Ramapo College of New Jersey

Ranked by U.S. News & World Report as fifth in the north in the Top Public Universities-Master's category, Ramapo College of New Jersey is sometimes mistaken for a private college. This is, in part, due to its unique interdisciplinary academic structure, its size of more than 5,800 students and its pastoral setting in the foothills of the Ramapo Mountains on the New Jersey/New York border.

Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include nursing and social work. In addition, Ramapo College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels. The College also offers three graduate programs as well as articulated programs with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, New York Chiropractic College, New York University College of Dentistry, SUNY State College of Optometry and New York College of Podiatric Medicine.

Undergraduate students choose to concentrate their studies in one of five schools with more than 700 course offerings and 40 academic programs. Ramapo College boasts an average student/faculty ratio of 18:1 and average class size of 23, affording students the opportunity to develop close ties to the College's exceptional faculty.

The College's mission is focused on the four "pillars" of a Ramapo education: international, intercultural, interdisciplinary and experiential, all of which are incorporated throughout the curriculum and extracurriculum. The international mission is further accomplished through a wide range of study aboard and student exchange links with institutions all over the world through the New Jersey State Consortium for International Studies. Additional experiential programs include internships, co-op and service learning.

A campus-wide building program during recent years has resulted in the completion of the Anisfield School of Business academic facility, a central feature of the main entrance to the campus; the Bill Bradley Sports and Recreation Center, with its 2,200-seat arena, fitness center, climbing wall, track and dance/aerobics studio; the Overlook and Laurel residence halls and the Village apartment complex. The Angelica and Russ Berrie Center for Performing and Visual Arts, completed in 1999, houses performance theaters, art galleries and specialized spaces devoted to fine arts, computer art, photography, theater, dance and music. The Sharp Sustainability Education Center and the Salameno Spiritual Center will be completed in 2009.

In addition to Ramapo's ranking in U.S. News, the College recently was recognized by two national publications. An article in the December 2008 issue of Kiplinger's magazine named Ramapo College among the top 100 public colleges and universities. Ramapo College also is one of 212 institutions recommended by The Princeton Review in the "Best in the Northeast" section in the 2009 edition of The Best Northeastern Colleges.

Dr. Peter Philip Mercer became the College's fourth president on July 1, 2005. The College is governed by a Board of Trustees who are appointed by the Governor of the State. The Reverend Dr. Vernon C. Walton is the chairman of the board.
Jeffrey Zaslow

Jeffrey Zaslow is a columnist for The Wall Street Journal and co-author of the current international bestseller The Last Lecture.

His column, “Moving On,” focuses on life transitions and often attracts wide media interest. That was certainly the case in September 2007, after Zaslow attended the final lecture of dying Carnegie Mellon Professor Randy Pausch.

Zaslow's column about the talk sparked a worldwide phenomenon. Tens of millions of people have since viewed footage of the lecture on the Internet and on television.

The book by Pausch and Zaslow, now being translated into 36 languages, is a #1 New York Times best-seller and has topped best-seller lists around the world.

In 2000, Zaslow received the Will Rogers Humanitarian Award, given to a noted humorist and columnist. Zaslow was honored for using his column to run programs that benefited 47,000 disadvantaged Chicago children.

His annual singles party for charity, “Zazz Bash,” drew 7,000 readers a year and resulted in 78 marriages.

He majored in creative writing. His wife, Sherry Margolis, is a TV news anchor.

Zaslow was drawn to the story of Randy Pausch because he has created a beat unlike almost any other in journalism. While The Wall Street Journal covers the heart of the financial world, Zaslow tends to the hearts of its readers.

There are a thousand emotionally charged transitions that people face in their lives, and most come without a roadmap. That’s the territory of his column — from finding a spouse to losing a job, from a child’s first crush to an old person’s last wishes.

In 2003 and 2005, Zaslow’s column was named the best general-interest column in a newspaper with more than 100,000 circulation by the National Society of Newspaper Columnists. In 2008, he received the Distinguished Column Writing Award from the New York Newspaper Publishers Association.

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Zaslow is currently writing a nonfiction book about 11 women, now in their mid-40s, who grew up together in Ames, Iowa and have been friends all their lives. It is set for publication in 2009.

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A Philadelphia native, Zaslow is a 1980 graduate of Carnegie Mellon, where he majored in creative writing. His wife, Sherry Margolis, is a TV news anchor with WJBK in Detroit. They have three daughters.

First-Year Seminar Summer Reading Program

The Ramapo College summer reading experience serves to engage new students in a common academic activity that accentuates critical reading, discussion and writing skills. The summer reading is a common thread among all 42 courses in the First-Year Seminar Program.

The summer reading experience is not restricted to first-year students. The entire College is encouraged to participate by reading the selected book and discussing it so the campus might share a common academic experience. The summer reading for the class of 2013 is The Last Lecture by Dr. Randy Pausch with Jeffrey Zaslow.

The Last Lecture is the title of a talk given by many professors upon their retirement. In this lecture, they are asked to consider their demise and to ruminate on what matters most to them. And while they speak, audiences can’t help but mull the same questions: What wisdom would we impart to the world if we know it was our last chance? What is our legacy? When Randy Pausch, a Computer Science professor at Carnegie Mellon, was asked to give such a lecture, he didn’t have to imagine it as his last. He had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. The lecture he gave — “Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams” — wasn’t about dying. It was about the importance of overcoming obstacles, of enabling the dreams of others, of seizing every moment. It was a summation of everything Randy had come to believe. It was about living. Jeffrey Zaslow attended the last lecture and chronicled the last intentions and advice of a dying man, which helped fuel interest world-wide.

All first-year students will use The Last Lecture as a guide to explore means of self-expression and self-reflection, to understand the role of achieving childhood dreams in their own lives and to analyze how they face challenges and criticisms. Our first-year students will learn what Randy Pausch meant when he said, “Brick walls are there for a reason. They let us prove how badly we want things.”