

March 19, 2025

## FEEDING FUTURES AND EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO SUCCEED

The Middlesex College Community Resource Hub and Food Pantry aims to give disadvantaged students full stomachs and full hearts.

“When we think about wellness and supporting students holistically, at the forefront is basic needs,” said Jennifer Spears, the director of Counseling and Student Wellness. “I think it’s paramount, because the success of a student starts with what their home life looks like and where they receive support from.”

Middlesex College cultivates an environment that attempts to situate all students in a position to succeed. The Community Resource Hub serves as a one-stop shop where students are connected to programs that can help them with utility bills and transportation issues, and be loaned a computer to use while enrolled.

The purpose of the Food Pantry is obvious: hungry students are not able to concentrate on academics. The Food Pantry is open on a regular basis and offers a variety of groceries in addition to meals prepared by students in the Hospitality, Culinary Arts, and Dietetics Department.

“It helps students just feeling cared for,” said Community Resource Coordinator Amanda Lyons.

“People hear about food insecurity and think it happens to other people. These people are part of our community. Everyone needs a hand sometimes. It’s hard to feel like you can’t ask for help. We really try to make people feel welcome and empowered by using this resource here.”

The Food Pantry opened on campus in 2018 and is dependent on grants and donations facilitated by the Middlesex College Foundation. Lyons said the need has grown exponentially. Since September 2024, over 500 enrolled students have taken advantage of the



pantry services and about 200 students stop by the Food Pantry each week.

Middlesex College is one of 34 institutions of higher education across the state to receive funds through the Hunger-Free Campus Act Grant from the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) to help alleviate food insecurity among students. Estimates from a spring 2024 survey by OSHE suggest that more than one in three New Jersey students lack consistent access to adequate food resources.

“I have learned first-hand that if people’s physical environment is not supportive of their goals, that translates into how they represent at work and at school,” said Spears.

Lyons believes there are even more students in the community who would benefit from the Community Resource Hub and Food Pantry, but are not aware of all the different options provided. She also knows that the larger goal is to create a healthy individual who can use these resources and thrive.

“We are here to help the students while they are here, but we know that’s temporary,” said Lyons. “What we are trying to do is empower them to find what resources are available and to know that there is help out there, how to find that and empower them to act.”

# WHAT'S HAPPENING ON CAMPUS

## STUDENT CLUBS IN ACTION



The **Organization of Latino Unity** sponsored a film screening of *Made in America* by Edgar Aquino Huerta. The short film seeks to raise awareness about immigration issues, educate young advocates, and foster empathy among those who may oppose immigration.

The film screening was followed by a question-and-answer session with Huerta. Afterward, the students held a discussion on knowing their rights, shared their experiences and perspectives on how society views their culture, and offered advice on how to support one another.

The **Library Services** team partnered with the **Earth Science Club**, **Sustainability Club**, and **Honors Program** in sponsoring a Kindness Rocks event. Participants were provided with paints and markers to decorate their own rock. The artists could keep their rocks or donate them for placement in the Rain Garden in front of Main Hall.



## TRANSFER FAIR

The **Student Success Center** held a Transfer Fair on February 20 to assist our students who are graduating this Spring in thinking about their options for pursuing a bachelor's degree. Over 200 students attended the fair and spoke with representatives from 41 colleges and universities. For the first time, the Savannah College of Art and Design sent a representative, a testament to how well our graduates do when they transfer.



# TESTIFYING FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Middlesex College students **Leslie Bello Rojas** and **Will Harris** testified at a hearing of the New Jersey General Assembly Committee on Higher Education on February 10. The Committee advanced several bills focused on setting up students attending community colleges for success, including Bill A5211, which codifies the New Jersey Pathways to Career Opportunities Initiative (NJ Pathways).

“Speaking at the NJ General Assembly Committee on Higher Education was an incredible experience,” said Bello Rojas, who is majoring in Business Administration and plans to transfer to a four-year school to continue her degree in Political Science with a minor in International Business. “I shared why I chose to attend Middlesex College because it offered me an affordable, high-quality education while allowing me to grow academically and personally...I emphasized that investing in community colleges means investing in students who are striving to build better futures. I encouraged the committee to support these bills so institutions like Middlesex College can continue empowering students across our state. It was an honor to advocate for my peers and share the impact of community colleges on my journey.”



# INCREDIBLE SEASON FOR BASKETBALL TEAMS



The **Men's Basketball** team finished their regular season with a record of 19-9 and gained the #2 seed in the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Division II Region XIX Tournament. The Colts finished with a 5-3 record in Garden State Athletic Conference play, which was the top record in the league. Sophomore **Sean Williams** led the Colts in scoring with 17.5 points per game this season. **Tristin Harcourt** led the Colts with 10.5 rebounds per game, an average that placed him eighth in the country among NJCAA Division II players.

The **Women's Basketball** team finished their season with a record of 12-15. Head Coach Michel Powell is very proud of the student-athletes' accomplishments in the classroom, as the team had a GPA over 3.0 with five players over a 3.5. Four sophomores will be graduating in May.

## CONNECTIONS

External Partner(s)	Middlesex College Representatives	Action
Middlesex County Regional Chamber of Commerce	President McCormick, Vice President Coffaro, and Executive Director James-Waldon	Presented on all that Middlesex College has to offer the business community and networked
New Jersey Council of County Colleges, Bristol Myers Squibb, and other biomanufacturing companies	President McCormick, Vice President Coffaro, Executive Director James-Waldon, and Department Chair Ansonoff	Networked with biomanufacturing employers
United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America	President McCormick, Vice Presidents Coffaro, Laureano, and Miller, Executive Director James-Waldon, Dean Aydin, and Acting Assistant Dean Orosz	Discussed development of a pathway for members of the UBC to earn an associate degree

## OUTREACH

Date(s)	Outreach Activity	Location or Means of Access
Sunday, February 23	HBCU College Fair	Plainfield
Monday, February 24	Hackensack Meridian Health – JFK Medical Center College Fair	Edison
Tuesday, February 25	Fast Track Admissions Day	Edison campus
Wednesday, February 26	Highland Park High School Instant Decision Day	Highland Park
Tuesday, March 4	East Brunswick High School Instant Decision Day	East Brunswick
Tuesday, March 4	NACAC National College Fair	Edison
Wednesday, March 5	East Brunswick Magnet School College Fair	East Brunswick
Saturday, March 8	College Access and Community Resource Fair	New Brunswick
Monday, March 10	ESL/ELL on-campus event with J.P. Stevens and East Brunswick High Schools	Edison campus
Tuesday, March 18	Newark Board of Education Spring College Fair	Newark
Tuesday, March 18	ESL Placement Testing	New Brunswick
Tuesday, March 18	Financial Literacy Workshop	New Brunswick Center
Multiple times	Admissions Information Session*	Virtual events
Multiple times	FAFSA on Demand Workshop*	Virtual events
On an ongoing basis	Live chat appointments*	Via the web

\*in English and Spanish

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Event	Location or Means of Access
Wednesday, April 9* and Thursday, April 10*	Board Committee meetings	Via Zoom
Wednesday, April 16 5 p.m. [Note the start time]	Board meeting	Boardroom and via Zoom

\*Schedule TBD

