



RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY
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Compassionate, clinical, student-centered care takes the lead at Ramapo College of New Jersey

MAHWAH, N.J. – Compassionate, clinical, student-centered care has been the focus of Ramapo College’s responses to the health crisis caused by the Covid-19 virus pandemic. Ramapo College of New Jersey took quick action to implement initiatives and programs to ensure the health and safety of its students and employees. This semester the College has launched on-campus Covid-19 testing, a Care Manager program, and mental wellness support, and it has enhanced its real-time dashboard which tracks Covid-19 activity at the College and among its members. These efforts, among others, have proven successful in both slowing the spread of the virus among students and fostering student wellness and success.

The College partnered with Visit Healthcare, an independent vendor, to administer free [on-campus Covid-19 testing](#) for asymptomatic residential students and student-athletes in competition. The program began on January 28 in step with the start of spring classes at the Mahwah campus. Students who receive a positive test result isolate on campus; and those who are considered to have had close contact with a positive-tested student are required to quarantine, as recommended by the CDC.

Students in isolation/quarantine on campus then receive added support from a College Care Manager, a specialized group of Ramapo employees who assist students with non-medical needs, including food, academic supplies, and access to counseling and related support services as needed. Care Managers stay connected with the student throughout the duration of their isolation/quarantine and also help them transition back to collegiate life. In addition to the care managers, the College’s health professionals also conduct daily assessments of students’ medical and mental health needs. Associate Director of Health Services Debra Lukacsko, (BA, MSN, RN, APN) provides much of this medical assistance and works in partnership with the College’s team of counseling and mental health professionals.

Ramapo College has redeployed some of its employees to serve as contact tracers. Trained by the State of the New Jersey and the CDC, members of the College’s Contact Tracing Team track and report cases in real time to the College’s [COVID-19 dashboard](#). Further, the tracers upload

important data to the Dashboard on how many employees or students are in isolation/quarantine, and distinguishes between those individuals who have been on campus and those who have been studying or working off-campus.

Melissa Van Der Wall, Dean of Students and Chair of the College's Pandemic Assessment Team, which meets several times each week and implements these initiatives, said the testing and other safety measures have resulted in effective progress. "The College's team of professional staff has worked together to ensure that our students remain healthy and receive the appropriate supports so they can complete their academic studies without interruption," said Van Der Wall. "This unprecedented situation can take its toll on, not only the physical health, but also the mental and emotional wellbeing of individuals. The College's Counseling Department, in collaboration with the Student Government Association, has ramped up its efforts to make available programs and services for all students to help them cope with their changing needs."

Among those efforts are creating a COVID-19 Stress Management Group, Drop-In Support for Students of Color, Grief Support Group, and Chronic Illness/Pain Group. Self-Care and Stress Reduction Workshops, which were offered in December, will also be offered during the spring semester.

"All the work and planning have been a concerted endeavor and, at times, an arduous process by the entire College community," said Van Der Wall. "However, our main focus has always been and remains ensuring our students continue toward wellness and success."

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Ramapo College of New Jersey is the state's premier public liberal arts college and is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and international and intercultural understanding. The College is ranked #1 among New Jersey public institutions by College Choice, has been named one of the 50 Most Beautiful College Campuses in America by *CondéNast Traveler*, and is recognized as a top college by *U.S. News & World Report*, *Kiplinger's*, Princeton Review and *Money* magazine, among others. Ramapo College is also distinguished as a Career Development College of Distinction by *CollegesofDistinction.com*, boasts the best campus housing in New Jersey on *Niche.com*, and is designated a "Military Friendly College" in Victoria Media's *Guide to Military Friendly Schools*.

Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, data science, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include business, education, nursing and social work. In addition, the College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels, and offers graduate programs leading to master's degrees in Accounting, Business Administration, Creative Music Technology, Data Science, Educational Technology, Educational Leadership, Nursing, Social Work and Special Education, as well as a post-master's Doctor of Nursing Practice.