

Class of 2025

Commencement Program

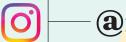
Big Goals

Accomplishments

It's the Baron way.

Congratulations, grads! You put your heart and mind into completing your degree and are now on your way to realizing your dreams. Cheers to a future filled with endless possibilities and exciting adventures.

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The Program Pod Graduation Special

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Rowan College at Burlington County

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Land Acknowledgement

National Anthem

Matthew Johnson Emma Graser Joni Gendrachi

Acting President's Greeting – Dr. David Spang

Introduction of Dignitaries

Board Chair Remarks - Sean Kennedy

Student Speakers -

Omolayo Akinwole – *President's Award Winner* Sherria Hannah – *President's Award Winner* Yvonne Tai – *Valedictorian*

Presentation of Candidates

Dr. Karen Montalto, Dean of Health Sciences

Dr. Francis Canedo, Dean of Humanities, Business, and Social Sciences

Dr. Taziah Kenney, Associate Dean of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

Recessional



Rowan College at Burlington County COMMENCEMENT Academic Academia

PRESIDENT'S AWARD | Omolayo Akinwole



For Rowan College at Burlington County student Omolayo Akinwole, transferring from Landmark University in Nigeria after earning her bachelor's to a university in the United States became more than an academic endeavour; it has evolved into an unexpected journey of reinvention.

Akinwole's first few months at the University of Albany in New York, where she was to work towards her master's in public health, were supposed to be an exciting time in a new country. Instead, she struggled to find her footing on campus, knowing a passion for nursing lay deep within her. With a short deadline, she had to transfer quickly and chose a community college in South Jersey.

But she didn't feel a connection there, either. A second search for a college in the area led her to a place where she knew she'd receive a good education in a field she loved and finally feel at home.

"That was when I discovered RCBC, a college that offered not only an excellent nursing program and affordable tuition but also a true sense of community," Akinwole said. "I remember my first day on campus, being welcomed with pretzels and ice cream. The simple gesture reflected the school's heart and commitment to making students feel valid and seen."

Even with the warm welcome, Akinwole attests to a shyness that affected her everyday life. Worried that people might not understand her because of her accent, getting a job on campus as a student ambassador was the perfect opportunity to discover that she actually fit in just fine.

"Working as a [student ambassador] really opened me up to a lot of people. I'm able to communicate with a lot of people," Akinwole said. "And when I speak, sometimes people are like, 'Where are you from?' and I'll be like, 'Oh, I'm from Nigeria." They'll be like, 'Oh, I love your accent. 'They gave me that strength, the motivation to speak."

This emerging confidence carried into her nursing studies as well. Any lingering trepidation was dashed by RCBC nursing instructors Lisa Parker, Elizabeth Brendle, Amy Melsi, Kelly La Rocca Amy Anderson, and Kelly Rivera, as well as Nursing Program Success Manager Sheri Hunter.

"The nursing program has been awesome," Akinwole said.
"I'm more confident now, having to speak to patients. In clinicals, my instructor will push me to go talk to a patient, and I was able to talk to them, assess them, and do the right thing. Before, I was shy, but now I can do that on my own."

Akinwole credits the first inspiration she got to chase her dreams in the U.S. to her mother and father. Although the road she took out of her home country ended up not being the one she expected after earning her bachelor's degree, it was worth every step, as it brought her to a place where she could find her footing. She hopes the cohort that will be hearing her words will take them encouragingly.

"RCBC gave me my voice," Akinwole said. "RCBC opened that door for me... I was welcomed with love, and I received the love. I'm trying to give back the love I received from RCBC."

PRESIDENT'S AWARD | Sherria Hannah



Beginning in 2020, Rowan College at Burlington County student Sherria Hannah faced challenges that few could have imagined. First, she lost her mother. A week later, she had a stroke, from which she fortunately recovered. The next year, in 2021, she developed Guillain-Barré syndrome, an autoimmune disease that affects the body's nervous system, taking from her the ability to walk for nine months.

However, what began as a period marked by loss and illness has set Hannah on a new course of self-improvement. In 2023, she returned to RCBC, where she had previously attended to earn her degree.

"I've been out of work now for quite a while, for six years due to the medical crisis," Hannah said. "So I sought out RCBC for an education to get a degree so that when I do return to work, I'll have some education behind me."

Hannah graduated from Burlington Township High School in 1997 and spent the subsequent years working, including roles in administration in the medical field and as a realtor. At RCBC, she enrolled in the 3+1 Business Administration program, a choice influenced by her previous administrative role, which also gives her the most flexibility to navigate which field to enter when she returns to work.

But stepping into the classroom again was not going to be easy for Hannah.

"I was very scared," Hannah admitted. "I didn't know if I could afford it... I didn't know if I would go through another health crisis that would stop my progression."

Hannah held fast to meeting her goal, first completing classes online due to her medical conditions. Soon, she was back in person for certain classes, such as algebra. While on campus, she also took the time to participate in the various Student Life activities held in the Student Success Center, including creative wellness workshops and activities.

Helping her in her return to school was the college's Office of Student Support. One counselor, Reagan Copeland, was especially helpful. Through the Office, Hannah was able to secure accommodations available to students with disabilities.

Hannah will be graduating with her associate degree at winter commencement. With the conclusion of her studies, she has found herself a different person than she was just two years ago.

"I'm definitely smarter, more confident in my abilities versus what my disabilities are," Hannah said. "I'm more understanding of the diversity in different walks of life that people have gone through to get to where we are... I quickly learned that there were people older than me who were still pursuing education, and it really just opened the possibilities for me."

VALEDICTORIAN | Yvonne Tai



When Rowan College at **Burlington County** student Yvonne Tai goes up on stage to retrieve her diploma at winter commencement, it won't be the last time she'll be up there. Because at spring 2026 commencement, she's coming back, and not just for the completion of one more degree or two, but for three

degrees. Once her time at RCBC is complete, Tai will have earned four associate degrees in two years.

The computer science, computer information systems, mathematics, and physics major didn't have the chance to attend college when she first graduated from high school 12 years ago. Tuition, which included foreign student prices, as she was a Malaysian citizen in Singapore, was too expensive. Coming to RCBC in 2024 after earning enough money was her chance to finally catch up with all the education she had left behind years before.

"I was just very curious about learning again," Tai said.

Tai worked at DHL Express, a global logistics and international shipping company, for 10 years to save money. She saw four promotions during her tenure, culminating in a senior manager position in sales. Once she was financially confident enough to start the college acceptance process, rejection from several institutions in countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia due to the gap in her educational experience steered Tai toward community colleges in the United States. RCBC and its 3+1 program became an appealing prospect even to a person half the world over.

"Of all the schools I applied to, RCBC was the most helpful by far," Tai said. "I decided to commit to RCBC, quit my job, take the world's longest flight from Singapore to New York at 18 and a half hours, and start my journey at RCBC."

The computer science degree Tai is earning at this winter commencement is what she has decided to continue with after RCBC. An education nurtured by Assistant Professor of Information Technology Chris Simber, and an influential experience in the Princeton Transfer Scholars Initiative program, a summer program for community college students to experience life at an Ivy League school, really helped her fall in love with the discipline. At Princeton University, Tai grasped brand-new concepts in computer science, including how to create music from code.

In the end, she earned a coveted A+, a grade that has to be approved by Princeton department heads. It wouldn't have been possible without a recommendation by now-retired RCBC math professor Crystal Bourne.

"That changed my life, really, because I didn't know that I'd be given so many opportunities," Tai said. "I thought I'd just come to a community college and make my way to a four-year university somehow, but I didn't know there was such a support system."

Professor Simber was also instrumental in securing her a position as a tutor at RCBC's tutoring center. With his recommendation, Tai has been able to help students with physics, computer science, and almost every math discipline. She also volunteers her time to tutor outside of RCBC. At Step Up Tutoring, a national nonprofit, Tai mentors low-income students in grades four through ten in math and English.

The most meaningful activity for Tai has ultimately become tutoring, and it has been her top priority during her studies. A role in academia may be in her future, but her current plan is to transfer to a four-year university. Since she ultimately decided not to participate in the 3+1 program because her current interests do not align with its offerings, she will determine where to transfer when she completes her three remaining degrees next May.

Tai's efforts over the course of two years culminated in her earning valedictorian. She will have the opportunity to share her story at commencement as a student speaker. When she gets to the podium, one of the things she hopes to reiterate to her cohort will be something she learned back in Singapore.

At DHL, Tai was in a mentorship program directly under the company's chief executive officer. She remembers him telling her that "the gap between zero and one is infinity."

"Which means that when you have no chance at anything versus a 1% chance, it is extremely different circumstances," Tai said. "If there's even a little bit of opportunity, then they should give it their all. If they see any form of opportunity at all in the future, have the grit and the guts to fight for a better opportunity.

"Having zero background in higher education and leaving a really good career behind, I still took that 1% chance, because to me, 1%, 0%, it is a world of difference."

Rowan College at Burlington County

COMMENCEMENT analidates

*Honors **High Honors ***Highest Honors † Phi Theta Kappa

Student names in **Bold** are Multiple Credential Candidates

Aleesa T. Abate
Edward A. Abboud **†
George Abd
Amatullah Abdul-Mujib *
Syed Abdulrahman
Aizhan Abylaeva **†
Jose A. Acevedo-Deniz
Shantal E. Acevero **†
Samantha Acosta

Deborah T. Adamolekun * Jennifer Adams *

Elias A. Addis ***

Grace M. Adekunle

Tyler D. Adkins Sarah F. Adler ** Angelina M. Adorno

Manasseh Adu-Gyan ** Hulusi Efe Akalin

Fatma Akcil *** Hayat N. Akilli

Omolayo D. Akinwole **† Ayanna Alamo *

Nicole Albany ***†
Jared M. Alexander *
Michael Alexander
Reannon M. Alicea
Danielle N. Allen

Kylee E. Allen *
Ta'jon Allen ***†
Zayna M. Allen **

Alvin S. Allison

Madeleine C. Alvarado **† Samantha K. Alvarez

Krystal M. Alvarez-Garcia

Celine S. Amparo *
Sude N. Anac *†
Ashley M. Anderson
Ava M. Anderson
Daveigh Anderson ***†
Destiny Anderson *
Marghy L. Andrades Garcia
Thomas C. Angelastro

Dominic F. Angelucci Phiona Apio

Jessica M. Applegate ** Graziella A. Arcaro Dayzalyn J. Arevalo Gabbriella M. Aristeo
Troy J. Armiger-Outland
Dasya R. Armstead
Emin Arnautovic
Cale L. Arnwine
Amaris L. Arocho
Hazar S. Atay
Joelle Au

Nicholas R. Aube
Anureet Aujla ***
Amani A. Austin
Armando J. Aybar **†
Amanda Azara Dos Reis **†

Ruth Backer Nyla C. Bah Khadijah A. Bailey Nakiyah L. Bailey * Odesco J. Baillie Justin Baker * Sabrina R. Baker Meghan J. Balchak

Meral M. Balik **
Jadeyn Ballard *
Ciara Banks *

Kyra N. Barr

Mikayla Barbalacci *** Marcus-Major Barnhill *†

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Madison A. Bell Connor J. Benasutti Gabrielle L. Bendick Nakiyah A. Benjamin

Christopher S. Bennett ** †

Shaqunna Bennett Sy'heem A. Bennett Kevin A. Benson Michael C. Berenato Ryan J. Berlin Zoe A. Bernstein Savannah N. Berrios * Alexis R. Berthot
Julissa Bertot
Donald S. Betts *
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Chase R. Bimmer
Carson L. Binegar
Alexandra R. Blackton
Jude McKoy F. Blas
Ryan J. Blazy

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Lihong S. Bourg Rhiannon N. Bowers *** John C. Bowser Kimberly A. Bowser Devyn A. Boyle ** Bonnie M. Bozarth

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Deep Patel ***†
Diya A. Patel *†
Jinil Patel
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Tyler R. Paut-Odionnin
Tyler R. Payton
Maxmiliano Pelaez †
Jason G. Pennypacker †
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Nando A. Pickering ***
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Shamma Pierre
Natalie E. Pierson
Kailey A. Piontkowski
Madison A. Piontkowski

Tierra Pointon ***
Marlena C. Pollaci
Lyndsey R. Ponzio
Danielle M. Price
Tiona R. Pride
Logan D. Pszalgowski
Caroline R. Quering *
Kaitlyn A. Quinn
Morgan E. Quirk *
Devin A. Raghu *†
Taseek Rahman ***
Adrian F. Ramirez

Heather L. Plasencia *

Eylene A. Ramirez-Martinez

Sonia I. Ramos
Zion J. Ramos *
Hannah J. Ranck **
Adrianne M. Raphael
Tori R. Rapko ***
Giovanni A. Rapps
Ruhama Rashid
Connor T. Ray

Danley F. Raymond Ethan Raymond **† Justin B. Reardon Jadyn Reeves * Taryn Reeves Sherlin Regino-Bauti

Sherlin Regino-Bautista *†
Gianna R. Reinhold *
Abigail Reihl *
Benjamin B. Reitz
Tristan I. Renz *
Mike Restrepo ***†
Matthew Reynolds **†
Tiyana M. Reynolds **
Kathryn S. Richards ***†
Debora E. Richardson
Samantha Richardson *
Danielle M. Richeda
Angela N. Risica *
Juliana M. Ritchey
Jenna L. Rivera

Jacob T. Roberts Lawrence K. Robinson III ** Sarah A. Robinson Shadea Robinson Tricia M. Robinson † Nicole S. Rodig * Diego A. Rodriguez *** Enrique A. Rodriguez Kenya A. Rodriguez Sydney A. Rogers Emily E. Romano * Taylor Rookstool * Mia A. Rose Rvan M. Rosenthal Jocelyn Rouse Gabriel Rubio Maya D. Rucker Keira E. Rudd * Ashley Rudderow Austin J. Rue * Lillian Ruley Shannon E. Runner

Alexandra Rypka *†
Talal Saad *
Nicole Sabatino
Hasret Sahin *†
Yaneli N. Salgado
Leah M. Sampson *
Amanda Samuels
Naomi C. Sandoval *
Dillon T. Sanfilippo
Logan J. Saranin
Samantha G. Sari ***
Daniel J. Sarkees *
Aditya A. Sarma
Kelvin Satterfield **
Ariana C. Sauceda *

Kayla B. Russell

Andrew J. Ryan

Madison N. Russell **

Nicole Saunders Justin G. Savary Angel E. Sawaged Jeshin B. Scaria *†
Alexandria T. Schade
Foster S. Schaffer *
William H. Schaming
Lindsey M. Schettino *
Michael T. Schmid III **†
Truman A. Schneider
Joshua A. Schreiber
Kurt H. Schroeder
Soraya Schumacher
Ashley Schuman *
Brooklyn C. Schuman *†
Tameka Schweppe **†

Cheryl M. Scott

Nyema C. Scott

Kaliah M. Scott **

Robert E. Seaman

Luis Jose Senior

Justin Seng

Victoria E. Semon **

Ismael Seydi * Kristin Shaffer Katherine A. Shallow ** Jamiyah L. Sharp James M. Shaw Jarrod M. Shaw Murfiejo J. Shedaker ** Imurana E. Sheriff Joshua Sherwood Dillon Sibilla Paramjot S. Sidhu Rajdeep S. Sidhu Ramleen K. Sidhu *† Scott A. Siket Xiaohong Silfies *** Jasnet C. Silvera

Marianne J. Simone *

Brandon D. Skarbek *

Jennifer N. Skwarlo

Amanda C. Smith *†

Donna L. Smith **

Japundeep Singh

Rajveer Singh

Vidushi Singh

Sahil Singh

Gabrielle S. Smith **†
Jalil Smith
Kemisha K. Smith
Laine A. Smith
Songa P. Smith ***
Christina G. Snyder
Nathan J. Snyder
Dalvir S. Sohi
Grace S. Sonjor
Gabrielle Soto

Lucas Henrique Sousa Dutra Daniel G. Southard Shallah A. Spalding Bryce C. Speed

Lawrence A. Spellman III Jessica L. Sprankle *** Malgorzata Stachnik * Mark A. Stahl Sophia C. Stancati
Kailey Stankus ***†
Shawn M. Steen
Kyleigh R. Stemetzki
Alvin Stevens
Daniel A. Stevenson
Sarah V. Stevenson
Benjamin N. Stewart ***
Kwasiya Stewart
Patrick M. Stone
Breanna Strada ***
Kaitlyn T. Styles *†
Melanie Sucuzhanay *
Evan Sutherland *
Colgan Taffler

Yi Wen Tai ***†
Mark J. Tarasewicz
Michael Tarchichi
Jorge O. Tavizon **
Evan W. Taylor **†
Gavin E. Taylor
Reginald A. Taylor Jr. **
Kristen M. Tencza *

Maya Thomas **
Jadae T. Thompkins *
Mary C. Thompson ***
Maurice Tiggett *
Michael P. Till
Gabriel L. Tillman
Jordyn R. Tilton *†
Katee Timmins *
Muge Nur Tokac
Corrin M. Toner
Joseph Tordy
Morgan A. Tran
Kristin Trobaugh *
Ryan R. Trojanowski
Brandi L. Tucker-McIntyre

Krstin R. Tumeh *** Aysenur B. Turkmenoglu * Breon I. Turner Folasade R. Turner Wayne D. Turner †

Mackenzie M. Twaddle-McKillop *

Zafercan Ucar *† Irem G. Uslu Leilanni Valdes Dyara V. Valdez * Ty Valencia *† Ahmad D. Valentine Jadyn L. Valenzano Madison Vallen Amanda L. Vazquez Maggie S. Verdon Rashid B. Vernon Helena R. Vibbert * Kristin E. Vidal Jillian D. Villano Nathan J. Villanueva Christopher O. Villatoro ***†

Anthony A. Vitale
Kimberly D. Volcy †
Michael J. Voll

Janmey P. Vyas Alexis Wade Asma Wahid *

Elizabeth J. Wakefield *

Zain Wali

Diamond Walker **† Abigail J. Wallis * Josie A. Walsh *† Andrea R. Walters-Stuart

Brenna E. Wark
Alana Warner
Brandon C. Warner
Matthew P. Warner †
Tariq Washington
Kennedy J. Watson
David A. Weaver
Michael J. Weaver Jr.
Mariah M. Webb *
Chloe E. Weber ***
Jenna L. Wells **†
Lenny Wen **
Marcella R. Wenner *†

Ava V. Wessner ** Gabriella J. Wester Moorea L. Wiest Ashley Wilder *** Elijah T. Williams James J. Williams Julian J. Williams Kenita N. Williams Rashada L. Williams Shakira R. Williams Shanoya Williams Siarra M. Williams Tacita Williams-Joseph *** Madison J. Williamson *** † Mia R. Williamson ** Kaneisha K. Wilson Aysa C. Wingate * Cole R. Wittman Cheryl A. Wood Jonah Wood Tyler E. Wood Hannah E. Worrell Michelle R. Wren Abigail Wright *** Benjamin C. Yeo

Bihter Yilmaz

Nur Yogurtcu ***†

Zachary F. Zaitz *
Shannon Zamarripa

Victoria Zebedies

Emina Zeljkovic **

Hamilton M. Zinnah

Kelly A. Ziolkowski *

Wenxue Zheng *

Erla Zylalaj †

Alexis Zeigler

Stephanie M. Yunga

Estefany M. Yurrita †

The names in this program include students who completed associate degrees, certificates and high school equivalency requirements by December 5 and candidates who may potentially complete their degrees in December. The list does not reflect students' final academic status.

Celebrate

your achievements with family, friends, and fellow graduates!

Join us immediately following today's commencement for a celebratory reception inside the Student Success Center.



Enjoy light bites, photo ops with Barry, and giveaways. All are welcome!



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