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The Final Score: SCCC Says Goodbye to Athletic Director

By Chris Arnold
College Hill Writer

The godfather of athletics at Sussex County Community College in Newton is set to retire. John Kuntz is retiring as athletic director after 36 years at SCCC.

Kuntz has played a role in establishing every sports program currently at the college, including establishing the first and only junior college football program in the state of New Jersey. Kuntz first started working at SCCC in 1987, when there were no sports teams at the college. Kuntz has established all 11 sports teams that are a part of SCCC which includes men's and women's basketball, men's and women's soccer, baseball, softball, men's lacrosse, women's volleyball, football and esports. On top of dramatically growing the athletic department through his 36-year career, Kuntz was able to make SCCC the home of N.J.'s first junior college football team.

"Adding football and being the only juco in the state was a great accomplishment, but there were many involved in that process," said Kuntz, "Including the support of Dr. Connolly and the major assistance of Cory Homer and Todd Poltersdorf in particular."

Although Kuntz clearly advocates for athletics, academics are at the forefront of his sports programs. This is apparent in the new study hours implemented for the sports teams on campus. These are set hours with tutors from every subject to help student-athletes achieve their goals off the field or court.

"I have always been a proponent that there is a reason why the word student comes first in referring to student-athletes," said Kuntz.

"Therefore, study hours, and study halls alike are instrumental to the academic success of the athletes and all students for that matter. The growth of the athletic department and in particular the addition of a football program, which is by far the largest number of athletes on any team, annually close to 100, was a driving force in having a more organized system of study time for the student-athletes."



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With 11 sports teams added in the last 36 years, SCCC's athletic department has been built from the ground up thanks to Kuntz and others over the years.

"The athletic department has come light years from the early days and is certainly moving in the right direction with the continued support of Dr. Connolly and the college administration and under the leadership of Todd Poltersdorf," said Kuntz. When asked about his relationship and how the new athletic director will do, Kuntz said, "Todd and I have known each other for many years. I taught him in high school at Pope John in the early 1980s and he coached baseball for me at SCCC in the early years for more than 10 years; he was quite successful as our baseball coach. I believe Todd will do great things as the next athletic director at SCCC. He has a vision and plan that he will work hard at in carrying out."

As far as retirement for Kuntz, he describes it as "bittersweet." "The time was right after 35 years," he said. "I will miss most, the staff and people I have worked with at SCCC over the years. Especially the athletic department staff; Mike Rath, Traci Smith, Christina Sakelakos and all the coaches." Kuntz's efforts and outreach have positively impacted not just student-athletes in Sussex County but all over N.J. Because of this, multiple sports and ample opportunities present themselves to local county kids and beyond.

"Mr. Kuntz is an amazing person, who created the largest athletic department in the state," said Poltersdorf. "His commitment and leadership to the student-athletes has been truly amazing. John Kuntz will be truly missed by everyone here at SCCC."



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SCCC Tuition Set to Increase Starting in July

By Robin Gindhart
College Hill Writer

After six years of remaining steady, tuition is on the rise at Sussex County Community College in Newton. Tuition is expected to increase from \$140 per credit to \$146 per credit at SCCC beginning July 1, according to SCCC President Jon Connolly. The main reason

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inflation that has occurred in the last two years an issue that can no longer be maintained by trimming the budget in certain areas to cover the various costs. Although rising costs in all sections of the school are equally responsible, computer software packages have been especially burdensome for the college's finances. These packages play a part in the operation of the school and in the various online platforms students learn from, such as something the majority of students are very familiar with, CANVAS.

"Everything is computerized in one way or another, and these software packages come with licenses and subscriptions that must be maintained," says Connolly. "The cost of such software, which affects everything, is one of the top drivers of ongoing costs at the college."

Other factors include how the costs of gas, oil and pavement maintenance have gone up. Connolly says, "up to this point, SCCC had held tuition steady for six consecutive years, which is unprecedented in the state of New Jersey for community colleges." This shows how the college has worked hard to avoid this tuition increase, but SCCC is no longer able to hold it off.

The executive team, chief financial officer, finance team and the board of trustees all worked together to determine the decision about it. For the majority of those who receive financial aid towards the tuition costs, this increase will



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have no impact on them because it "has actually increased over the past several years to keep pace with rising inflation," says Connolly. This increase in financial aid will counteract the increase in tuition in most instances.

Also, as is required by the state, the public has been made aware of the tuition increase through various news outlets and on the college website before the budget was discussed and approved. For the future, they will be monitoring the college's costs and funding and will share with the students any savings opportunities that may come along.

Although these measures may help temporarily, "the only long-term path to reducing tuition for students at this college is to obtain more funding from the state," Connolly says.

State funding plays a huge role in this tuition increase and will continue to do so because until the college receives more of it, there will occasionally be more increases.

"A tuition increase is never something the college proposes lightly, and the college has been committed to holding tuition steady as evidenced by the last six years," says Connolly. The school sectors involved put time and careful consideration into this decision and will continue to strive for affordable tuition and helping students with costs in any way possible.

"Aesop and His Fabled Friends" Production Embodies Students' Capabilities

By Robin Gindhart
College Hill Writer

The student-led production of "Aesop and His Fabled Friends" at Sussex County Community College in Newton is a great opportunity for families with young children and aims to bring in new audiences. This production takes place in the Performing Arts Center with showtimes set for May 4 at noon, May 6 at 11 a.m. and May 11 at noon. For the first time, the students of the Theater Workshop class with SCCC Professor Allison Ognibene have created this production in its entirety.

"Aesop and His Fabled Friends" is a wonderful example of how a college community develops art and creativity in a multi-dimensional, diverse and intellectually challenging environment," says Daniel Cosentino, SCCC dean of Arts and Humanities. The process is teaching students valuable skills and bringing different sections of the school together to create an enjoyable experience for the audience.

Ognibene says that for the children, "it's a way for them to really have an immersive experience." Not only will they be watching the show, but they will also get to meet the characters afterwards and color in drawings of the animals made by Professor James Jeffrey's Comic Book Illustration students. The show will be about 30 minutes long, but with the other activities, will last about 45 minutes to an hour. Jeffrey shares how he is "very happy to be a part of this with Professor Ognibene and the Theater Dept." This is a special opportunity for his 10 students to get some extra experience and improve their grade with extra credit. "We're building a show from the ground up," says Ognibene in regard to her Theater Workshop class. This is a highly complex process with many different components that challenge the students to be creative,

explore different areas, multi-task and work collaboratively. They started off by reading 200 fables in the span of a month and narrowed it down to only 12. The students' tasks include writing the script, designing the props, creating the costumes, acting, directing and controlling the lighting.

Ognibene hopes that the students will acquire "a real fundamental understanding of what is entailed in an actual production." With the complexity of this process comes challenges, including the short amount of time they have, staying focused and on track, and maintaining



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connectivity between the scenes. Also, it's an ongoing process of weaving things in and out, so the students have to be willing to be flexible, which can be very challenging. After each show, they will discuss what did and didn't work, so it may change each time.

"Sometimes you have to prune the garden to really let it bloom," says student Catarina Cruz, an English major who is one of the board operators and will be playing a couple of characters during the show.

She has been editing the script as she is one of the playwrights and has designed a few props. With having to rewrite the script and even completely remove parts that don't fit she says, "it's hard to do that as someone who enjoys unbridled creativity, though it's given me a better understanding of the creative process."

Going along with that, Ognibene expresses how "it's a hard pill to swallow when you have written a script and it has to be cut." This has been frustrating for some students, but it just contributes even more to their development of practical skills.

Anthony Guerra, another student who is a technical theater major, expresses the challenge of time when he says, "I like working with my production team, they're all hard workers and are trying their hardest as we are in a time crunch." He is the production manager/tech director for the show and will be playing Aesop. The time crunch makes it so the students are learning about time management as well. Since this production is meant to be completely created by the students, Ognibene's role is simply to oversee the process and listen to their ideas. She had no vote on the fables they decided to use; she just reminds the students to pay attention as to whether something fits.

"As a professor, I can tell who's distracting," says Ognibene, so she puts them back into focus when things get off track. She also helps organize what they're doing and guides them into better connectivity between the different scenes when needed. Other facets of the school that are helping with this production include the Makerspace, photography students, and graphic design faculty, student interns and even Cosentino who says they are "consulting, providing input and guidance."

The Makerspace is being utilized by the Theater Workshop students to create the props with a 3D printer after they're designed on a computer. It has a wide variety of tools for them to work with and allows them to use new technologies. The showtimes of "Aesop and his Fabled Friends" on May 4 and May 6 will be happening during the Festival of the Arts that is set to take place on campus from May 2 to May 9.

This festival will have different events every day with both students and professionals showcasing what's on campus. It's part of a larger plan to make the Alpha Arts Institute, established in 2022, a "garden of culture," as Cosentino puts it. "By doing so we will build a strong base for students to participate in, volunteer for, serve as interns through the degree programs, and of course provide fertile ground for professional development and practice of skills learned in the classroom." For more information or any questions about "Aesop and His Fabled Friends," contact Ognibene at aognibene@sussex.edu.

Diversity Grows With More Opportunity at SCCC

By Chris Arnold
College Hill Writer

As long as Sussex County Community College in Newton continues to grow as an institution, diversity will surely spread through the campus community.

It is appropriate for every student and administrator to have a voice no matter the race, origin, ethnicity, religion or sexual preference. As SCCC



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grows the challenge is getting diverse voices heard and included in the campus community which takes time. Which leaves the question, how is the diversity and inclusion on SCCC's campus?

Diversity has raised its profile as a conversation point on college campuses around the nation in recent years. Colleges and universities are confronting new opportunities and difficulties as student populations diversify. A lot of crucial discussions are taking place around campus diversity, from fostering inclusivity to tackling issues of inequity.

Historically SCCC has not been known to be the most diverse community college in New Jersey. However, diversity has been on the rise since 2013 according to communitycollegereview.com.

In 2013 SCCC recorded a .18 diversity score, with .72 being the state average amongst community colleges.

In 2022 SCCC's diversity score was .35. Still below the state average but SCCC has faculty tasked with the challenges that diversity and inclusion bring. Phillip Andujar was hired in Jan. 2022 as the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator/Academic Advisor and is currently the coordinator of Student Engagement and Inclusion at SCCC.

When asked about the driving factor behind SCCC becoming more diverse Andujar said, "In my beliefs, access to support is one route, of some others, that provides equity for students to have a voice in directing this institution forward. My goal is to improve how the institution can remove barriers to students' learning experiences. I am a graduate of SCCC and had such a transformative experience as a student and seek to create as many opportunities for students to experience similar."

Diversity helps to foster creativity, learning, empathy, and unity among individuals, which can result in a society that is more successful, artistic and harmonious. These are all essential in creating a campus environment that students can flourish in.

"Diversity, in general, is important," said Andujar. "It's a dynamic that is generalizable to many areas of life. For example, humans need a diversity of bacteria in their stomachs to digest and maintain gut health. Condition of gut health relates to other health conditions that are instigated or avoided as a result. This is the way that we should look at diversity. Every voice should have an opportunity to be heard and contribute to the mission of the institution."

SCCC can be described as a commuter campus where students from all over Sussex County, neighboring counties, and different states all attend. Most students find themselves going back home after class unless they are part of a team or club.

"There are students that are seeking out more opportunities to connect with the campus community, so we are trying to expand this experience as much as possible," said Andujar. For students looking to connect to campus life and feel more included on campus SCCC offers a variety of ways to do so. SCCC has the largest athletic department in the state with more than 10 sports teams. Also, clubs and organizations around campus are always open to student participation.

"There are many ways to get involved, through clubs and organizations, the Skylander Ambassador program and student government," said Andujar. "We are in the process of rebuilding these spaces of student engagement and so feedback and participation are always being sought after." For those students who may not be from the United States or use English as a second language, SCCC offers English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses. Therefore, individuals who struggle to pick up English naturally have the chance to pursue higher education. "We currently offer ESOL courses for free with the college," said Andujar. "There are also college-level ESOL courses students can take to meet collegiate standards."

A diversity statement for SCCC is currently being worked on, as well as a space for those part of the LGBTQ+ community to come together on campus. "We have been in the process of building a diversity statement," said Andujar. "I aim to have the statement finalized and ready to present for discussion with the campus for the next academic year. Along with that, the Student Government Association has been working to establish a space on campus for people from the LGBTQ+ community. Again, with the hope that it can be presented to the campus community within the next academic year." With the help of administrators being added like Andujar and others, SCCC can become a place of education where students feel heard and included no matter their social background. Providing a more diverse and inclusive environment is paramount for student success. "Diversity is a multifaceted dynamic to examine," said Andujar. "Specifically, for SCCC, I am trying to evaluate and support growth in the diversity of perspectives and the inclusion of those perspectives. In connecting with students and relaying their commentary to the administration, growth is occurring, but it can be a slow process."



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Sussex Teen Arts Festival Gives Local Teen Artists Amazing Opportunities

By Chris Arnold
College Hill Writer

After originally being scheduled for Tuesday, March 14, the annual Sussex County Teen Arts Festival was postponed because of two snow emergencies that hit Sussex County. Even though the biggest snowstorm of the year landed on the date of the festival, the show still went on. The 54th annual Sussex County Teen Arts Festival was held Thursday, March 16 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Sussex County Community College in Newton. Participating students got the opportunity to gain feedback from professional artists, got exposed to new art forms and ideas, developed work for their portfolios and enhanced their resumes. They also got to experience a

college campus, scholarships and advance to the New Jersey Teen Arts Festival set to be held at Middlesex County College in Edison.

With an anticipated 1,500 students from 20 different schools attending this year's festival, 770 students submitted work for display. Teens from grades 7 through 12 all across Sussex County got to gain and experience all the festival has to offer. Sparta Middle School attended this year's festival for the first time as it continues to grow.

In 2022, approximately 900 students participated. The total annual audience is approximately 2,000 each year, including students, teachers and parents. Nearly 600 submissions of student visual, literary and performance art were exhibited. A total of 53 art and performances were selected for presentation at N.J. Teen Arts Festival. "This year's festival is bigger than ever before with expanded educational offerings," said Daniel Cosentino, dean of Arts and Humanities at SCCC. "Also, new visiting artists, workshops and live demonstrations were added to this year's festival." After 54 years the festival

gives new opportunities to Sussex teens. World-class visiting artists new to Sussex County Teen



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Arts offered instruction and personal critiques. "Hands-on workshops, live demonstrations, performance critiques, open poetry jams and open films are all available for students at this year's festival," said Cosentino. "Topics to be included in these workshops include fine art, visual art, applied art, performance art, literary art, music and theater. All forms of self-expression whether it be visual, verbal, written, theatrical or dance

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are welcomed and embraced at the Teen Arts Festival.” There were 14 stop-and-go demonstrations and 15 workshops and masterclasses. A total of 108 critiques in 11 different art disciplines were offered in individual and group settings. Feedback workshops included 550 pieces of 2D and 3D visual art and photography. Judged events are arguably the most important and give the biggest opportunities to teen artists. Professional artists judge students’ work according to Philosophy and Standards documents used by Teen Arts. This includes a Critique Philosophy, Appropriateness Philosophy, and an Adjunction Scoring Guide and Rubric.

“Student work presented at the Teen Arts Festival is selected by their teachers as representative of the work produced by their students,” said Cosentino. “The emphasis is on excellence and diversity. The critique process is designed to guide students in their development, pointing out both strengths and weaknesses of each

piece, but never placing value on the work in relation to the work of others. This is not a competition in the true sense of the word. Excellence and mastery of craft are stressed.”

The critique forms are reviewed in assessing the success of each artist using adjunction rubrics and a holistic scoring guide system developed by the N.J. Teen Arts Festival. The artists recommend student work for selection based on excellence, originality, creativity, chronological ability and diversity. These recommendations are used to determine which pieces will represent Sussex County at the State Festival and other venues. Student work will also be reviewed by the Teen Arts Advisory Board, which also make the final selections. A student who submitted her painting at a prior festival was granted \$10,000 in scholarship aid after the painting was chosen to represent Sussex County at the N.J. Teen Arts Festival. The opportunities that the county festival brings local teens is apparent.

“Those who submit visual art, video, creative writing, or who perform and participate in workshops are expanding upon skills,” said Cosentino. “Teen artists are given the opportunity to exhibit, publish, or perform before a variety of audiences and professionals. We encourage teenagers today to become the adults of tomorrow who will sustain the arts as either artists and or patrons of the arts.”



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Spring Productions Enrich Campus Life

By Robin Gindhart
College Hill Writer

The spring productions presented by the Alpha Arts Institute at Sussex County Community College in Newton were an all-around success and brought together a myriad of different components, both within and outside of the school.

The most recent production was the musical, “The Theory of Relativity,” that had its opening night on March 30 and was shown through April 2. Stephen Davis was the director and Professor Mariann Cook was the music director.



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“The musical incorporated projection and lights in a thematically captivating way that enhances the song cycle,” says Director Allison Ognibene. These new technical features were made possible by the recently installed cyclorama, a background device that displays multimedia projections.

As Ognibene puts it, “the show captures the experiences of young adults/ college students.” This was a great opportunity not only for the cast members and the audience overall, but specifically for a large portion of the SCCC demographic.

The second production of the semester, “Sylvia” by A.R. Gurney, included a collaboration with the non-profit company, North Star Theater Company. It was held in the Performing Arts Center from Feb. 17-19 and Feb. 24-26 and overall, attracted about 300 attendees. The production team was made up of 10 students and two of them performed in the show.

Ognibene shares how one of the lead actors had an emergency when her daughter got in a horse-riding accident, but thankfully Ognibene had double cast, so there was someone to fill in for her. “If I did not have a double cast, we would not have been able to run the show,”

Ognibene had double cast, so there was someone to fill in for her. “If I did not have a double cast, we would not have been able to run the show,” says Ognibene, and it gives more people a chance to perform. This points out how COVID changed a lot of the ways in which people do things because that’s why Ognibene started double-casting, and she’s very grateful she did. The main idea of “Sylvia” is that the dog, named Sylvia, comes between a married couple, Kate and Greg who don’t feel the same about the dog. It explored many interesting topics that were “cutting-edge,” as Ognibene puts it, during 1995 when it was created and many of them have resurfaced now. This includes women’s issues and questioning/exploring gender.

“What was really fascinating for me to watch was the actors really getting into the development of their character,” says Ognibene. They evolved over time, and this contributed to the success and the authenticity of the show.

There was cursing in one part of the play that caused a couple to walk out; viewer discretion was given for when people walked in, but Ognibene shares how they should’ve included it on the tickets as well.



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Otherwise, the audience laughed and reacted very positively to this show. Ognibene also describes how the timing of the production was a bit difficult to manage because it was first chosen around the holidays, so extending the rehearsal time is something she would do differently in the future, especially with two casts. At the start of the spring semester, the first production was “Macbeth” by William Shakespeare, which was a Centenary University play brought over to SCCC as a way for the schools to collaborate. It was shown at SCCC Feb. 11 and 12 in the Performing Arts Center; and at Centenary in Hackettstown, Feb. 2 through Feb. 6. Stephen Davis, the associate professor of theater arts at Centenary who directed “Macbeth,” says this production was a “win-win all across the board.” It’s a part of the new collaboration with SCCC to encourage students to transfer into the theater program at Centenary in a seamless way. It also allows the students from both schools to work



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in a seamless way. It also allows the students from both schools to work together and have “cross pollination,” as Davis calls it, including how SCCC student Anthony Guerra did the lighting. There were 14 Centenary students in the cast and SCCC students were invited to audition, but none ended up doing so, according to Davis.

Looking to maintain audience engagement, the production was a bridge version of “Macbeth,” so it was a 90-minute show and had no intermission. This production wasn’t as promoted as other ones, so there was a much bigger turnout at Centenary than at SCCC. There were about 50 people present on opening night and about 25 on the second night at SCCC; whereas at Centenary, 500 people attended one weekend and other shows were sold out.

“With a 300-seat house, we all realized that there was a missed opportunity,” says Davis. It was their first time doing this though and it was still a win overall, especially in regard to the educational opportunities it presented to students. For the Centenary students, Davis says, “it was a great opportunity for them to perform in a brand-new space in a new way.”

Another positive aspect was that all of the proceeds went to expanding the Alpha Arts Institute, which is a hub of creativity at SCCC established in 2022 that features professional artists in the visual, performing and literary arts.

The last production of the spring semester is expected to be “Play On!” written by Rick Abbot and its showtimes are set for May 5 to May 7. This one is a different experience because it’s a play set within a play. It’s a farce, so it’s a comedy that entertains with highly exaggerated situations.



SPORTS NEWS



Women's Basketball Team Searches for New Players

By Robin Gindhart
College Hill Writer

This spring, the women's basketball team at Sussex County Community College in Newton had a successful season, despite having a rather small number of players, by working hard and



Photo by Edward Nieuzytek

focusing on teamwork. "Teamwork was the key to our success," says John O'Hara, the head coach of the SCCC Women's Basketball Team. "Our team stuck together all year, fought through injuries and made sure we had a friendly atmosphere."

The team ended the season with 11 wins and 14 losses and made it to the first round of the playoffs, but if it weren't for some teams canceling on them, its record would've been even better. The team started off with only two players and went up to nine, but then one had a season ending injury, so it ended up with eight.

Although this small number didn't discourage the team from being successful, recruiting more players for the future is still a top priority for O'Hara.

"I have been recruiting day and night to improve our numbers for next season," O'Hara says.

On top of that, he is looking to further the team's success. "We are working on our basketball skills and have a plan to work hard in the off season," says O'Hara.

This initiative is impressive considering that this is O'Hara's first year coaching at the college level. He previously was a basketball coach at the high school level for more than 20 years.

The players on this team were also able to maintain their academic lives and the newly implemented student athlete study halls played a part in this. There are a few showing interest in continuing their athletic prowess at a four-year college. Overall, O'Hara shares his satisfaction with this team's determination.

"I have enjoyed that our team stuck together and competed til the last buzzer sounded in our last game," says O'Hara.

Softball Team on Pitch for Having Successful Season

By Robin Gindhart
College Hill Writer

The softball team at Sussex County Community College in Newton this spring is heading towards great success and reaching its goals of making it to the playoffs/ championship game, while also growing together as the season progresses. By the end of March, the team had 6 wins and 3 losses, and there were 22 more games to go. There are 11 women on the team, but this relatively small group doesn't let that stop them from achieving greatness.

"We have a smaller roster with a mighty appetite for reaching our goals," says Jamie Borger, who has been coaching for five years at SCCC, but is in her second year of being head coach. They're on track by staying united and strong and by continuously fighting to win each game.

"Some of the great strengths of the team are their ability to bounce back from hardship, their willingness to grow and their coachability," adds Borger.

The whole team has many strengths, including the captains of this season: Sophomore Raeann Teague, who plays third base and pitcher; and Freshman Natalie Armstrong, catcher; and "Sydney Grifone who had her first collegiate No Hitter game against Monroe Bronx, and is also hitting 481% with a .704% slugging percentage," adds Borger.

This team is especially exciting and impressive to Borger because it goes above and beyond just playing the sport well. The players show true care for each other and their coaches, and "they really are a good group of individuals with high values and great morals," says Borger, who "have a hunger to better themselves as players and people. She further explains that "we can teach softball skills in a matter of a semester but to have basic human kindness and sport leadership is exciting for me." On top of that, the players are keeping up with their academics and the new

student-athlete study hall is mandatory for them, showing how Borger stresses the importance of their academic lives. For a lot of them, this will be their last stop in college athletics, but about half of them are planning on going to the next level at a four-year college. For next season, they'll be moving from NJCAA Division III to NJCAA Division II, which means tougher competition, so they are looking to recruit some of the top prospects in the Sussex County area. The future is looking up for softball at SCCC because the coaches have "already started to recruit those types of athletes with that mindset for greatness, so the transition should be smooth," says Borger.



Photo by Edward Nieuzytek

Wrestling Team Pins Expectations

By Chris Arnold
College Hill Writer



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A student wakes up for his team's tournament, he hops on the bus to find that only five of the

10 people on the team showed up. This situation is similar to what Sussex County Community College's wrestling program dealt with all year. Low numbers meant little to coach Nick Barzano and his five freshman wrestlers.

Barzano was hired this past summer as SCCC's head coach for the wrestling team. The team he walked into had no wrestlers or any returning wrestlers.

"We had a bit of a late jump recruiting but were still able to fill five of 10 weights needed on a team," said Barzano. "This year's team consisted of all freshmen: Joe Casella wrestled at 147 pounds; Nik Pagano at 157; Michael Castles at 165; Noah Ripley at 197; and Shane Saulnier is our heavyweight, at 285 pounds." With the minimum number of wrestlers allowed to compete, SCCC's wrestling team stayed competitive and made history. The team qualified and competed

in Garden State Athletic Conference (GSAC) Championships for the first time in school history. This tournament is invite-only, and the wrestling proved they were worth the invitation.

Also, a school record of four wrestlers advanced to the National tournament in Iowa, and the first dual meet win in school history was recorded this past year, all under the coaching of Barzano.

"We placed third in the GSAC tournament," said Barzano. "This acknowledged us as the third-best team in the state among all other county colleges. We also had the program's first-ever wins this year. We sent a school record four wrestlers to Nationals, beating the former record of one."

As far as the National tournament is concerned, unfortunately, none of the four wrestlers sent to wrestle placed in the top eight. Accomplishing a

(Continued from Page 5)

top-eight finish at the National tournament grants a wrestler All-American status. They all were eliminated a round or two before placing. Castles made it the closest to the placing round before being knocked out. "The trip to Iowa for Nationals was an amazing experience for our

wrestlers and our program," said Barzano. "We are very grateful for the support we received from the college, everything was taken care of, allowing the wrestlers to stay worry-free and focus on the task ahead. Our freshman wrestlers learned much on this trip to help them know

what to expect next year. It was great to be out there with the best in the country and have Sussex being represented as that as well. Everyone enjoyed their time on the trip and it was a great way to end a fantastic season."

Alpha Arts Institute Enhances Art At SCCC

Exhibitions, performances, lecture series — Sussex County Community College in Newton has set the stage for greatness when it comes to the arts!

"The Alpha Arts Institute's inaugural season is transforming and strengthening the arts in Sussex County," says Daniel Cosentino, dean of Arts and Humanities and director of the Alpha Arts Institute at SCCC. "We have already opened gallery exhibitions and presented theater performances, and now we are hosting the artist lecture series.

"We are quite excited to have received our first grant from the Sussex County Arts and Heritage Foundation supporting our efforts to serve as a dynamic learning environment for both the college and community, as well as an important arts destination in New Jersey and within the tri-state area," adds Cosentino.



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The Institute is currently planning its first Festival of the Arts, bringing together all disciplines of the arts in a three-day festival slated at the college the weekend on May 5-7. The institute is also organizing its first-ever film festival, complementing the college's film program in collaboration with community leaders in film.

Most recently, the institute opened the Graphic Arts Faculty Expo featuring works by the college's esteemed Graphic Arts professors. The exhibit ran from Feb. 17 through March 14, in Gallery C on the college's campus.

Alpha Arts Institute welcomed Broadway actress Charissa Bertels for it's first Lecture Series, which was held on Wednesday, March 1 in the Student Center Theater.



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Another event was the photography exhibition, "Still Waiting for Normal: Cuba and the United States," and a collaborative performance of A.R. Gurney's "Sylvia" with North Star Theater Company that ran the weekends of Feb. 17-19

and 24-26 and Jake Jackson's one-man Shakespeare show in October. To learn more about upcoming events that Alpha Arts Institute at



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Sussex County Community College is holding, visit <https://www.sussex.edu/community/alpha-arts-institute/>. Funding has been made available in part by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, through the State/County Partnership Block Grant Program, as administered by the Sussex County Arts and Heritage Council.

The Alpha Arts Institute, founded in 2022, operates under the Sussex County Community College 501(c)(3) of the US Internal Revenue Code, a not-for-profit Higher Education institution in the town of Newton, County of Sussex, New Jersey, USA. The Alpha Arts Institute serves the Visual, Performing and Literary Arts communities locally and regionally, with national and

international partners, by providing a high-quality premium platform for artists, arts professionals, students, citizens, residents and guests.



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The Alpha Arts Institute has five main areas of focus to support original Contemporary Art and traditional forms: Performances, exhibitions, lectures and salons, Alpha Arts Film Festival, and a yearly Festival of the Arts. Alpha Arts Institute hosts artists-in-residence, visiting scholars, and provides venues for collaborations and partnerships through professionally-guided and administrative support of the college.

The Alpha Arts Institute is founded by Cosentino, an artist/educator currently serving as dean of Arts and Humanities at SCCC, together with colleagues of the Visual and Performing Arts.

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Sussex County Community College Alpha Arts Players at SCCC Present **alpha** PERFORMANCES AT SCCC

AESOP & His Fabled Friends

Illustration by Joanna Covert
Designed by Professor James Jeffrey

Adapted and Presented by the Theater Workshop Class
SCCC Visual and Performing Arts Department

TICKETS ARE \$5
Email aegribene@sussex.edu
or call 973-300-2184
SCCC Performing Arts Center
One College Hill Drive, Newton, NJ 07860

SHOW DATES:
Thursday, May 4, at 12 p.m.
Saturday, May 6, at 11 a.m.
Thursday, May 11, at 12 p.m.

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