



RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY
Office of Institutional Advancement
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Ramapo College Receives \$455K to Support Sustainability Programs

MAHWAH, N.J. – Ramapo College of New Jersey will receive \$455,000 in funding to support a special environmental sustainability program that will create a vertical hydroponic farm and allow for the creation of jobs for young adults with autism as well as a valuable learning experience for Ramapo College students. The grant, included in the \$1.5 trillion Fiscal Year 2022 government funding bill recently passed in the Senate, was announced by U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) who worked to secure federal funding for critical New Jersey programs, projects, and priorities.

“We are so grateful for this funding which will provide valuable work experience for young people with autism as well as Ramapo students,” said Dr. Angela Cristini, Professor of Biology. “The vertical farm will help prepare the workforce for this growing industry in New Jersey.”

Ramapo College and the REED Foundation for Autism entered into a partnership that provides job training, volunteer opportunities, and paid employment for adults with autism so that they can live a more independent, fulfilling life. The College will work with REED to incorporate existing courses for the certificate program, which will be open to both higher-functioning young adults with autism and currently enrolled Ramapo College students. Funding will also be used pay up to 10 adults with autism to participate in paid job training in the farm.

Details for the funding include:

- *Purchase and installation of repurposed shipping containers that have been converted into pods for vertical farming;
- *First year's operating costs (seed, growing medium, fertilizer, utilities, and salary and fringe benefits for the farm manager);
- *Incorporate existing Ramapo College courses to create a certificate in environmental sustainability, and to pay up to 10 participants with autism who will work in the farm.

“The projects funded in the government spending bill will provide major benefits to communities across our state,” said Sen. Booker in a release. “I fought to ensure this funding was included and am grateful for the organizations, community leaders, and elected officials who joined together to advance these vital initiatives. As these projects all across New Jersey move toward becoming a reality, I look forward to seeing the positive impact they will have on local and regional economies and the improvements they will bring to the quality of life for New Jersey residents.”

In total, Booker secured more than \$72 million in funding for New Jersey projects detailed [HERE](#).

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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, Applied Mathematics, Business Administration, Contemporary Instructional Design, Computer Science, Creative Music Technology, Data Science, Educational Leadership, Nursing, Social Work and Special Education, as well as a Doctor of Nursing Practice.

