



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 22, 2026

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\$4 Million Matching Gift to Ramapo College Honors Lasting Friendship, Names School of Arts, Humanities, and Education

Historic match from Hudson County couple doubles transformational gift to \$8 million, honoring a lifelong friendship and establishing an endowed programming fund for the newly named school.



MAHWAH, N.J. – Building on the largest single gift in Ramapo College of New Jersey's history, the Kocis Family Fund has committed \$4 million to the College, matching [the historic gift](#) made by their longtime friends, Susan and the late Nick Vallario, in 2025. The combined \$8 million philanthropic investment strengthens support for student scholarships, academic programming and innovative initiatives at New Jersey's premier public liberal arts college.

The gift honors a decades-long friendship between Jim and Alice Kocis and Susan and Nick Vallario, rooted in their shared commitment to education and public service. The College also announced the naming of the **Susan and Nick Vallario School of Arts, Humanities, and Education** during an on-campus celebration on October 21, recognizing the Vallarios' generosity and enduring commitment to Ramapo.

The \$4 million matching gift advances Ramapo's institutional priorities through three significant investments:

- **\$2 Million Presidential Scholarship Endowment Match:** Matches the Vallarios' \$2 million contribution to the Susan and Nick Vallario Endowment for Presidential



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Scholarships, bringing the combined endowed scholarship investment to \$4 million. The funding will help Ramapo attract and support high-achieving New Jersey students, expanding access to educational opportunities while encouraging talented students to pursue their education in the state.

- **\$1 Million Endowment for Arts, Humanities and Education:** Establishes the Dean's Programming Fund for the newly named [Susan and Nick Vallario School of Arts, Humanities, and Education](#). Following an initial year of investment, the endowed fund is expected to provide approximately \$50,000 annually to support academic programming and opportunities for students, faculty, and community engagement.
- **\$1 Million for Presidential New Priorities:** Provides current-use funding to help launch and advance three initiatives focused on student achievement, technological innovation and experiential learning:
 - **Office of Prestigious Fellowships and Scholarships:** Expanding advising and mentorship to help Ramapo students pursue competitive national and international scholarships and fellowships.
 - **Digital Innovation Institute:** Supporting the development of a new institute focused on digital innovation, emerging technologies and interdisciplinary learning, building upon the Vallarios' earlier \$1 million commitment.
 - **Center for Data, Mathematical, and Computational Sciences:** Preparing students to meet evolving workforce demands through interdisciplinary learning, real-world experiences, and the development of technical, communication, and leadership skills.

"Access, discernment, and national distinction are priorities that create the conditions for ground-up innovation and high-impact programs across the College," said Ramapo College President Cindy R. Jebb, Ph.D. She noted that investing in these areas strengthens faculty-student collaboration, expands discovery, and equips students to make a meaningful impact in their communities and beyond. Reflecting on the gift, President Jebb added, "To know the Vallarios is to know humanity, and the Kocis family's generosity in their honor is a profound extension of this humanity."

The Kocis family's relationship with Ramapo began in 2018 through their friendship with the Vallarios. Their earlier philanthropy supported the Peter P. Mercer Learning Commons, including the naming of a terrace in memory of members of the Kocis family. In 2020, Susan and Nick Vallario chose to [name the Learning Commons](#) in honor of Ramapo's fourth president, Peter P. Mercer.



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Now, six years later, Jim and Alice are honoring Susan and Nick through the naming of the School of Arts, Humanities, and Education.

"What makes these gifts so meaningful is that it reflects two families who believe deeply in Ramapo's ability to transform lives," said Christopher Romano, Ed.D., executive director of the Ramapo College Foundation and vice president of strategic enrollment, outreach and engagement. "Their generosity will open doors for talented students, provide lasting support for academic innovation and anchor Ramapo as a resource, and strategic partner for the region and state. It's an extraordinary investment not only in Ramapo, but in the students and communities we serve."

Together, the Kocis and Vallario families' historic \$8 million commitment strengthens Ramapo College's ability to advance its strategic plan, [Boldly Ascending](#), through enduring investments in student scholarships, academic programming and innovative initiatives that will benefit generations of students.

To learn more about Ramapo College's strategic plan and academic programs, visit ramapo.edu.

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ABOUT RAMAPO COLLEGE

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 comprehensive college is situated among the beautiful Ramapo Mountains, is within commuting distance to New York City, was named one of the 50 Most Beautiful College Campuses in America by *Condé Nast Traveler*, and boasts the best on-campus housing in New Jersey per Niche.com. 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.