



**RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**Office of Media and Public Relations**  
**Press Release**  
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*Contact: Angela Daidone*  
[adaidon1@ramapo.edu](mailto:adaidon1@ramapo.edu)

## **Ramapo College of New Jersey Proudly Celebrates the Class of 2021**

MAHWAH, N.J. – Ramapo College of New Jersey celebrated its Class of 2021 in the first of a series of small outdoor ceremonies on May 17 on the College campus in Mahwah, N.J. Additional ceremonies are scheduled for May 18-20. Master's degree recipients will be recognized on May 21.

With "Pomp & Circumstance" playing festively across the 300-acre public campus, graduates and their guests proudly processed through the campus's iconic Arch, symbolizing their completed academic journey and entry into life beyond Ramapo. Immediately following the Arching ceremony, everyone took their places on the College's Bandshell lawn. The degrees were conferred by the President. The Provost led the graduates in the tassel change. And, each graduate was individually recognized as they crossed the Bandshell stage. The events were live-streamed throughout.

Ramapo President Peter P. Mercer, who began his tenure in July 2005 and will be retiring on June 30, delivered his remarks at the Bandshell.

"It has been my privilege to serve as your president and to come to know many of you over the past several years whether it be through your leadership, classroom work and presentations, your art, music or vocal performances, or your civic and extracurricular engagement," said President Mercer. "For me and my wife Jackie, being a part of Ramapo College for the last 16 years has meant being a part of the future, namely your future. Several people have asked me recently, 'Peter, how does it feel—this being your last semester with Ramapo College?' I find myself responding to them, 'This may be my last semester *at* Ramapo College, but it is not my final semester *with* Ramapo College.'"

President Mercer concluded his remarks, saying, "This place, its people, its energies, and its quirks, it has become a part of me and I hope the same is true for all of you. We may leave this campus today, but we are not leaving Ramapo College. We are better together and Ramapo will always be with you."

The deans of each of the College's five schools addressed the audience, and Ramapo Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Susan Gaulden presented the candidates for undergraduate degrees.

Dr. Vernon C. Walton, Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church of Vienna, VA, Past Chair of the Ramapo College Board of Trustees, delivered the keynote address via virtual message, offering the graduates

words of encouragement to “learn how to win over adversity” and challenging them to “appreciate and value each other.”

“Whether you are graduating with high honors or whether you needed extra credit or extra prayers, the good news is that you have crossed the finished line,” Walton said. “You have done the work and you have done it despite the challenges of this COVID19 environment. You have persevered through a shutdown. You overcame the challenges of virtual classrooms...Despite separation and isolation from classmates, family members and routine college life, you have endured. And, for that, I am honored to join in with family members and friends and celebrate you for a job well done.”

Walton thanked President Mercer for his “stellar leadership” and for helping to usher Ramapo College into “a new era.”

“Dr. Mercer, you have expanded its territory and enlarged its footprint. You have made this campus an institution more accessible to the broader community. You have done this with excellence and without sacrificing its standards and reputation.”

Board of Trustees Chair Susan A. Vallario offered a virtual congratulatory message. Undergraduate student speaker Ashley Sarah Mathew and graduate student speaker Bianca Maria Grande '16 also addressed their fellow graduates via virtual message. All videos can be viewed here:

<https://www.ramapo.edu/commencement/>

The College ensured that all Covid-19 safety measures were adhered to according to state and CDC guidelines.

#### **Some facts about the Ramapo College of New Jersey Class of 2021:**

1,283 total undergraduates (January 2021, June 2021, August 2021)

286 total master’s recipients (including August 2021 candidates)

34 international students representing Brazil, Bulgaria, Burma, Honduras, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka

127 students affiliated with the Office of Specialized Services (OSS)

71 Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) Scholars

11 Veteran students (including dependents of armed forces service members)

2 Ramapo College employees

37 Degree Completion Graduates (including August 2021 candidates)

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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 *CondeNast 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.