



**RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**Office of Institutional Advancement**  
**Press Release**  
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## **Governor Phil Murphy Joins Ramapo College Officials for New Learning Commons Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony**

MAHWAH, N.J. – On September 22, Ramapo College of New Jersey held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new state-of-the-art Peter P. Mercer Learning Commons, which offers an array of resources that go beyond those of a traditional campus library. Governor Phil Murphy was among the guests at the ceremony held on the Mahwah, N.J. campus.

“When I was running for governor, I said that we could no longer tolerate our young people being New Jersey’s greatest export. Moreover, I was incensed that other states’ universities were advertising to our high school students on billboards along our highways. I knew something would have to change,” Governor Murphy stated. “The Peter P. Mercer Learning Commons will be a meaningful and lasting addition to the Ramapo College landscape. It will be another reason for students to look within our own state for their higher education future. This is a game-changer for Ramapo and a game-changer for New Jersey.”

He noted that the Gross Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies will be among other centers located within the Learning Commons. “Before I held this office, I had the distinct honor to serve as our nation’s ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany. I am a student of that country’s history. Ensuring that the Holocaust is never forgotten is deeply, deeply personal for me. We know that to shape the future, one must never forget the past. This center, in particular, is vital to this process. And this college is just as vital to the future of higher education in New Jersey.”

Ramapo President Cindy R. Jebb, who was named the fifth president of the College in July, said, “The Peter P. Mercer Learning Commons is the result of a bold idea, the kind and thoughtful nourishment of that idea by its namesake, and a comprehensive team effort that we so deservedly recognize today. While my time at Ramapo is only nearing three months, I have already been impressed by the vibrant generation of ideas and our community’s shared pursuit

of achievement. This project was a seedling in 2015. That seedling took root, it grew, and it will bloom, I am sure, for generations of future Ramapo students.”

Dr. Angela Cristini, Vice President of Institutional Advancement and Executive Director of the Ramapo College Foundation welcomed the attendees, and acknowledged special guests Bergen County Executive James Tedesco, Senator Holly Schepisi, Assemblyman Gordon Johnson, Mahwah Mayor James Wysocki, Commissioner Mary Amoroso, and Gene LePore of the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities.

Dr. Cristini acknowledged the significant support of \$15 million for the project, which was secured through the State of New Jersey Higher Education Capital Financing Grant program for the renovation of the George T. Potter Library and the addition of a new Learning Commons. “That grant and the generous support from so many others has led to this special day,” she said. “When we broke ground a little more than two years ago, there was a vision of a place where students could learn and gather and fully experience college life. There was a vision of a place where staff and faculty and the community could meet and share ideas. Today, thanks to the dedication and hard work of so many people, that vision is now a reality.”

Ramapo College Foundation Board of Governors Chair Roy Putrino applauded the fundraising efforts of the Goals in Common Campaign, noting that each donor was a “building block of the College Foundation.” He added, “This beautiful building is proof of the power of community and teamwork.”

Board of Trustees Chair Susan A. Vallario and her husband Nick Vallario were the lead donors for the project and participated in the project task force since its inception in 2016. Given naming rights, they announced in November 2020 that the building would be named for former Ramapo President Peter P. Mercer, who could not be in attendance for the ceremony. Chair Vallario read a statement from Dr. Mercer, which in part said... “I want to express my profound thanks to the Trustees, and especially to Chair Vallario, for bestowing on me this singular honor. In many ways, our expectations for the Learning Commons are congruent with those held by the builders of the Great Library of Alexandria more than one thousand years ago. Far from being merely a depository for ancient text and materials, it was widely known as a vibrant center for many subjects of academic study and debate. Perhaps even more important, was the diversity of scholarly inquiry that was supported by the Great Library patrons. It goes without saying, that the Learning Commons project has involved hundreds of supporters from donors to volunteers and I am grateful for your efforts.”

New Jersey Secretary of Higher Education Dr. Brian Bridges said the Learning Commons will serve as a “beacon of innovation and academic discovery... for today’s students and those that will follow.”

Construction of the state-of-the-art facility, which began in 2019, added approximately 20,000 square feet to the College's existing George T. Potter Library, making the Learning Commons approximately 80,000 square feet in size. The remodeled facility features nearly 800 book shelving units with space for more than 24,000 lineal feet of books and printed materials.

Among the Learning Commons features are:

- \*High-tech classroom and laboratory space;
- \*19 group study rooms, 4 media rooms, and dedicated individual study space on each floor;
- \*On-site technology resources, a design laboratory, and a Maker Space;
- \*Lounge seating, an on-site café, and 18 gender neutral restrooms;

The Learning Commons will also be home to the Ramapo College Archives as well as several of the College's Centers.

The building's environmentally sustainable design brings ample natural lighting on all four floors, including a spectacular glass oculus, which is the focal point on entrance. Nearly all of the landscape plantings are native species, including 110 trees, 170 shrubs and more than 12,000 ground cover plants. The entire building offers stunning views of the Ramapo Mountains and surrounding region.

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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; is recognized as the state's top college on the list of Best Disability Schools by *Great Value Colleges*; was 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.

