

November 17, 2025

FOCUSING ON ACCESS WITH OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES PROJECT

Seeded by a \$1.44 million grant through the U.S. Department of Education, Middlesex College is leading a statewide project creating a repository of open educational resources for students, helping to defray the cost of materials while establishing a valuable database for generations to come.

Through the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) grant, Middlesex College crafted the Open Textbook Collaborative (OTC) under the Open Educational Resources umbrella.

“It fits our mission to explicitly provide quality open, and accessible, education,” said Middlesex College Library and Tutoring Services director and OTC principal investigator Marilyn Ochoa. “It helps with the affordability question that everyone always talks about and is a real concern for our population and for students even at a four-year research institution.”

In the most basic sense, the OTC is course materials uploaded by professors in general education classes that serve a broad population, meaning students in these classes no longer have the burden of paying for a textbook. Program developers even created an interactive online microscope that could be used to evaluate slides. All students need is a computer and the link to the database.

“In a lot of cases, the faculty wrote textbooks that were a couple of hundred pages, or sometimes just a couple of chapters,” said Ochoa. “There were other teams focused on ancillary type of materials—interactive quizzes, lesson plans, and slides. This way students can pay nothing, but still have the benefit of high-quality educational materials at their disposal.”

The courses selected for the OTC aligned with New Jersey’s growth industries in health services,



(l-r): Marilyn Ochoa, Moe Tabanli, and Steve Chudnick

technology, energy, global manufacturing, and supply chain management. Insights as to what courses would be best served by this initiative were provided by an advisory council that included representatives from other New Jersey community colleges, Rowan University, and Rutgers University.

The OTC also worked with partners at NJ Transfer, an organization devoted to coordinating successful transfers from community colleges to four-year colleges and universities.

Ochoa estimates the program has saved students millions of dollars. She credits the work of project director Steve Chudnick and Middlesex College grants director Yamillet Febo-Gomez for helping lay the foundation.

“It’s beneficial to Middlesex College to lead this project,” Ochoa said. “We had the capacity, the drive, and the faculty who participated and did fantastic work.”

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON CAMPUS

HARVESTFEST 2025

Hundreds of Middlesex County community members gathered on October 16 for Middlesex College's annual HarvestFest.

The Edison Campus quad was packed with people from 5 to 8 p.m., with 120 tables staffed by College employees, students, and community groups. Attendees enjoyed activities including a pumpkin patch, horse-drawn carriage rides, food trucks, and a classic car show and were treated to music performances by student groups and our own Middlesex College employee ensemble, Musical Chairs.



VISUAL, PERFORMING, AND MEDIA ARTS EVENTS

HarvestFest coincided with two **Visual, Performing, and Media Arts** events: *Student Art Showcase* and the cabaret show *Haunting Melodies*.



The showcase, on display in Chambers Hall now through May 21, 2026, includes art from students and recent alumni of all majors, levels, and mediums including painting, photography, and sculpture. The goal of this exhibit is to highlight student achievement in a visible, celebratory way that fosters pride, builds connections, and inspires future students to see the value of an education rooted in creativity and self-expression.



Haunting Melodies, which ran October 16-18, was an ensemble performance of spooky songs and scenes from Broadway favorites and the American Songbook including *Into the Woods*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, and more.

CONNECTIONS

External Partner(s)	Middlesex College Representatives	Action
Catholic Charities (Perth Amboy)	County Youth Career Initiatives Director Bottoni	Discussed referral process to assist youth and adults in Middlesex County
Middlesex County	Vice President Miller, Dean Aydin, and Nursing Program Director Kaldawi	Met with Economic Development Department Head Sandy Castor to explore development of externships for Middlesex College Nursing students

OUTREACH

Date(s)	Outreach Activity	Location or Means of Access
Thursday, October 16	East Brunswick Magnet School Visit	East Brunswick
Thursday, October 16	HarvestFest	Edison Campus
Thursday, October 16*	South River High School College Fair	Edison Campus
Friday, October 17	Piscataway High School	Piscataway
Saturday, October 18*	Family Wealth and Wellness Resource Fair	New Brunswick
Tuesday, October 21	Perth Amboy Magnet School Visit	Perth Amboy
Wednesday, October 22	New Brunswick High School College and Career Fair	New Brunswick
Thursday, October 23	Hispanic Serving Institution Evening College Fair	New Brunswick
Friday, October 24	Aging Out Conference sponsored by Middlesex County	Edison Campus
Monday, October 27	Edison High School College Fair	Edison
Tuesday, October 28	East Brunswick High School College Panel	East Brunswick
Thursday, October 30	Dunellen High School College Fair	Dunellen
Monday, November 3	Registration Blitz	New Brunswick Center
Tuesday, November 4	Highland Park High School College Fair	Highland Park
Wednesday, November 5	North Plainfield College and Career Fair	North Plainfield
Thursday, November 13	JP Stevens High School	Edison
Friday, November 14	East Brunswick High School College Fair	East Brunswick
Friday, November 14	Sayreville High School College Fair	Sayreville
Friday, November 14	Spotswood High School College Fair	Spotswood
Friday, November 14	Veterans Health Fair and Career Expo	Woodbridge
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, December 10* and Thursday, December 11*	Board Committee Meetings	via Zoom
Wednesday, December 17 8:30 a.m.	Board Meeting	Boardroom and via Zoom
Wednesday, December 24 and Thursday, December 25	Christmas (College closed)	
Thursday, January 1	New Year's Day (College closed)	

*Schedule TBD