycling, and reduce waste and the use of plastic across campus, FSC is indeed going green!

Each spring, the grounds crews affectionately tend the gardens, lawns, and planting beds, turning the soil to prepare for a new season of growth. Seasons pass, and FSC continues to grow and evolve. So, whether walking on campus in the summer or returning with a renewed spirit in the fall, embrace the opportunity for rejuvenation that is at the core of what we do here at Farmingdale, all of which is made possible thanks to the careful attention of Facilities Operations.



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Growing Partnerships With Schools, Health Care, and Government Shape Long Island's Future

BY DANIELLE DIMURO

Farmingdale State College (FSC) continues to enhance its role as a regional leader in education, workforce development, and community engagement. Through innovative partnerships, outreach programs, and academic initiatives, FSC is building meaningful connections that reach beyond campus.

DUAL ENROLLMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITH UNIVERSITY IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

One of FSC's most impactful programs is University in the High School (UHS), which enables eligible high school students to earn college credit through approved courses at their schools. With over 3,500 students enrolled from more than 90 schools, the UHS program promotes early college readiness and strengthens ties with local districts.

INSPIRING K-12 VIA VISITING SCHOLARS

Launched in fall 2024, FSC's Visiting Scholars Program sends faculty into K-12 schools to lead engaging, age-appropriate presentations. These visits introduce students to topics in STEM, the humanities, health sciences, and more, sparking early interest in academic and career paths.

Each session is interactive and hands-on. For example, FSC President and marine biologist Robert Prezant, PhD, provides students with a close-up look at preserved marine animals, such as deep-sea pill bugs and cowfish, to deepen their understanding of biodiversity and environmental science.

The program encourages curiosity and connects classroom learning to the real world while reinforcing FSC's commitment to educational outreach across Long Island.



INSPIRING FUTURE INNOVATORS

FSC also promotes accessibility and equity in STEM through its annual STEM Diversity Summit. The event brings together high school and college students, educators, and industry leaders for a day of workshops, panels, and networking. It is designed to inspire students from diverse backgrounds to explore careers in science, technology, engineering, and math.

PARTNERSHIP TO PROMOTE WELLNESS & OPPORTUNITY

Community health is another area where FSC is making a difference. In partnership with Northwell Health, the College recently launched a women's health initiative that invites local middle and high school students to participate in medical professional-led programming offering early exposure to health care while promoting lifelong well-being.

“The Women’s Health Initiative at FSC is an investment in our communities,” said Virginia Peterson-Graziose, RN, DNP, CNE, chair of the Nursing Department. “By reaching young women early with knowledge about wellness, prevention, and health care careers, we’re inspiring a future generation of informed, empowered leaders.”

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE IMPACT

FSC is also supporting local planning. In collaboration with the Town of Huntington, faculty and students are contributing to transit and traffic studies that support safer, more sustainable outcomes for the region. This applied work demonstrates the College’s commitment to real-world learning and community impact.

“Through applied learning experiences like the Capstone Project, our students apply classroom knowledge, from working with real-world data to managing projects, to help influence local infrastructure policy,” said Associate Professor of Civil Engineering Technology Michael Shenoda, PhD, PE. “They’re collaborating across disciplines to develop practical solutions that make Long Island a safer, more sustainable place to drive and live.”

COMMITTED TO PROGRESS & PARTNERSHIP

Each initiative reflects a continued commitment to collaboration, access, and impact. FSC remains focused on elevating communities and empowering students, creating stronger connections and a shared vision for the future.





LEARN, DISCOVER, THRIVE

New Leadership Reinforces FSC's Commitment to Students, in the Classroom and Out

BY CHRIS MAIO

This year, Farmingdale State College (FSC) expanded its leadership team with three pivotal appointments in its Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions. Kenneth Lee, PhD, PE, joined as dean of the Pasternack School of Engineering Technology. Sarah Gross, PhD, was named dean of the Santmann School of Health Sciences, and, most recently, Ronald Jackson, EdD, joined as vice president for student affairs.

"We are a close-knit community and collaborate across campus to prioritize learning, discovery, and well-being, both inside and outside the classroom," said FSC President Robert S. Prezant, PhD. "These three appointments, all experts in their respective arenas, will help drive our collective values and shared priorities to better serve our remarkable students and help them realize their academic, professional, and personal goals."

RONALD JACKSON, EdD, VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

Ronald Jackson, EdD, joined FSC in April 2025 as vice president for student affairs, serving as a member of the President's Cabinet.

In this new role, Jackson will oversee and advance FSC's expanding student life initiatives, including the Dean of Students Office, Student Activities, Residence Life, Health and Wellness Center, Disability Services Center, Veterans Services, Title IX, and Campus Mental Health Services, among other student-focused programs.

Jackson brings 25 years of experience, most recently serving as vice president of student affairs and dean of students at Brooklyn College, part of the City University of New York, since June of 2016. He also held dean of students appointments at the Community College of Philadelphia and Marymount Manhattan College.

With a focus on collaboration and building cross-departmental teams to enhance services for students, he is spearheading a reimagined orientation program and an online orientation for students taking classes exclusively remotely. He is also establishing a new holistic approach for addressing student conduct and concerns, utilizing a theoretical framework.

SARAH GROSS, PhD, DEAN, SANTMANN SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES

In August 2024, FSC was proud to appoint Sarah Gross, PhD, as dean of the Santmann School of Health Sciences following her seven-year run as chair of FSC's Biology Department.

Gross joined FSC in 2006 as an assistant professor of biology and quickly moved into a leadership role as curriculum director of FSC's Bioscience Program, achieving tenure in 2013 and the rank of full professor in 2022.

Under her leadership as chair, the Biology Department grew to support 75 faculty and staff. Throughout her time at FSC, Gross has been deeply involved in service at all levels, including chairing the Farmingdale Executive Committee from 2022 to 2024 and the College-Wide Curriculum Committee from 2011 to 2015. She received the prestigious State University of New York (SUNY) Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2017.

In her first year as dean, together with the Nursing Department, Gross submitted an \$8.5 million grant application to SUNY to build clinical nursing simulation facilities in Gleeson Hall and is working with Capital Projects to develop additional simulation facilities outside of the scope of the grant. This year, the school launched a new master's degree program in nursing administration.

KENNETH LEE, PhD, PE, DEAN, PASTERNAK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

Kenneth Lee, PhD, PE, joined FSC in August 2024 as dean of the Pasternack School of Engineering Technology. Lee is an accomplished administrator who previously served as dean of the Lance College of Mines and Engineering at Montana Technological University and as professor and founding chair of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Western New England University. He has held academic positions at both the University of Massachusetts Lowell and Rutgers University, and has research experience from Princeton University.

During his tenure as dean, Lee oversaw 10 academic departments and 13 programs, and created the only construction management bachelor's program in Montana. His focus on student success and retention has led to curriculum enhancements and improved enrollment. He is a registered professional engineer in multiple states and a dedicated ABET program evaluator.

Since joining FSC, Lee has focused on expanding and modernizing existing academic program offerings and developing new industry partnerships. He has also assisted faculty in developing more than \$1 million in external funding proposals.



MAKING SUCCESS ACCESSIBLE

FSC's Department of Academic Support and Access Programs
Champions Student Achievement

BY KAREN V. CONTINO

Dedicated to the advancement of underrepresented students, the Department of Academic Support and Access Programs (ASAP) at Farmingdale State College (FSC) serves nearly 800 FSC and 800 local secondary school students annually, helping each young learner tap into their infinite potential to succeed.

Through eight uniquely structured programs, ASAP offers a variety of inclusive services designed to meet each student's needs while removing known educational barriers. Grant-funded and state-operated, the programs serve participating students, including those who may be first-generation or low-income, have disabilities, or have demonstrated need, with resources such as financial assistance, individualized counseling, academic guidance, and career development.

"Each program has its own niche in terms of its primary focus, from extensive research in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) fields to the holistic support students may need to graduate on time," said ASAP Executive Director Janice Rivera. "But they are all committed to serving underrepresented students. We strive to create a sense of belonging and empowerment... Their continued success drives everything we do."

ASAP's college support and opportunity programs "have outcomes that typically match or exceed those of the College," said Rivera. "Over the past three years, our first-year retention rate has ranged from 71% to 100%, with an average of 90% across programs. Our students display excellence around campus as well, holding leadership positions and earning many recognitions," she added. Similarly, ASAP's access program participants have a 95.5% average graduation rate compared to an 85% average among its partner district high schools.

"My experience has been amazing," said Allan Boateng Anfom, '26, a science, technology, and society major and cybersecurity minor in the TRIO Program. "There are so many remarkable things about the program, but one thing that stands out most to me is the personalized support from our counselors, which has given me the tailored solutions and tools to navigate my college journey."

"We strive to create a sense of belonging and empowerment... Their continued success drives everything we do."

*Janice Rivera, executive director,
academic and support services*

For Marquies Clifford Ross, '28, an applied psychology major in the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), being a part of ASAP "has been nothing but positivity" as he navigated personal challenges and housing insecurity while trying to focus on his education.

"I was going through some family problems at home, and I did not have a very stable place to lay my head, unfortunately," he said. "Coming into college, I was extremely nervous and scared. I thought I was never going to fit in. But through EOP, I've received the best advice and options and have had the most fun I've ever had in my life building relationships around campus. Entering EOP is one of the best choices I've made. It has helped me see clearly how successful I can be and what steps I need to take to reach that success."

To honor students' hard work and dedication, ASAP recently hosted an inspiring graduation celebration for all its secondary school access programs, including Smart Scholars, the Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP), and the Liberty Partnerships Program (LPP).

"We wanted you to see that you're part of something bigger," Rivera said to the middle and high school graduates. "You are not alone and never will be as long as you reach out for the support that is offered to you. Remember what you're capable of and that you have the intelligence, the strength, the motivation, and most importantly, the support to succeed in anything that you want to do."

Now an FSC science, technology, and society major studying molluscan shell regeneration, Kevin Velasquez, '28, shared it was his interest in zoology that led him to join STEP while attending Walter G. O'Connell Copiague High School. He now aspires to become a veterinarian.

"The variety of program activities to choose from is remarkable and really broadens the scope as to what might interest a person," he said. "I gained new experiences and found new knowledge that I would have never known about if not for joining

STEP. And it has led me to my experience as a Farmingdale student, which has been very positive. Looking ahead, I feel confident. STEP is a gateway for whatever a student may want to do in the future."

Kelly Lira, administrative assistant for LLP and STEP, is also a 2020 LLP and 2024 FSC alumna. She first learned about ASAP as a student at Amityville Memorial High School.

"Before LLP, I had never joined a club or program since my family often moved every few years," she said. "Now, being a part of the amazing ASAP team, I have seen the students grow before my eyes. I understand how rewarding and impactful it is. It's a different kind of feeling, especially knowing how bright their futures will be and knowing how much work they put into the program, their education, and their community. I can't wait to see what they become and what they will accomplish."



A LANDMARK GIFT

\$5 Million Alumni Donation to Fuel Scholarships and Engineering and Technology Programming

BY KAREN V. CONTINO

Celebrated engineer and entrepreneur Murray Pasternack, Farmingdale State College (FSC) Class of 1960, recently pledged a record \$5 million commitment to fund scholarships and programs in engineering technology at his alma mater, the largest technology college in the State University of New York (SUNY).

The gift, the greatest in FSC's history and among SUNY technology colleges, will support a minimum of 56 students each year with four-year scholarships across all 15 majors in the School of Engineering Technology, in addition to student programming, mentorship, co-curricular resources, and experiences to attract, retain, and empower students who are less likely to pursue careers in computing, engineering, and technology.

The generous donation also aligns directly with New York State Governor Kathy Hochul's workforce development agenda to educate and prepare students, including women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), to meet industry needs in fields like computing, electrical engineering, technology, renewable energy, and software engineering.

In recognition of this transformative gift, Pasternack's ongoing support of the College and students, and his all-time giving to academic programming campuswide, FSC has named its engineering technology school in his honor, now known as The Murray Pasternack School of Engineering Technology.

"Mr. Pasternack has been a longtime friend of Farmingdale State College, a donor who continues to recognize the remarkable potential of our students and the impact they will have on the region," said Robert S. Prezant, PhD, president of FSC. "This historic gift will support students who might otherwise have struggled to find essential resources and will be reflected in the important contributions our students will make in an array of engineering and technology fields."

"As an educator and engineer, I've seen firsthand how talent can flourish when given the right support," said Kenneth Lee, PhD, PE, dean of The Murray Pasternack School of Engineering Technology. "Mr. Pasternack's remarkable gift isn't just about scholarships; it's about opening doors, changing lives, and showing our students that their dreams are worth investing in. His belief in our mission and the potential of every student in our program will resonate for generations."

Pasternack, who founded Pasternack Enterprises as a radio frequency engineer, is, together with his wife, Judy, the largest individual donor to the College, both in total giving as well as making the single largest gift to FSC. In the last four years, they have donated a total of \$8.2 million in personal philanthropy. Recent impacts of the Pasternacks' generosity across campus include the student-managed investment fund and state-of-the-art trading room in the School of Business in 2024, the Radio Frequency and Microwave Technology Lab in Lupton Hall in 2023, and the launch of FSC's Honors Program in 2022.



"I know firsthand the effects and the trade-offs of trying to earn a living and getting an education at the same time and greatly appreciate an education that leads to a productive future," said Pasternack, who drew on his experience of working while earning his associate degree in electrical technology at FSC. "My hope is that this gift will allow engineering students the opportunity to concentrate more on their education and less on earning money to pay for it."

Students can apply for the Murray Pasternack Scholarship in Engineering upon their acceptance into an engineering technology program at FSC. "This investment is so much more than an act of giving—it's a tremendous statement of confidence in engineering at Farmingdale State College and represents Murray's legacy that we will proudly steward," said Matthew Colson, vice president for development and alumni engagement at FSC. "Our gratitude to Murray extends beyond the depth of his generosity; we are inspired by his commitment to his alma mater and by his desire to lift others up to reach their fullest potential."



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WELCOMING A NEW PROVOST

Sean Lane, PhD, Tapped to Lead
as Chief Academic Officer

BY CHRIS MAIO

In June 2025, Farmingdale State College (FSC) welcomed a new senior vice president and provost, Sean Lane, PhD, to lead FSC's Division of Academic Affairs. Lane will oversee all academic units, support services, and operations while providing a strategic vision for enriching academic programs and enhancing teaching, research, and the student experience.

"Dr. Lane's academic experience and disciplinary expertise will build upon our already strong team and, in partnership with our campus community, continue to expand our mission of educating students for tomorrow's challenges," said Robert S. Prezant, PhD, president of FSC.

Lane joined FSC from the University of Alabama in Huntsville, where he served as dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. As dean, he revamped the college's recruitment, retention, and graduation efforts, led strategic planning, helped develop numerous new degree programs at both undergraduate and graduate levels, created new research support programs, engaged deeply with industry, and led significant fundraising activities. He also served concurrently as interim dean of the Honors College and acting associate provost for International Services, Academic Integrity, and dean of the Graduate School. Lane previously served as associate dean of the Graduate School at Louisiana State University, where he was also on the faculty and served as director of research in the Department of Psychology.

Prior to his academic roles, Lane worked in the tech sector as a human factors and user experience professional. He has a deep level of success in securing competitive grants from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Science Foundation, and the Spencer Foundation. He has been recognized for his excellence in teaching, is author or editor of two books on memory and attention, and has a long list of peer-reviewed publications.

"Farmingdale State College has long provided a rich, transformational education that prepares students to be successful in their lives and careers, and become outstanding citizens and leaders in their communities," said Lane. "This is a testament to the dedication and passion of faculty and staff. I look forward to working together to deepen the impact of our teaching, research, and community partnerships, and to writing the next chapter in FSC's remarkable history."

Lane received a PhD and MA in experimental psychology from Kent State University and a BA in psychology from California State University, Fresno.



FARMINGDALE STATE COLLEGE

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Explore the world with your fellow Rams and friends of Farmingdale! The FSC Alumni Association invites you to experience culturally rich travel destinations hand-selected by Collette, our highly respected travel partner. Let us take care of your tour planning and logistics, so all you have to worry about is enjoying your trip. Plus, you'll have the support of an expert tour manager during your journey.



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For details visit

farmingdale.edu/alumni-travel



MISSION STATEMENT

Dedicated to student success, Farmingdale State College delivers exceptional academic and applied learning outcomes through scholarship, research, and student engagement for Long Island and beyond. FSC's commitment to student-centered learning and inclusiveness prepares graduates to be exemplary citizens, equipped to excel in a competitive, diverse, and technologically dynamic society.

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