

EMERGE

For alumni and friends of **Community College of Baltimore County**

WINTER 2025



**ONE COLLEGE,
MANY JOURNEYS**
Family Legacies
at CCBC
pg. 5

EMERGE



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Dear CCBC Alumni and Friends,

In every corner of our college community, the word legacy carries profound meaning. As we celebrate the many generations of families who have walked our halls, sat in our classrooms and crossed our graduation stages, I am reminded that CCBC is more than just a college—it is a *continuum of opportunity*.

The stories featured in this edition of Emerge reflect a powerful truth: CCBC changes lives not just for individuals but for families across time. From parents to children, siblings to cousins, our alumni prove that education can be a shared thread—binding generations together in the pursuit of knowledge, self-improvement and service to others.

As we honor these multigenerational legacies, we also recognize the vital role that philanthropy plays in making these stories possible. The

scholarships, innovative academic programs and transformative learning experiences that define CCBC today are made possible in large part through the generosity of those who believe in our mission.

To those who have supported CCBC through their time, talents and treasure—thank you. Your contributions ensure that future students, regardless of background or circumstance, have access to the same extraordinary education that shaped your life and the lives of your loved ones.

Legacy is not only what we inherit but what we choose to leave behind. I invite you to continue investing in CCBC's future so we can build on our shared legacy and open the doors even wider for the next generation of learners and leaders.



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A childhood treat inspires a heart-healthy business

For Joyson BaLisamore, founder of Jay's Watermelonade, a lifelong love of watermelon has grown into something much bigger: a beverage company on a mission to fight heart disease.

"It started out of my own love for watermelon as a kid," BaLisamore said. "But then I learned about its benefits for heart health, hydration and even managing diabetes and high blood pressure."

Those discoveries weren't just a passing interest.

"I grew up in a family like many others in Baltimore, impacted by chronic conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease," he said. "And one of the biggest culprits behind those illnesses? Added sugar, especially in drinks."

That connection between sugary beverages and serious health issues became the foundation for Jay's Watermelonade, a company that positions itself as a tasty alternative to sugar-loaded drinks.

To make his vision reality, BaLisamore turned to CCBC. A former student and local entrepreneur, he connected with the college's Center for Business Innovation and Trades (CBIT), selling his juices at The Collective and refining his business model in the Elite 10 Accelerator program. He capped the experience by winning CBIT's 2025 business plan competition, earning \$20,000 in seed money and consulting support.

"That was a huge moment," he said. "Not just because of the funding, but because it validated that this idea could grow into something real, something that could create change."

The drinks are light and flavorful, made without artificial additives or sugar, and include options like watermelon with lemon, tropical watermelon colada, seasonal varieties and even mocktails. But BaLisamore is quick to emphasize that education is just as central as taste.

"Education is a huge part of what we do," he explained. "We want people to understand the health benefits of watermelon and the risks of sugar-sweetened beverages. That's what drives our outreach."

That outreach includes partnerships with local wellness organizations, pop-ups at yoga and fitness events, and youth workshops that blend nutrition lessons with hands-on juice-making experiences. Jay's Watermelonade continues to expand its reach across Baltimore, inspiring healthier choices while staying rooted in community and culture.

Speaking up for community college

In 2019, Beth Baunoch had a bold idea: build a podcast production house powered by community college students.

"I wanted to show that our students have a lot more to offer and should have a seat at the table," said Baunoch, a media studies professor who has taught at CCBC for 14 years. "These voices are not heard, except when jokes are made about community colleges."

Upon receiving a fellowship, awarded by the American Council of Learned Societies and the Mellon Foundation, Baunoch launched "Good School," a student-produced, documentary-style podcast that asked a deceptively simple question: What makes a school "good"?

"People say Harvard is a 'good school.' Columbia is a 'good school.' But what does that actually mean?" Baunoch wondered. "Our students set out to investigate."

Students handled everything from research and interviews to editing, distribution and marketing. The result was a professional-grade podcast series that earned national attention and gave students a rare platform to tell their stories.

"Most people think podcasting is just recording a conversation and uploading it," said Baunoch. "This was journalism — investigative, researched and produced journalism."

Over three years, more than two dozen students participated. Despite juggling work, classes and family obligations, they committed to the intensive project. "Good School" was featured in Inside Higher Ed, and its student creators spoke at national conferences, including a keynote address in Las Vegas.

The project culminated in a high-profile launch party attended by more than 100 people, featuring Pulitzer Prize winning NPR journalist Cheryl W. Thompson, who interviewed students on stage.

"They were just so proud," Baunoch recalled. "It was transformative. This is something they'll never forget."

Some of those students have gone on to careers in TV and audio production. Others are pursuing law school or jobs in unrelated fields. Regardless of their path, Baunoch believes the skills they developed are universally valuable.



"Even if they're not going into media, they've learned how to amplify their voices," she said. "That's powerful in any profession."

When "Good School" wrapped, Baunoch shifted her focus to a more scalable project: "Know-It-All." This classroom-based assignment invites students to record a five-minute solo podcast about something they learned that semester.

"It's a great assessment tool to evaluate how much they have learned," Baunoch said. "It also gives students a chance to show the world they're smart and capable."

Select episodes are now broadcast on WYPR, Baltimore's NPR affiliate, giving students real-world experience and a resume-ready credential.

Aware that many community college students juggle work, family and classes — leaving little time for extracurriculars — Baunoch is committed to expanding in-class opportunities for students that enrich their college experience and build professional skills.

"I want to expand the reach of this work," she says. "Because I've seen what happens when students are empowered to tell their own stories — they find their voice"



Off to the Ivy League: Hannah heads to Cornell

When Hannah Renner first set foot on a CCBC campus, she had no idea it would lead her to the Ivy League. After moving to Maryland from Texas during her junior year of high school, she completed several dual enrollment courses at CCBC, managing to earn 18 college credits before graduating. However, her grades suffered as she balanced work with her studies.

After high school graduation, Hannah took a gap year, working and living independently while trying to stay afloat. College was a dream, and not one she was sure she could afford.

"I tried to make it work," Hannah recalled. "But I realized just working and trying to pay my bills at 18 ... I couldn't live like that forever."

Returning to CCBC seemed like an obvious choice, and it became a turning point for Hannah. She qualified for significant financial aid, which allowed her to focus on her studies rather than working multiple jobs.

"My heart was set on eventually attending Cornell, but I didn't know if it was realistic. My high school grades slipped a bit because I was working full time and living on my own," she said. "But I hoped I could come back and make it all right."

At CCBC, she focused on her academics and stepped into leadership roles. She was accepted into the Honors College, attended symposiums, joined student government and became active in Phi Theta Kappa. All of this led to a particularly meaningful event: Maryland Advocacy Day.

"We went to the State House in Annapolis, and we got to speak to all our legislators about funding for community colleges," Hannah

explained. "I feel like that was probably one of the most powerful things I did at CCBC because I stepped up and talked to politicians and shared my story."

Advocating for community college funding is an issue that is close to Hannah's heart, based on her personal experience.

"I got immense funding from CCBC. I got a lot of help financially, and I feel like that's what really helped keep me on my feet," she said.

Lifting that financial burden is what allowed her to achieve her dream – Hannah was accepted to Cornell University as a transfer student, where she will study industrial and labor relations, with minors in communication and math. She plans to pursue a career in journalism, hoping to become a news anchor. And, she has already secured a spot on the cheerleading team and has her eye on two more goals: joining The Cornell Daily Sun or student government.

Hannah's chosen major, industrial and labor relations, might not be the most obvious path to journalism, but for her, it's the perfect fit.

"It's business, law, government, sociology, history, all in one," she said. "I like learning everything, and I didn't want to choose just one field. This gives me a foundation whether I go into reporting or even law school down the road."

And while Cornell may be the next chapter, Hannah hasn't forgotten where she began. Even though she is transferring before earning an associate degree, she plans to reverse-transfer her credits and officially graduate from CCBC next year.

"I want to walk across that stage," she said. "It's part of my journey."

One college, many journeys: FAMILY LEGACIES AT CCBC



When **Isaac Njoroge** stepped up to the podium as CCBC's 2025 commencement speaker, he wasn't just celebrating his own graduation. He was honoring a legacy that began nearly a decade earlier, when his sister Edith first enrolled at CCBC, unsure of what came next. Today, all four Njoroge siblings are CCBC alumni, and each credits the college with shaping not only their education but also their sense of self.

The Njoroges are one of several families who've made CCBC part of their collective story. Through economic uncertainty, career pivots and cross-continental moves, these families found a shared place to begin again, discover their purpose and launch their future.

The Njoroges

For Edith, the eldest sibling, attending CCBC was a practical decision. Her family had recently immigrated from Kenya, and finances were tight. Though she'd been accepted to several four-year universities, tuition was out of reach. So she enrolled at CCBC, a choice she now calls "monumental."

"CCBC gave me the space to figure out what I actually wanted to do," Edith said. "I thought I was going to be a doctor. But through my classes and experiences, I realized I wanted to help people communicate, to find their voice."

Now a speech-language pathologist, Edith recalls the confidence she gained at CCBC. "I remember sitting in class and realizing this is something I can actually do. I can thrive here."

Her sister Cynthia became curious about health care technology after seeing a demonstration on robotic surgery in high school. Later, that spark evolved into a deeper interest in cybersecurity.

"I started researching how health care systems are protected," she said. "CCBC gave me a clear path to explore that. It was a foundation for everything else."

Cynthia transferred to Towson University and now works as a cybersecurity message protection engineer.

"When I got my first job offer, I felt ready," she said. "CCBC helped me build that confidence."

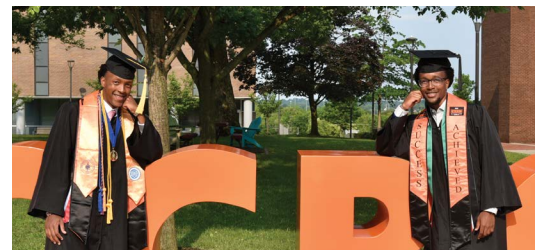
Denis, a natural athlete, chose CCBC after weighing financial aid packages from four-year schools. He was skeptical at first — until he met CCBC Dundalk cross country coach Noah Hutton.

"He was one of the first people who saw something in me," Denis said. "He treated me like someone who could lead."

He also joined the Male Student Success Initiative (MSSI), which became a turning point.

"MSSI gave me confidence. They pushed me to be a leader. It wasn't just about grades; it was about who I wanted to be."

Isaac initially wanted to chart his own course and head straight to a university. But after seeing the growth in his siblings, he enrolled at CCBC and never looked back.



"I joined MSSI, played basketball, did study abroad, became a Dream Scholar, served as a student ambassador," Isaac said. "I got more than an education. I got purpose."

He's now studying information science and cybersecurity at the University of Maryland.

"My journey wouldn't have been possible without CCBC," he reflected.

Their stories are unique, but the sentiment is shared.

"CCBC gave us all something different," Denis said. "But more than anything, it taught us to be curious, to ask questions and to go after opportunity."



The MacLaughlins

For Lynn MacLaughlin, CCBC isn't just where she built her career, it's where she built her life. A Dundalk native, Lynn first enrolled as a student in 1973 and later returned to CCBC as a part-time employee in the registration office. She worked her way up to senior director of Enrollment Services and Registrar – the role she holds today.

"My trek in life has been to support students," Lynn said. "I love working on the student side. I believe in this college, in what it stands for and what it makes possible."

Over five decades, Lynn has held roles in academics, student life and administration. She's helped thousands of students enroll, persist and graduate. But some of her proudest moments come from seeing her own family thrive at CCBC.

Her daughter, Kristen MacLaughlin, attended CCBC right after high school.

She graduated with an A.A.S. in criminal justice but later pivoted to pursue her passion for skincare. She became a licensed esthetician, a career she loves and has now practiced for 20 years.

"I made so many great memories at CCBC — playing sports, working in the bookstore, commuting with my mom," Kristen said. "I had professors who really believed in me and guided me. I felt supported the entire time."

Kristen also credits her mom with smoothing the transition into college life.

"She helped me with the admissions process and made sure I met the right advisor. It made all the difference."

Their bond deepened during those college years.

"It was special, being on campus together," Kristen said. "She wasn't just my mom; she was my biggest supporter."

Kristen's connection to CCBC didn't end at graduation. As an esthetician, she often finds herself encouraging young clients to explore community college.

"When people ask me how I figured out my career, I tell them 'I didn't. CCBC helped me figure it out.'"

The MacLaughlin legacy extends beyond mother and daughter. Lynn's late brother, Anthony Michael Fedi, is honored through an endowed scholarship. Her nieces graduated with honors and transferred to Towson University. Her nephew, a former dual enrollment student, is now pursuing a Ph.D. at Baylor.

"If I didn't believe in CCBC, I wouldn't have sent my own daughter here or encouraged my family to go here," Lynn said. "It's more than a college. It's a community."

The Rajas

When the Raja family moved to the United States in 2007, eldest daughters Sana and Wafa were eager to continue their education. CCBC was a natural first step.

"The U.S. education system is different from what we had experienced, so we were not sure what to expect," said Sana, the eldest. "But the staff at CCBC took so much time explaining everything – credits, majors, transfers. It was so helpful."

All four Raja sisters – Sana, Wafa, Nishay and Dua – attended CCBC. So did their mother, Zahida, who had already completed her undergraduate studies before coming to the United States. Zahida began with ESOL classes and explored several different subjects from psychology to English literature. She landed on an associate degree in business administration, graduating with honors after more than a decade of part-time study. Their father, Tariq, attended as well, taking ESOL classes that helped him strengthen his language skills, adapt to a new environment and build connections in the community.

"I've always loved learning," Zahida said. "CCBC gave me that space to learn, to grow and to feel proud of what I accomplished."

Sana, Wafa and Nishay were all members of the Honors program and graduated with honors. They took advantage of leadership opportunities and experiences beyond the classroom, which they credit

with shaping their perspectives and strengthening their confidence.

"Being in the honors program gave me leadership opportunities I never imagined," said Nishay, who studied engineering. "I went on alternative spring break trips, joined clubs and learned how to advocate for myself and others."

She added, "I still use what I learned in those classes in my job and in my life. CCBC shaped how I show up in the world."

Sana and Wafa both transferred to UMBC after earning their core credits.

"CCBC gave us a strong academic foundation," said Sana. "And it helped us build the study habits and discipline we needed to succeed at a four-year school."

Dua, the youngest, began taking early college classes at CCBC through a homeschool program.

"It was intimidating at first," Dua said. "But it was also empowering. I got involved with the Multicultural Student Association and found mentors who helped me grow. I realized I had a voice."

Like her sisters, Dua also took part in alternative break programs, gaining experiences that built her leadership abilities and broadened her outlook.

The sisters all emphasized how CCBC helped them feel at home.

"It was warm, welcoming and everyone wanted to see you succeed," recalled

"I still use what I learned in those classes in my job and in my life. CCBC shaped how I show up in the world."

Sana. "That sense of belonging made all the difference."

"It felt like a village, not a city," added Dua. "Everyone wanted to see you succeed. That's rare."

Today, all four sisters work in engineering for a government contractor. Zahida continues to take classes and support her grandchildren who are approaching college age.

"Education doesn't stop," Zahida said. "At CCBC, I learned that growth can happen at any age."

LEGACY, REDEFINED

These families didn't come to CCBC because it was expected. They came because it made sense for their goals, their budgets and their futures.

What they found was more than a stepping stone.

"CCBC helped me build confidence I didn't know I had," said Edith Njoroge. "That one decision shaped everything that came next."

Kristen MacLaughlin put it simply: "CCBC helped me figure out what I wanted to do, and who I wanted to be."

And for Dua Raja, the impact was personal and profound.

"CCBC gave us all different tools," she said. "But the biggest thing it gave us was a sense of belonging."



Welding the future: How CCBC is reshaping the skilled trades pipeline

With a \$1M investment in welding education and growing industry partnerships, CCBC is training a new generation to rebuild infrastructure — and redefine success.

When the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapsed into the Patapsco River, the loss was more than steel and concrete. It exposed a deeper fracture that's been building for decades: the shortage of skilled workers needed to maintain and rebuild the infrastructure our communities rely on. Rebuilding the bridge will take millions of pounds of steel and thousands of hours of expert welding — stretching the limits of the current

workforce and driving demand for a deeper bench of trained tradespeople.

At CCBC, that need has ignited a bold response. Backed by a \$1 million grant from the Baltimore Community Foundation (BCF), CCBC is developing a state-of-the-art Welding Training Center to power the region's recovery and prepare students for high-demand careers that are reshaping what it means to build a future.

A workforce at a crossroads

The U.S. is facing a critical shortage of skilled trades professionals. According to the American Welding Society, the country will need more than 330,000 new welding professionals by 2028, driven by a retiring workforce, a drop in young entrants to the field and soaring demand from infrastructure, manufacturing and clean energy projects.

In the Baltimore region, the pressure is already mounting.

"The gap is driven by the combined forces of a lot of people retiring and not enough new people coming in, as well as increased demand for professionals in some areas," said Jonathan Sachs, director of economic and workforce development for Baltimore County. "The Key Bridge is a great example of this — driving a lot of demand for welders in particular."

That demand extends far beyond the bridge. Sachs notes that employers across the county are urgently seeking qualified candidates in construction, building maintenance and HVAC — where hiring has become increasingly competitive.

"I was sitting with a group of business leaders recently," he added, "and someone in commercial real estate said, 'The saying used to be location, location, location. Now it's workforce, workforce, workforce.'"

The stakes are clear. If the region can't train and retain the next generation of skilled workers, vital projects may stall, and economic momentum could slow with them.

Building capacity to meet the moment

In the face of rising demand, CCBC is doing more than keeping pace, it's setting the standard.

The new 12,000-square-foot Welding Training Center will be located on CCBC's Dundalk campus. The project investment comes at a pivotal moment, as the region looks ahead to rebuilding the Key Bridge and tackling other large-scale infrastructure projects. But the impact will extend far beyond any single site.

"This funding is not just an investment in our college; it's an investment in the future of our region," said CCBC President Sandra Kurtinitis. "It enables us to equip individuals with the high-demand skills needed to rebuild our critical infrastructure and provide pathways to sustainable, family-supporting careers."

The new center will dramatically expand CCBC's capacity to train welders at multiple levels of expertise. It builds on the college's existing partnership with Earlbeck Gases & Technologies, an American Welding Society-certified program, and introduces a dedicated facility where students can develop both foundational knowledge and hands-on skills in a real-world environment.

"The Welding Training Center is an innovation that marks a commitment to develop a pipeline of qualified welders who will contribute meaningfully to long-term economic opportunity and resilience," said Shanaysha Sauls, Ph.D., president and CEO of BCF. "We're proud to support CCBC's vision to build a state-of-the-art facility in the footprint of the Key Bridge that prepares a highly skilled future workforce for regional needs and careers."

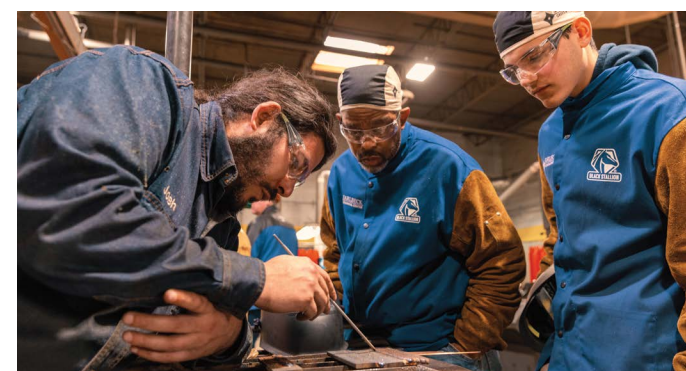
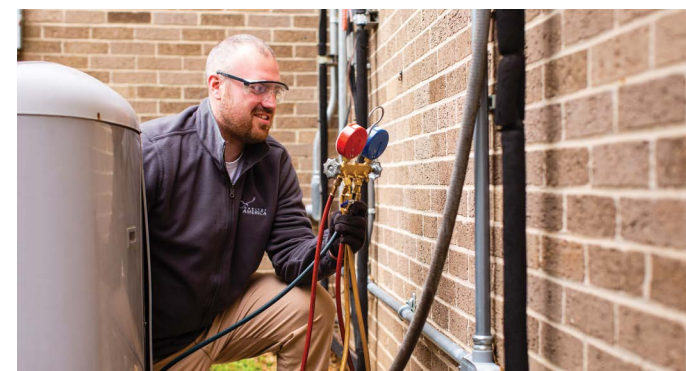
But closing the skilled trades gap doesn't stop at welding. CCBC is also growing its HVAC and building maintenance programs. That momentum has drawn support from national funders like the Lowe's Foundation, which is helping CCBC scale its programs through the Gable Grant.

"This grant is helping CCBC expand its HVAC and building maintenance programs," said Lowe's Foundation Director Betsy Conway. "This includes modernizing labs and equipment while expanding course offerings to equip students with the skills they need to succeed in today's job market."

From software systems used in modern HVAC controls to certifications that align with union apprenticeships, every element of the training is tied to employer needs so students enter the workforce prepared to start strong.

"Our country needs passionate tradespeople like never before, and CCBC has a clear vision to solve the skilled trades labor gap in Baltimore and beyond," Conway added.

And while the labor shortage is urgent, a generational mindset shift is also changing perceptions. The stigma surrounding skilled trades is fading, replaced by a growing recognition that these careers offer not just good pay, but autonomy, creativity and purpose.



A new generation, a new definition of success

For decades, the narrative was clear: success meant a four-year degree, a desk job, and maybe, someday, a corner office. But that narrative is shifting, fast. Today, more students and families are questioning the value of expensive degrees and reevaluating what meaningful, stable and successful careers look like.

"The pendulum is swinging back in a really good way," said Michael Guarraia, a former engineer turned educator and curriculum developer, who interacts with students and parents regularly. "People are realizing that you can have a great career, own a business, live the American dream — and never set foot in a traditional college classroom."

Guarraia knows the story firsthand. As a student, he was steered toward engineering because he was good at math and loved to build, but that path took him away from actually creating.

"I wonder how different my life might have been if someone had encouraged me to become a plumber or a fabricator instead of an engineer," he said. "Not because I regret anything, but because I genuinely love working with my hands."

That kind of hands-on, purpose-driven work is increasingly appealing to Gen Z, particularly as trades gain visibility through creators on YouTube and TikTok. Guarraia points out that many of today's young content creators are welders, mechanics and tradespeople with massive followings and lucrative careers.

"They're not influencers," he said. "They're builders. And they're showing the world that the trades are creative, powerful and profitable."

The team at Johnson Controls Inc. (JCI) sees that shift playing out in real time and considers CCBC a strategic ally.

"Four years ago, there was limited interest," said Dennis Wiseman Jr., installation manager for JCI's Baltimore office. "But in the last two years, it's been different. Students are seeing that a career in the trades is a way to make a good living and make a difference."

From high school outreach to social media campaigns, industry partners like JCI are working to demystify what the trades actually look like in the modern era: not just boilers and wires, but laptops, programming, energy savings and systems thinking.

Pipelines, not postings

The Johnson Controls Foundation created a national grant initiative aimed at partnering with community colleges to strengthen skilled trades training and rebuild interest in the field. CCBC was selected as one of the very first recipients. According to Wiseman, it quickly became a model for what success looks like.

Over the past four years, the company has built a strong, consistent pipeline from classroom to job site, hiring CCBC graduates, offering internships and helping shape curriculum that reflects the realities of modern building systems. Students not only enter the workforce job-ready but equipped with a clear sense of how far their skills can take them.

"We've hired five students full-time out of CCBC so far," said Wiseman. "Four are still with us, and we want to keep that pipeline flowing. There's real opportunity for advancement, but we need that entry-level talent coming in consistently."

Beyond paychecks

Skilled trades education doesn't just lead to good jobs; it leads to good lives. For many students, these programs open the door to financial freedom, meaningful work and a future that might otherwise feel out of reach.

"I talked to someone with three kids," said Sachs. "One's a doctor, one's a lawyer and one's a union electrician. Guess which one has no debt, owns a home and is set up for retirement? The electrician."

The story illustrates a growing awareness among families: the trades don't just offer decent wages; they offer options. In the Baltimore region, welders earn a median salary of \$57,209, well above the national median for all occupations. And unlike many degree pathways, trades training can be completed in months, not years, with minimal to no student debt.

"Not everybody wants to sit behind a desk," said Wiseman. "Some people want to be hands-on. They want to fix things. They want to make buildings more efficient, make communities stronger. And this work gives them that chance."

From student to instructor to benefactor



Margaret Hinkle remembers the first time she visited a CCBC campus. She was just five years old, sitting next to her grandfather watching a student production of "Fiddler on the Roof."

"My grandfather brought me because he worked at the college," Hinkle recalled. "He was a nighttime security guard while he was getting his associate degree."

The experience left an impression on Hinkle. Still, when she later became a young mother, she didn't see college as part of her future.

"I was a teen mom, and I had a lot of family support. I didn't really need for anything. I was given every opportunity you could imagine," she said. "But I finished high school and didn't know what I wanted to do."

For years, Hinkle drifted between administrative jobs, occasionally taking classes at CCBC. She knew she didn't want to be a receptionist forever but couldn't identify her calling.

The turning point came when Hinkle sat down with an academic advisor at CCBC Dundalk.

"The counselor asked me a bunch of questions and then said, 'I think you'd be good at dental hygiene,'" she recalled. "And I was like, 'What is that?'"

That conversation changed everything. After asking her dental hygienist questions about the profession, Hinkle realized it could be a good career choice.

Hinkle enrolled full-time at CCBC in 1996, supporting herself and her daughter by cleaning houses, a job that allowed her to work around their school schedules. Her dedication paid off when she transferred to the University of Maryland's dental hygiene program, where she not only earned her bachelor's degree but also discovered her passion for teaching.

"I had such fantastic teachers at University of Maryland," she said. "As a kid, one of my favorite

toys was a chalkboard. I loved playing teacher."

In 2008, Hinkle came full circle when she joined CCBC's new dental hygiene program as a faculty member. Today, she remains the only original instructor from the program's inception.

It's in this role that Hinkle sees the challenges facing today's students, particularly single parents.

"I see a lot of these young women are single moms and they struggle. It's not just about a financial struggle, it's about support," Hinkle explains.

These observations inspired Hinkle and her husband to create a scholarship, which will become available once the endowed fund reaches \$10,000. Recipients must be single parents enrolled in the dental hygiene or automotive program — a nod to Hinkle's son who earned his automotive degree at CCBC. Applicants do not need to demonstrate financial need, a deliberate choice based on Hinkle's own college experience.

"They don't have to prove that they need the money," she says, explaining that the money could be used for groceries, child care or other expenses that make it difficult to make ends meet.

"We were looking just to leave our mark on the college. I'm going to retire in another eight years, and by then the scholarship will have had quite a few recipients. I want our name to be here because my family has a long history with CCBC. I want to keep it going."



Real conversations inspire perseverance at CCBC's



Dinner with a Pro

On a spring evening at CCBC, students and alumni gathered not just to eat, but to connect. The event, Dinner with a Pro, was more than a networking opportunity. It gave CCBC alumni a chance to share experience, community and sometimes hard lessons learned with current students.

Over 50 high-achieving CCBC students were invited to mingle with alumni and professionals who once sat where they are now. Students and pros were seated together for dinner, with each pro sharing their story with the crowd.



For Sagar Chapagain, M.D., now in his final year of internal medicine training at Johns Hopkins Bayview, the event was deeply personal.

"Dinner with a Pro was a full-circle moment. It reminded me just how much impact a conversation, a bit of encouragement or even simply being present can have.

Sitting down with students who are walking the same path I once did — full of questions, potential and dreams was deeply meaningful," he said. "It wasn't about giving a speech or lecturing. It was about connecting as human beings and letting them know that success is possible, even when the path isn't linear. Just being able to say, 'I've been where you are,' can go a long way."

Chapagain immigrated to the U.S. from Nepal as a teenager and started his higher education at CCBC. From there, he transferred to Cornell, attended medical school and is now preparing to serve the Baltimore community as a primary care physician. He returned to CCBC not to give a lecture, but to listen and to share what he's learned along the way.

"The students asked thoughtful, heartfelt questions," he said. "How to choose a major, how to stay motivated while juggling work and school, how to stand out in transfer applications and how to cope with uncertainty. Some were curious about the process of becoming a doctor, others just needed reassurance that it's okay not to have it all figured out."

For Damion Hocker, a father of three and recent CCBC graduate, the evening was a chance to reflect on just how far he's come. He first came to CCBC for his commercial driver's license. He now holds a CDL with all endorsements, along with associate degrees in transportation, distribution and maritime logistics and business administration. He's been accepted into several universities, including Howard University, Morgan State University and the University of Maryland. Upon graduation, he plans to start his own logistics company.

"I thought the CDL was the end game," Hocker said. "But I started getting information about other programs, and I thought, do I still have what it takes? That question sparked a passion in me to keep going and return to school."

He described the dinner as "awesome," and said the stories shared, especially those from Kimberly Ellison-Taylor and Dr. Sagar Chapagain, were truly inspiring.

"Kimberly's story, growing up in an environment I could relate to, then becoming one of the top CPAs in the world? That hit me hard," he said. "She talked about being a non-traditional student, not being successful in the beginning, but having that passion to continue. She was resilient. She kept going."

Ellison-Taylor, CPA, CIA, CISA and global business leader, said that kind of spark is exactly why she participates in events like this.

"I'm a huge fan of community colleges, and I always come back to CCBC when they ask," said Ellison-Taylor, who took courses at CCBC to earn the credentials she needed for the CPA exam. "I wouldn't have become the chairperson of the world's largest accountancy body without that foundation."

The students at her table asked about everything from work-life balance to imposter syndrome. Her advice was both personal and practical: "Be authentic, but appropriate. Your values go with you wherever you go. You don't have to lose who you are to fit in."

That kind of honest, real-world insight defined the evening. Students didn't hear sugar-coated versions of success. They heard about false starts, wrong turns and what it means to keep going — a message that landed powerfully with Tierany Alexander, a nursing student who returned to school after raising her daughter.

"Returning to school as an adult, you have to retrain your brain," she said. "So it was so nice to hear from somebody that said, 'Look, I came back, and it was hard. It was tough. I was managing real life. I was managing school. I still had a job. I still had kids.' I really appreciated that. It was really empowering."

Alexander was especially impressed by Sujata Chapagain, a nurse in infection control at the University of Maryland.

The event gave CCBC alumni a chance to share experience, community and sometimes hard lessons learned with current students.

"I'm interested in that field, so I literally just pulled my chair over to her table," she said with a laugh. "She was eating dinner and still talking to me. It meant the world. She told me about her journey, how she started in nursing, how she kept going. It showed me I can get there too."

Michael Carper, division vice president at Whiting-Turner and longtime supporter of CCBC, said the students impressed him with their ambition and curiosity.

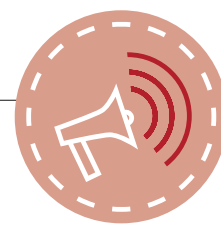
"They asked great questions," he said. "How do you get ahead? How do you find balance? My advice was pretty simple: Put in the time. Put in the effort. Be willing to learn. Ask questions."

Carper, who earned his associate degree at CCBC decades ago, sees events like Dinner with a Pro as vital for student success.

"These weren't just students looking for extra credit," he said. "They seemed very ambitious and wanted to learn from somebody who has achieved some level of success."

The night wrapped up, but students lingered to ask one more question, shake one more hand or scribble down one last LinkedIn handle.

Alexander summed it up best: "I don't think anybody left that room without feeling like, 'Yeah, I can do this.'"



Foundation and Grants News



Expanding the addiction recovery workforce

The Maryland Department of Health awarded CCBC \$344,000 through the Maryland Office of Overdose Response to expand its recovery workforce. The funding will support individuals with lived experience in addiction recovery and the justice system as they pursue careers in substance use counseling.

Led by CCBC's Human Services Counseling team, this initiative will support 40 new alcohol and drug trainees in starting their career journey and assist 20 current trainees in advancing to become Certified Supervised Counselors-Alcohol and Drug (CSC-AD). The program covers tuition, certification fees, textbooks and supervision. This support is essential for trainees who are not only building their own lives but also preparing to guide others on the path to recovery.

Participants are more than students—they bring a deep understanding of recovery and resilience to the field. Trainees are placed in real-world settings where they apply harm reduction principles, develop communication skills and engage with clients under the guidance of experienced professionals. Students also build networks, learn about new recovery approaches and gain a broader understanding of the behavioral health system.



Addressing Maryland's teacher shortage

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) awarded CCBC \$100,000 to launch its Expanding Teacher Quality and Diversity initiative — an effort to help address Maryland's teacher shortage while building a more diverse, representative educator workforce.

With this funding, CCBC is creating a low-cost, fast-track pathway to help conditionally certified teachers gain full licensure without leaving the classroom. This program is designed for aspiring educators from all walks of life — parents seeking career changes, former federal employees in search of renewed purpose and individuals who have long dreamed of teaching but were unable to access traditional routes.

In collaboration with Baltimore County Public Schools, the initiative also seeks to improve equity and student outcomes by ensuring more teachers reflect the communities they serve. From mentorship and training to classroom supplies, CCBC is providing wraparound support that sets participants up for long-term success. Additionally, CCBC is hosting a statewide conference, bringing together teachers, administrators and education advocates to share strategies, resources and stories that inspire. The conference offers CCBC's future educators an opportunity to network, learn from leaders in the field and build lasting professional connections.



LIGHTS, CAMERA, REFLECTION!

An evening of recognition and a record-breaking fundraising milestone

The CCBC Foundation's annual gala has long been more than a glamorous evening. It's a tradition that unites alumni, faculty, staff, donors and community partners to celebrate the incredible value of education.

This year's event, themed Lights, Camera, Reflection - Spotlighting Generosity and Impact, held special significance. It marked the conclusion of the Foundation's six-year Bridge to Success: Creating Brighter Futures campaign, an ambitious effort to raise \$51 million in support of student success.

More than 500 guests filled the room, raising nearly \$300,000 in one night. The evening recognized the people and organizations whose generosity has fueled scholarships, strengthened academic programs and created opportunities for CCBC students to thrive.

"From scholarship endowments to enhancing new and existing academic programs, these champions of education have strengthened CCBC's ability to provide a dynamic environment for learning and innovation," said CCBC President Sandra Kurtinitis. "And for that, we are grateful."

Honoring impact

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the college's Impact Awards, which honor individuals and organizations whose contributions have made a lasting difference for CCBC and its students. The awardees were recognized for their service, philanthropy and collaborative spirit. They helped bolster academic progress, fund innovative approaches to student success, foster a culture of inclusivity, enhance teaching and learning and support educational excellence.

2024 Impact Award recipients:

- **Best in Volunteer Leadership** – Richard Scheper, CCBC trustee and alumnus
- **Best in Cultivating Community** – Maryland Higher Education Commission and Baltimore County Department of Economic and Workforce Development
- **Best in Building Bridges** – Johnson Controls Foundation, increasing enrollment by 27% in the HVAC program
- **Best in Pioneering Progress** – Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, supporting faculty in developing enriched curricula that boost learning, persistence and completion
- **Best in Promoting Advancement** – Lowe's Foundation
- **Best in Creating Opportunities** – Philip E. & Carole R. Ratcliffe Foundation
- **Best in Elevating Education** – Sheldon Caplis (posthumously)
- **Best in Sustaining CCBC's Success** – Senator Francis X. Kelly Jr., former CCBC board chair and supporter of the Sandra L. Kurtinitis President's Innovation Fund

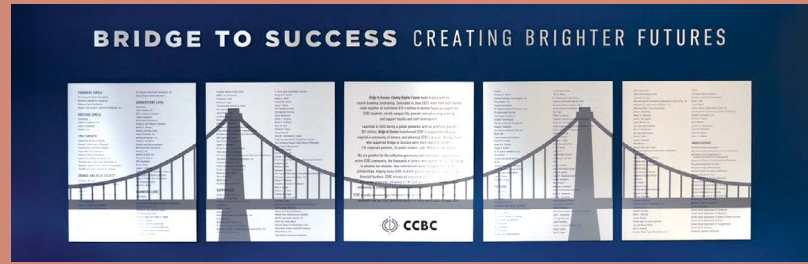
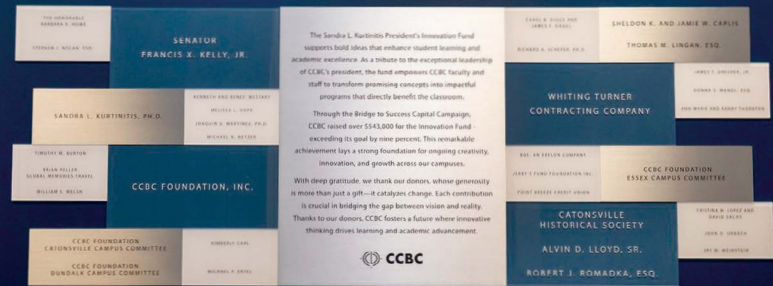
A historic reveal

As the awards concluded, the lights dimmed and sparklers lit the stage. Dr. Kurtinitis stepped forward to reveal the final campaign total: **\$68 million** — far surpassing the \$51 million goal and setting a new record for CCBC fundraising.

The announcement was a fitting close to a night that celebrated not just past achievements but the promise of the future.

The Bridge to Success campaign may have concluded, but the work continues. With the support of its community, CCBC will keep opening doors, expanding opportunities and transforming lives through the power of education.

SANDRA L. KURTINITIS, PH.D. PRESIDENT'S INNOVATION FUND



CCBC CELEBRATES CAMPAIGN SUCCESS BY UNVEILING MAJOR DONOR WALLS

CCBC marked the successful conclusion of its six-year "Bridge to Success: Creating Brighter Futures" fundraising campaign with the unveiling of two new donor walls at CCBC Essex. The campaign has been an extraordinary achievement, exceeding its goal of raising \$51 million by 40%, culminating in an incredible \$70 million raised.

The donor walls are a lasting tribute to the generosity and vision of the major donors whose philanthropic support has created momentum and impacted CCBC students and the community. While nearly 4,000 individuals and organizations contributed to the campaign, the walls highlight more than 250 major contributors, including corporations, foundation and government funders.

During the wall reveal, CCBC President Sandra Kurtinitis expressed her deep gratitude for the community's outpouring of support.

"All this is only possible because of the generosity and impact of CCBC's major donors," shared President Kurtinitis. "It is you who have helped us meet our large and ambitious goals. You share our passion for serving communities. Without you, it would not be possible for 95% of students to attend CCBC tuition-free."

One of the walls specifically recognizes donors to the **Sandra L. Kurtinitis President's Innovation Fund**. This fund was established in June 2022 through the "Bridges to Success" campaign with a challenge gift of \$250,000 from Senator Francis X. Kelly, Sr.

Senator Kelly, whom President Kurtinitis calls the "godfather of CCBC" for his vision in bringing three institutions together as one in 1998, is a key figure in the fund. The Innovation Fund honors President Kurtinitis' vision to support the growth of creative ideas at CCBC that enrich student learning. It empowers faculty and staff to develop promising new programs that strengthen and sustain ideas for student access and success.

The "Bridge to Success" campaign focused on several critical areas:

- **Student Success and Scholarships:** Assisting thousands of CCBC students cover full or partial tuition as well as other unmet financial needs.
- **Academic Programs and Innovative Initiatives:** Developing new and creative programs to enrich the student learning experience.
- **Faculty, Staff, and Infrastructure:** Enhancing the physical and technical resources available for teaching and learning across the college.

Basking in the success of the "Bridges to Success" campaign, CCBC Vice President of Institutional Advancement Ken Westary reflected on the donor wall with pride.

"This wall stands as a visible reminder that, through philanthropy, our community can transform lives and create opportunity for generations to come."



We extend our deepest gratitude to members of CCBC's President's Club for Annual Giving for their unwavering commitment and compassion. Your extraordinary generosity provides vital support for student scholarships, professional development, innovative programs and so much more – helping to transform lives through education. Thank you for being a part of our mission to empower students and strengthen our community.

PRESIDENT'S LEVEL

Gayle and Craig Adams
Michelle Allbritton
Jaime Alvarez
Joe Bailey
Nicole Y Baird
Wendy Dorothy Baker Smith
Knicky Balson Dreyer
Richard L. Barnett
Fred L. and Jill Bartlett, Jr.
Murry Baskerville
Brian Bollmann
Margaret French Bowler
Neal A. Brooks
Yvette Bunn Jones
Robert E Burks
Timothy M. Burton
Brian F. Butler
Barbara L. Byron
Suzanne Callery
Joe Carolan
Mikayla Christine
Susan Jane Clatchey
Natasha Cole-Leonard
Curtiss Cooper
Nickie A. Copinger
Steve Coyne
Cheri Marietta Craft
Timothy Owen Davis
Laura Deutsch
Robin DiBlasi
Carol Beth Diggs
and James F. Siegel
Robert A. Diggs
Alisa R. Diop
Audrey Dow
Sherry Drabin
James T. Dresher
Brian M. Eakes
Brian Edwards
Michael P. Ehrlinger
George C. Farrant

Lorraine Fedder
Michael Galiazzo
Patricia A. Gay
John C. Gordon
Harry William Grauel
Tonya Deneen Green
Linda S. Gronberg-Quinn
John Guckert
Sandra J Hartsock
Roland S. Harvey
Robert Hess
Alan Hillenbrand
Margaret Hinkle
Larry D. Honeycutt
Melissa L. Hopp
Barbara K. Howe
Linda Elizabeth Isenock
Carl W. Jackson
Michelle L. Jackson
Earline D. Johnson
Richard G. and Nina Jones
Gus J. Karayinopoulos
Robert Karkoska
John L. Kenneally
Lisa M. Kielian
Paul L. King
Steve Klobosits
Lemonia Eleni Kostakis
Louis Kousouris
Sandra L. Kurtinitis
Nancy Landolf
Connie J Le Mire
Henry F Linck
James J. Links
Alvin D. Lloyd
Joseph T. Loverde
Andrew H Lowe
Ann M. MacLellan
Donna S Mandl
Nicholas G. Manis
Laura J. McCarthy
Donald H. McCoy
Tom McGlynn

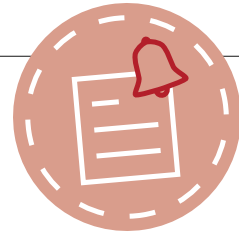
Carol McKelvie
Cheryl Jean McNamara
Shawn P. McNamara
Theresa H. McNeil
Christopher McRoberts
Maria C. Membrebe
William Midwig
John Milani
Robin Minor
Derek A. Mitchell
Phil Mooney
Janet P. Moure
Sandy M. Myers
Bryan Myers
Cecile V. Myrick
Scott Nauman
Michael N. Netzer
Gualtiero Noto
John J. O'Brien
Kimberly O'Connor-Miller
Mary Margaret O'Hare
Carl Penski
Thomas G. Peters
Beckie Phillips
Frances K. Pitts
Leroy Propst
Mildred Reaves
Patricia Rhea
Douglas B. Riley
Theresa Robinson
Matthew Rondeau
Roy P. Sachs
Kimberly Sansone
Richard A. Scheper
Tameika Scott
Jennifer Searing
Julian Thayer Simmons
Judith P. Snyder
Therese Sorrentino
Mark Talbert
Douglas Thompson
Ann-Marie and Randy Thornton
Stuart Tobin
Darlene Alexander Wakefield
Monica M. Walker
Mary Walkins
Ron Walper
Penny Walstrum
Adrienne Washington
Joseph J. Welkie
William E. Welsh
Peter Whedbee
John R. Whitaker
Monica White
Fay B. Willey
Dennis Wipprecht
J. Steven Wise
Angie D Wright
Alvin J. Zumbrun

DEAN'S LEVEL

Robert Aupperley
Darren Barnes
Johari A. Barnes
Caroline-Anne Barringer
William M. Barry
Jessica Beaver
Karen L. Beck

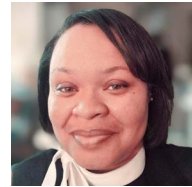
James Bell
Cheryl Bennett
Matthew Bernardy
Catherine M. Birkelien
Winifred Bishop
Jean Boggs
Jay Chandler Bouis
Genie A. Briggs
Steven G. Brown
Kenneth P. Burch
Mason Burden
Tori K. Burns
Candy A. Carr-Smith
Wendy Lee Chin
Michael Cocuzza
Zolita C. Courter
Laura J. Cripps
Calvin Damron
Mary Kay DeMarco
David Dent
Dallas M. Dolan
Susan H. Dugan-Konka
Eric Dummann
Abigail Eineman
Beverly A. Eurice
Janice B. Evans
Linda Fallon
Eric Feiss
Tashauna Felix
Michael W. Ferrell
Deborah Feuer
William J. Feuer
Amy Filardo
Chuck Fischer
Clyde Franklin
Dawn Frazier
Joseph Galiazzo
Ann M. Gamble
Clifford Geiger
Pamela Geraci
David Gnbis
Patricia L. Gossick
Candice Grayson
Robert Greenwalt
Ronald J. Gretz
Heather Griner
Wes Guckert
Dell Hagan-Rhodes
Brian Hammond
Amy Happell
Jacqueline Heine
Brian Henry
John E. Hess
Darrell T. Hollomon
Carol S. James
Kim A. Jensen
Michael Jewell
Adrian S. Johnson
William Johnson
Michele A. Karr
Jennifer Marie Kilbourne
J. Craig Klimczak
Frank J. Kolarek
Tina M. Kommalan
Matthew C. Lang
Bernard Lawson
Aida Lebbos
Carol Levin
Linda Ann Libby
Mary Denise Lindt

Derrick R. Little
Annette M. Logan
Sherina Long
Amy Macht
Ken E. MacLaughlin
Lynn M. MacLaughlin
Victor Madike
Joaquin Martinez
Lynne Mason
Michael Mason
Katherine Mathis
Kevin J. Matthews
Ervin McDaniel
William McDonald
Melissa V. Miller
Sarah E. Miller
Daniel J. Minnick
David Francis Mister
Gale A. Moore
Gregory J. Morgan
Ed T. Morman
Sharon D. Moulton
Laura G. Myers
Vinita Nithianandam
Genevieve R. O'Connor
Gregory Paranzino
Aashish Parikh
Angela S. Phillips
Kimberly A. Poston
Richard G. Puller
Eric Wesley Reitz
Gayle Restivo
Gary Rissling
Leonard Ritterpusch
Margaret Ann Ross
Tony M. Ross Taylor
Gail K. Rossmark
Ingrid Sabio-McLaughlin
Christine A. Schoenberger
Nancy S. Seidel
David Gnbis
Jeffrey W. Shue
Craig Sigismondi
Louise D. Slezak
Deborah A. Smith
Elizabeth H. Smith
Jason Stuart Spiegelman
Madeline G. St Clair
Michael W. Tan
Elizabeth P. Tewey
Fnu Thazin
Bradley W. Thompson
Sean R. Turner
Ellen Valentino
Parita Vithlani
Mary Judith Walsh
Travis Ward
Arthur W. Warshaw
Eric Washington
Martha H. West
Kenneth Westary
Martha Whitty
Mark D. Williams
Douglas A. Williams
Donna Windisch
Dawn Michelle Wisniewski
Newton Woo
Barbara A. Yancy
Thomas E. Yuhas
Virginia Ann Zawodny

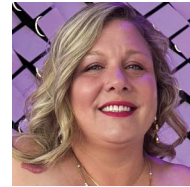


Alumni Updates

1990s



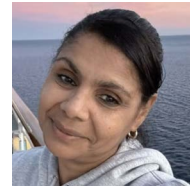
Kristol M. Taylor '95 completed 25 years of service this year as a special educator in the Howard County Public School System. She is proud to share that her nephew, Marcus King, a fellow CCBC alum, earned his BFA this past spring.



Ashley Bowers '12 graduated from CCBC and later magna cum laude from Upper Iowa University. She began her MBA at UIU in January 2025 and is on track to graduate next summer. She credits CCBC with giving her the motivation and mindset needed to pursue her academic and career goals.



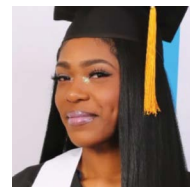
Sinead Fahey '12 studied classical voice at CCBC before earning degrees from Towson University and Berklee College of Music. She fronts Taylorville, a nationally touring Taylor Swift tribute band, and also writes and records as Sinead Angele. Her second EP, "Self Sabotage," was released this summer.



Diane McManus-Stoval '15 enrolled at CCBC as a mother of five. She later earned a bachelor's degree and moved to California, where she works as a program manager supporting people transitioning out of homelessness. She enjoys life with her thriving children and grandson and loves to travel.



LaDawn Jackson-Shields '15 works in the Howard County Public School System, supporting a special education classroom for three-year-olds. She is dedicated to fostering diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in early education and creating supportive environments where every child can thrive.



Daijour Chrishay Rooks '16 earned an A.A. from CCBC before earning a B.A. She is now pursuing an accelerated master's in biotechnology and environmental science at Johns Hopkins University. Based on her own journey, she encourages others to stay resilient: "You matter. Trust the process — your journey has meaning, and your future has purpose."

2000s



Jason Ulysses Terry '01 earned an A.A. in occupational therapy from CCBC. He retired after a 20-year career as an occupational therapist assistant, working with geriatric patients, and is the author of the book "Smiling All the Way to the Scale."



Terrie Sharday Henry '06 has worked with Baltimore-area youth through volunteer programs and summer camps. She recently stepped into a permanent role as a youth care activity specialist, using her creative talents to continue to put smiles on kids' faces.

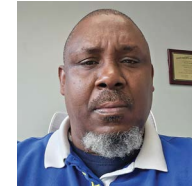


Kareem Sykes '08 earned an A.A. in interdisciplinary studies from CCBC and a B.A. in jurisprudence/pre-law from the University of Baltimore. With 25 years in national security and cybersecurity, he is managing partner at FTS Consulting Group, director of Project Spectrum and a sought-after speaker and mentor. He credits CCBC with inspiring a career rooted in leadership, service and innovation.

2010s



Preston Bush '11 earned a degree from CCBC before continuing his education to pursue personal and professional goals. He is now director of contracts at a federal government contracting firm and a proud husband and father of three, crediting CCBC with providing the foundation for his success.



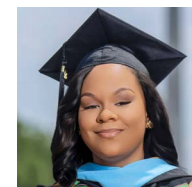
Cyril Maxwell Scovens '16 is founder of CMS Institute of Addictionology Inc., and owner of Scovens & Associates LLC. He holds a master's from Coppin State University and is pursuing a doctorate at National University. He is board president of the Maryland Association of Addiction Professionals and a member of ASAM's Maryland chapter.



Steven Silvia '17 earned a paralegal certificate from CCBC, which he proudly displayed in his first private office. He now works on federal litigation and is preparing a case for the U.S. Supreme Court. He credits CCBC with laying the foundation for his legal career.



Jack Weeks '18 earned an associate degree from CCBC, a bachelor's in history (summa cum laude) from Loyola University Maryland and a master's in teaching secondary social studies. He teaches U.S. History, AP U.S. History, and AP African American Studies at Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, where he is department chair and was named Teacher of the Year.



Brianna Thompson '18 recently earned a master's in teacher leadership, curriculum and instruction. In her third year with Prince George's County Public Schools and eighth year working with young children, she mentors new teachers and supports her peers. She proudly dedicates her achievements to her late father, Wade Thompson Sr., who always believed in her.



Cynthia LaHue '19 applies her MBA in accounting customer service at a global insurance wholesaler, collaborating with colleagues worldwide. She credits CCBC Professor Anthony Burns for helping her overcome a fear of public speaking and encourages newcomers to the insurance industry to stay positive, connect with others and build a personal brand for long-term success.

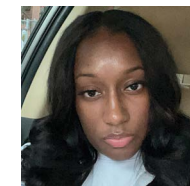
2020s



Nora Cooper '22 earned an A.A. from CCBC before completing a bachelor's degree at Towson University in May 2024 — an unforgettable milestone. While studying, she gained hands-on experience as a preschool and child care aide. She recently began the counseling psychology master's program at Bowie State University.



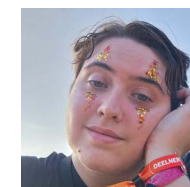
Obukola Ogunyoso '23 felt led by God to open a daycare after graduating from CCBC, starting with a small family-based program. Within a year, she expanded to a larger facility with pre-K services and is now working to open a mini daycare center to further support families in her community.



Ganesha Ralph '23 graduated from CCBC's nursing program in December 2023 and began her career on a local hospital's intermediate care unit. She next earned a BSN and now works as a float pool nurse gaining experience across various units. Her next goal is to pursue a PMHNP degree.



Jordan Smothers '24 returned to school in 2020 while launching a vending machine business and growing his social media presence (@thesmothersotr). He's traveled to all 48 states as a truck driver. He and his wife recently welcomed their first child and now live in his hometown of York, Pa. He looks forward to using his education and 'keep on truckin'.



Imogen Kone '24 graduated from CCBC, then enrolled at the University of Amsterdam to study anthropology and be closer to her mother. She plans to earn her bachelor's degree by 2027 and looks forward to continuing her academic journey in an international setting.



Tyneike Lewis '25 has flourished since completing CCBC's nursing program. While preparing for the NCLEX, she received three job offers and accepted one that fits her dream career. She considers attending CCBC one of her most rewarding decisions and encourages others to take the leap.



College News



Aspiring entrepreneurs awarded \$62,500

CCBC awarded \$62,500 in start-up capital to student and alumni entrepreneurs during its 12th Annual Business Plan Competition, hosted by the Center for Business Innovation and Trades. The top 10 finalists pitched their business ideas at the event, held in conjunction with the Center's Alumni Showcase.

Funding was made possible through the continued support of the Philip E. & Carole R. Ratcliffe Foundation, which has contributed over \$2 million to expand the center's programs. In addition to funding, the grant supports new courses and workshops to help entrepreneurs develop critical business skills.

"It has been truly inspiring to work alongside each finalist as they transform their passion into a strategic business plan and present their vision with confidence to the judges," said Dennis Sullivan, executive director of CCBC's Center for Business Innovation and Trades. "While we can only award seed money to a few, every finalist has demonstrated incredible potential. We look forward to watching these entrepreneurs grow and scale their businesses in the years ahead."

2024 competition winners:

- **First place (\$20,000)** – *Joyson BaLisamore*, **Jay's Watermelonade** (Owings Mills): A heart-healthy, hydration-focused beverage brand.
- **Second place (\$15,000)** – *Lindsay Liu*, **Happy Little Paper Co.** (Baltimore): Whimsical, inclusive stationery and illustrations.
- **Third place (\$10,000)** – *Madelin Martinez*, **MiNest** (Baltimore): Bilingual property management services.
- **Fourth place (\$7,500)** – *Latesha Reid*, **Ready, Set, Prep Early Learning Center** (Gwynn Oak): High-quality child care promoting school readiness and social-emotional growth.
- **Runner-up (\$5,000)** – *John and Kimberly Fishback*, **PartyPix DJ LLC** (Middle River): Event services including DJ, decor and catering.
- **Runner-up (\$5,000)** – *Chanel Waller*, **Herway Expedited Logistics** (Baltimore): Courier service offering time-sensitive services for the legal, medical and financial sectors.



Scholars among scholars

CCBC students Nour Miswadeh and Kyle Clarke Echeverria are among the 90 high-achieving community college students selected to receive the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation's Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship. The highly competitive national scholarship aims for Cooke Scholars to complete their undergraduate educations with as little debt as possible. The award, which is last-dollar funding after all institutional aid, provides students with as much as \$55,000 a year to complete a bachelor's degree.

Miswadeh graduated with a degree in digital media production. She plans to continue her education at UMBC and major in print media visual arts. Clarke Echeverria, a former CCBC Honors College student, has already begun pursuing his bachelor's degree at UCLA. Only four students within Maryland received this honor.

This year's selection process drew more than 1,600 applications from community colleges across the nation. Ninety new scholars were selected from a semifinalist pool of 467 students. Applicants were evaluated based on their academic achievement, unmet financial need, persistence and leadership qualities.

"The accomplishments of our students fill us with immense pride, and earning the title of Cooke Scholar is both highly sought after and a remarkable feat," expressed CCBC President Sandra Kurtinitis. "Congratulations to Nour and Kyle. Their unwavering dedication, perseverance and academic excellence are clear in this well-deserved honor. Their success not only demonstrates the strength of CCBC but also the limitless potential of all our students."



Proudly serving those who serve

Military Times recognized CCBC in its **2024 Best for Vets: Colleges rankings**, the largest and most comprehensive list of colleges and universities for military service members and veterans.

An impressive 304 schools made the 2024 list, demonstrating their commitment to supporting the military community in their educational journeys. Each year, Military Times surveys colleges and universities nationwide to evaluate their veteran-focused programs. These survey responses, along with public data sourced from the Department of Education and Department of Veterans Affairs, undergo a rigorous analysis by the Military Times data team to produce a trusted, unbiased ranking.

CCBC's **Office of Veteran Services** supports military-connected students from all branches of the military, whether they are active duty, National Guard, reservists, veterans, dependent spouses, children or survivors.



Statewide initiative aims to boost student transfers

CCBC is one of 25 public and state-aided institutions participating in the Maryland Transfer Intensive, an initiative launched by the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program and the Maryland Higher Education Commission. Over the next seven years, these institutions will coordinate efforts to boost attainment for those seeking bachelor's degrees, expand equitable opportunities for Marylanders and build on Maryland's ranking as the second most educated state in the country.

Transferring from a local community college to a four-year institution offers an affordable pathway that's good for Marylanders, their families and employers looking to fill key positions. It's also a good investment for the state: **88% of community college students stay in the state after college**, working and contributing to the Maryland economy.

"Joining the Maryland Transfer Intensive reflects CCBC's dedication to supporting students from all backgrounds in reaching their academic goals, strengthening Maryland's workforce and helping the state rise to No. 1 in higher education," said CCBC President Sandra Kurtinitis.



Providing hiring support for displaced federal workers

In response to the growing number of displaced federal employees, CCBC stepped up to provide meaningful support and employment resources.

At its spring open house, CCBC's Human Resources team actively recruited for open positions at the college and shared vital employment resources with attendees. HR representatives offered personalized assistance, including resume reviews, application guidance and interview strategies — all aimed at helping individuals navigate the job market with confidence.

Beyond the open house, CCBC hosted a series of virtual "pop-up" training sessions throughout the spring semester. These flexible offerings were designed to further assist displaced federal workers in strengthening their job-readiness skills and exploring new career paths.

CCBC's outreach was driven by a clear community need. With approximately 160,000 federal employees living in Maryland, the state is particularly vulnerable to the impact of federal budget cuts and downsizing.

"We understand this is a difficult time for many federal workers, and we want to offer our support," said CCBC President Sandra Kurtinitis. "CCBC is committed to being a resource for our community, and we are proud to provide services that help individuals transition to new and fulfilling careers."



New "sensory oasis" supports student well-being

CCBC celebrated the opening of its new "sensory oasis" — a thoughtfully designed space on the Catonsville campus where students can relax, re-center and reduce stress. A ribbon-cutting ceremony marked the launch of this unique environment, which also features an adjoining interfaith prayer room equipped with texts and resources representing a variety of religious traditions.

The concept for the sensory space emerged from a campus roundtable of volunteers, including students, who explored ways to make CCBC more welcoming and inclusive for all. The result is a calming environment designed to support mental wellness and offer relief from the sensory demands of daily life.

While especially beneficial for neurodivergent students, the oasis provides a quiet, restorative space for anyone seeking a break from campus distractions. The room is styled to evoke a natural, peaceful atmosphere, featuring soft lighting, bubble tubes for gentle visual stimulation, tactile objects, rocking chairs and swing desks. Cushioned seating and shelves stocked with sensory toys, fidget tools, drawing supplies and relaxation materials encourage students to unwind in ways that suit their individual needs.

This initiative reflects CCBC's ongoing commitment to holistic student support, mental health awareness and inclusive campus spaces.



Dr. Kurtinitis receives BBJ's Lifetime Achievement Award

CCBC President Sandra Kurtinitis is a recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Baltimore Business Journal (BBJ). President Kurtinitis was recognized along with 25 "Women Who Mean Business" honorees during a special ceremony hosted by the BBJ.

President Kurtinitis has led CCBC since 2005, and has worked in the community college space for more than 50 years. She says the capstone of her long career was being chosen as CCBC's president and given the charge to transform three good community colleges into one great institution. She defined that challenge as a pivotal opportunity that set CCBC on the path to being one of the top 150 community colleges in the country, with a reputation for innovation and forward thinking.

As expressed by President Kurtinitis, "Propelled by our motto: 'The power of one built on the strength of three,' the transformation of the Community College of Baltimore County has been one of the most rewarding accomplishments of my professional life."

CCBC named "Best Community College"

CCBC maintained its position as "Best Community College" in the 2024 Maryland Daily Record's Reader Rankings poll. Having maintained this title since the inception of the award in 2019, CCBC is particularly proud to receive this honor because it comes from the community the college serves.

"We are incredibly honored and deeply grateful to be consistently recognized as the 'Best Community College' in the Maryland Daily Record's Reader Rankings," said CCBC President Sandra Kurtinitis. "This repeated affirmation, directly from the community we serve, truly means the world to us. It reinforces our unwavering commitment to providing

something meaningful for everyone — whether you're seeking a path to an associate degree, looking to gain essential workforce skills or simply exploring new passions. This award belongs to every student, faculty member, staff member and community partner who makes CCBC such a vibrant and vital resource."





Champions on every front

CCBC's 2024–25 athletic season delivered grit, glory and plenty to celebrate.

The Essex Knights reigned. Men's soccer and lacrosse both competed in national tournaments and women's basketball secured a third-place national win.

Adding to that success, the Essex Knights men's soccer and women's basketball teams captured Region 20 Division II and Maryland JUCO titles. Not too far behind were the Catonsville Cardinals softball and the Essex Knights lacrosse teams who were runners-up in the Region 20 Division 11 tournaments.

CCBC also celebrated 11 NJCAA All-Americans, one NJCAA Women's Basketball Player of the Year (Gigi Gamble), multiple NJCAA Players of the Week, Region 20 Players of the Month and 129 region and conference awards.

In December 2024, 18 new athletes, coaches and administrators were inducted into the CCBC Athletics Hall of Fame, raising the total to 251.



Beyond the scoreboard

Off the field, CCBC athletes partnered with League of Dreams to host adaptive sports clinics for Single Step and Baltimore County Public Schools Functional Academic Learning Support students. Facilities also got a boost with refreshed gym floors at the Essex and Dundalk campuses and a new turf infield at CCBC Catonsville.

Isaac Njoroge, a Catonsville Cardinals men's basketball player, was named a Dream Scholar and served as CCBC's 2025 commencement speaker. Eighteen Essex Knights student-athletes earned spots on the 2024–25 NJCAA All-Academic Teams, and more than 77 student-athletes are expected to receive academic awards, illustrating that CCBC athletes demonstrate talent, dedication and heart in everything they do.



ccbcmd.plannedgiving.org



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CONTACT US

Planning your estate and legacy for future generations, including your charitable interests, takes careful evaluation. Consult with appropriate professionals for assistance.

Kenneth Westary, vice president,
Institutional Advancement
kwestary@ccbcmd.edu
443-840-3213

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events

CCBC Foundation Annual Gala

Saturday, April 11, 2026
7–11 p.m.

MARTIN'S WEST
6817 Dogwood Road
Baltimore, Md.

Contact **Woodrow Powell**
wpowell@ccbcmd.edu
or 410-952-5874

CCBC Foundation Scholarship Awards Banquet

Thursday May 7, 2026
11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

CCBC DUNDALK
Alvin and Mary Lloyd
College Center
First Floor Lobby
7200 Sollers Point Rd.
Baltimore, Md.

Contact **Angella Kevas**
akevas@ccbcmd.edu
or 443-840-1817

Grad Fest

Saturday, May 16, 2026
11 a.m.–3 p.m.

CCBC ESSEX
Wellness Center
7201 Rossville Blvd.
Baltimore, Md.

Contact
alumni@ccbcmd.edu
443-840-3129