



2025 All-Pennsylvania Academic Team
Awards Ceremony
April 8, 2025

Annual Awards & Recognition Dinner
Digital Program



Thank you to our event sponsor:

PSECUSM



APRIL 8, 2025 EVENING PROGRAM

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: Dr. Quintin Bullock, President, Community College of Allegheny County, and Chair, PA Commission for Community Colleges

NEW CENTURY TRANSFER SCHOLAR: Noemi Gonzalez, Reading Area Community College

NEW CENTURY WORKFORCE SCHOLAR: Paul Arciba, HACC, Central Pennsylvania's Community College

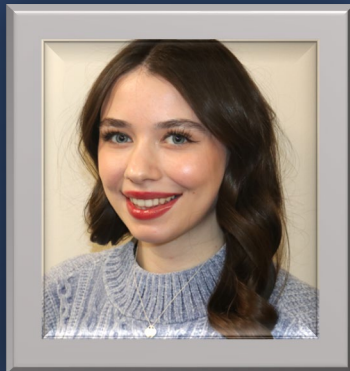
INTRODUCTION OF HONORED STUDENTS: Cynthia Proctor, Interim VP of Academic Affairs, Westmoreland County Community College

Community College of Allegheny County



Alex Afloarei

Originally from Romania, back home Alex wanted to be the first in his family who obtained a degree in higher education. After all, what motivates him to succeed is resilience and passion for life-long learning. Alex shifted from Biomedical Engineering to Business Administration after almost four years working in the professional services industry and what started as a very entry-level job in HR, led to two promotions within his company, where he had the opportunity to learn what it takes to be a good corporate trainer and be an inspiring source for the trainees. Alex's preferred transfer university is Slippery Rock.



Mae Alley

Mae is a dedicated student leader and aspiring journalist with a passion for storytelling. As president of CCAC's student government association, she is committed to making a difference in her academic community. Inspired by the resilience of her single mother, she has developed a strong work ethic and determination to succeed. Mae discovered her love for writing through her school paper and is now actively pursuing a career in journalism by submitting her work to editors and applying for internships. Her goal is to gain experience before transferring to a four-year university, with the long-term ambition of writing professionally or teaching others about the power of storytelling. Quoting Beyonce, "You say move a mountain, and I'll throw on my boots."



Community College of Allegheny County



Destiny King

Destiny is currently pursuing an associate degree in nuclear medicine technology and plans to continue her education at a 4-year university in medical imaging or a related field. Destiny's career goal is to work in a hospital as a nuclear medicine technologist and chose this path because she is passionate about helping others and believes this field allows her to make a meaningful impact. Fun fact: Hamilton is her favorite musical.



Ashley Lex

Currently, Ashley is part of CCAC institution's honors program which has provided her with many valuable experiences and opportunities ranging from honors courses to conducting research for an honors contract. In addition, she is a member of Phi Theta Kappa since May 2024, which through leadership emphasized in both this and CCAC's honors program, allowed Destiny and other students to group together to create a service project by collecting food and school supplies for young children in, then became inspired to create and organize her own service project to aid in collecting essential supplies for an organization in which she volunteers twice a week; Ricki's Rescue, which is a non-profit that specializes in rescuing and providing a sanctuary for disabled cats and chihuahuas. Destiny is currently choosing between a major for an eventual teaching career with children or working with animals. Preferred transfer university is PennWest. Quoting Churchill, "Success is not final; failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts."



Community College of Allegheny County



Kamal Long-Childs

After completing two years to finish an associate's degree in business management, Kamal plans to take real estate courses at CCAC to start a real estate career and wants to build his own real estate company, cleaning business, and create passive income. Once everything goes as planned, within several years, he would like to take culinary classes to learn more about the art since Kamal already has a passion for it. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" Hebrews 13:8



Mukhammed Mamatysaev

Mukhammed is just a student who discovered his passion for technology and leadership at CCAC. At CCAC we began the Computer Club and are now attempting to establish a chapter of Girls Who Code to empower more women to step in the field of tech. The dream is to be an AI leader who will promote ethical use while leading innovation. But beyond personal success, he wants to make a lasting impact on the community that gave him everything and wants to attract more top tech companies to Pennsylvania and even start the next big AI company—making our area a hub of innovation, opportunity, and high-paying jobs. He is still exploring options for transfer universities but considering West Chester, Slippery Rock and IUP. Fun fact: Having a habit of taking things apart to see how they work but luckily have gotten better at putting things back together.



Community College of Allegheny County

Joseph Parr

Joseph is a workforce student at CCAC, and we congratulate him on being selected as a 2025 All-PA Academic Team Member. Good luck on your future endeavors.

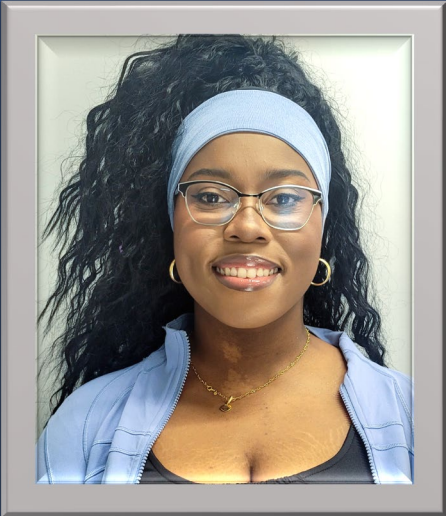


Sara Sabri

Sara is currently pursuing an associate degree in Cybersecurity and IT Support. As a student and a mom, she's learned to manage her time wisely and stay focused on goals. Sara chose this field because she's passionate about technology and protecting systems from cyber threats. Career goal is to become a cybersecurity analyst and help organizations strengthen their security posture. "You don't have to be great to start, but you have to start to be great." Zig Ziglar



Community College of Allegheny County



Jayla Thompson

Jayla's goal is to complete nursing school and start working as a Mother Baby nurse. While doing that she hopes to get her bachelor's and go on to a nurse practitioner program and then maybe go for CRNA, the sky is the limit. Preferred transfer university, PennWest. "The road to hell is heaven, the road to heaven is hell."



Community College of Beaver County



Austyne Mann

Austyne is a second year Criminal Justice major and president of the Beta Alpha Upsilon chapter of Phi Theta Kappa and the Student Government's secretary. Her involvement in activities on and off campus has provided Austyne with many wonderful opportunities and accolades. She values time with family and appreciates the support and encouragement she perpetually receives. Academics are extremely important to continue on her educational journey. It is this journey that Austyne hopes will lead her to a fulfilling career in the FBI as a Special Agent. Preferred transfer university is Slippery Rock. Fun fact – Austyne is a daredevil.



Maya Marshall

Maya majors in liberal arts and sciences. She is an active member of Phi Theta Kappa's Beta Alpha Upsilon chapter and serves as their Student Government Delegate and is also the president of CCBC's IMPACT Club, where they participate in community outreach, volunteer work, and fundraising events. She has loved writing since childhood and plans to obtain her bachelor's and master's degrees to teach English at the collegiate level. Preferred transfer university is IUP. “....and the universe said everything you need is within you...” Julian Gough



Bucks County Community College



Jessica Waterstradt

Obsessed with reading about the social behaviors of society, Jessica found herself at Bucks County Community College working towards her associates in social science. Jessica wants to transfer to a four-year university to pursue her bachelor's degree with a focus on the social sciences. She hopes to eventually work with a nonprofit or in politics to achieve her lifelong dream of helping others. Jessica currently works part time as a Client Care Specialist and Financial Manager at a law office while attending college full-time. "Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both." C. Wright Mills



Adrian Tyrk

Adrian is a transfer student at Bucks County Community College, and we congratulate him on being selected as a 2025 All-PA Academic Team Member. Good luck on your future endeavors.



Butler County Community College



Molly Milich

Molly is a double major in history and English, with a career goal of becoming a lawyer. Molly is a volunteer intern at the Butler Historical Society, where she catalogs and works with different artifacts. She works at a local coffee and candy shop and is a member of the presidents scholars program, student ambassadors, and of course, PTK, at BC3. Her transfer university will be Slippery Rock. Fun fact: Molly loves going for walks and hikes with her dog.



Sennett Purcell

Growing up, I always had a passion for helping others. My journey began when I started coaching a cheer team for kids with special needs. This experience opened my eyes to the unique challenges they face and the joy they bring. I learned how to communicate differently and celebrate small victories, which made me realize the power of encouragement. Watching these children grow in confidence inspired me to pursue a career in psychology, where I can better understand and support individuals with diverse needs. Their determination and spirit pushed me to want to learn more about how mental health impacts our lives. In psychology, I hope to provide all children with tools to express themselves and cope with challenges. Preferred transfer universities are University of Pittsburgh, Duquesne University, and Chatham University. "If you focus on what you left behind, you will never be able to see what lies ahead."

—Gustave, Ratatouille

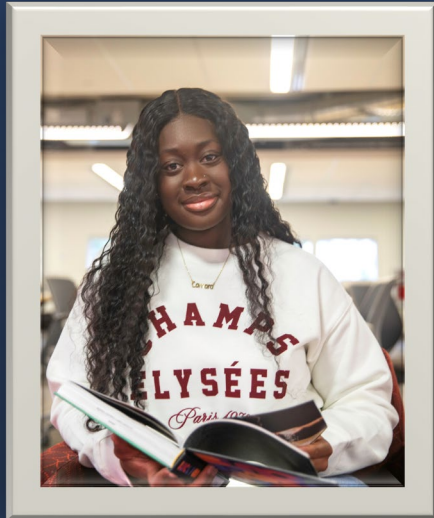


Delaware County Community College



Umniyah Al-Haneef

Umniyah is currently a psychology major and when she first started college she was aspiring to become a psychotherapist. However, after taking a couple classes that focused on the brain, she realized she wanted to work in a neuroscience adjacent field. Careers that Umniyah is considering include becoming a neuropsychologist or neuroscientist. In her free time, she enjoys reading or knitting, and recently learned how to sew. Preferred transfer university, West Chester. Favorite quote: “so surely with hardship comes ease”.



Maria Hawa Camara

Maria is a transfer student at DCCC and we congratulate her on being one of the 2025 All-PA Academic Team students. We wish her good luck in her future endeavors.

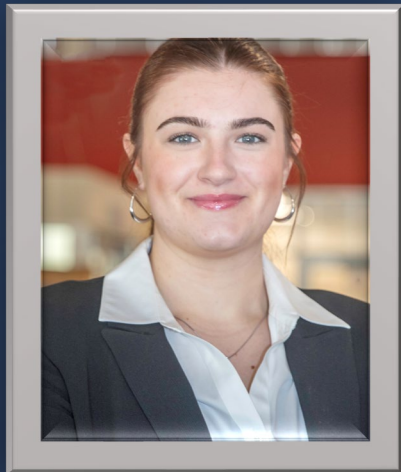


Delaware County Community College



Elizabeth Mercadante

Elizabeth is a transfer student at DCCC, and we congratulate her on being one of the 2025 All-PA Academic Team students. We wish her good luck in her future endeavors.



Brooke Weiss

Brooke is currently working at a financial firm while attending full-time. She hopes to expand financial and business knowledge to become a leader that is kind, fair and successful. Brooke would like to manage a company or business that leads with empathy, prioritizes ethical practices, and empowers others through creating a diverse culture of growth and innovation. Preferred transfer university, West Chester. Brooke's goal is to travel and explore the world. Her dreams are to join the Peace Corps or a program/job that seeks to better the world and environment.



HACC, Central Pennsylvania's Community College



Paul Arciba (New Century Workforce Scholar)

Paul is always interested in learning new things. He never dreamed he would have come this far. Paul is proud to be a tradesman in the study of Electrical Technology and hopes to excel in the trades industry. "What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger."



Holly Best

Holly plans on obtaining a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies, then a master's degree in library science to pursue a career as a librarian. Gaining the knowledge that she needs to be successful as a librarian will set her on the path to success in the future and allow her to implement programs that will make a difference in someone's life. One of the main reasons Holly wants to be a librarian relates to literacy and her own struggles with it as a child. Reading is so important, not just because of the joy that can be found in reading books, but because reading is an important life skill. Holly plans on advocating for literacy when she becomes a librarian and raising money for literacy programs to encourage children to read and wanting others to benefit from reading and find joy in it, like she has. Preferred transfer university, PennWest. Fun fact: Holly has been a beta reader for a published author.



HACC, Central Pennsylvania's Community College

Tejaswi Gentala

Tejaswi is a workforce student at HACC, and we congratulate Tejaswi on being a part of the 2025 All-PA Academic Team. We wish you good luck in your future endeavors.



Katrina Grimm

As a Theatre Director, it has been both her duty and passion to work with hundreds of students, bringing art and opportunity to small communities. Founding a program with high standards and a lasting impact has been a deeply rewarding journey – one defined by growth, excellence, and collaboration. Through her leadership, students have performed for tens of thousands of audience members, earned thousands in scholarship awards, and received countless accolades. Now, Katrina is ready to take the next step: expanding her reach, deepening her knowledge, and establishing a company that fosters cultural and personal growth within her community. Her goal is to create an enduring space where the transformative power of theater & art continues to inspire, educate, and uplift. Preferred transfer university, Johns Hopkins. “The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away.” Pablo Picasso



HACC, Central Pennsylvania's Community College



Farida Mahamane Tassiou

Farida, is a 20-year-old transfer student at Lebanon Valley College pursuing a bachelor's degree in Neuroscience. She was a HACC student and graduated in December 2024 with an associate's degree (Pre-Health Professional). Her goal is to become a Cardiothoracic surgeon. Fun fact: Farida can speak five languages which are (Hausa, her maternal African language, Zarma, a little bit of Arabic, French and English).



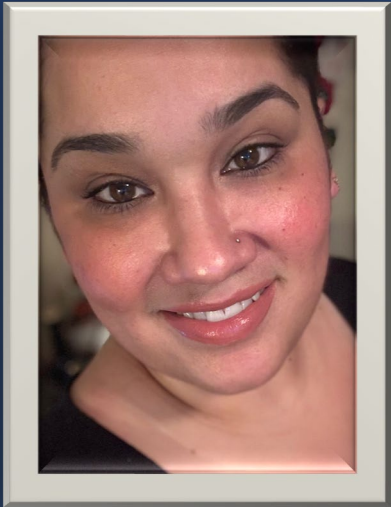
Donnyce Younger

Donnyce is a transfer student at HACC, and we congratulate her on becoming one of the 2025 All-PA Academic Team members. Good luck in your future endeavors.





HACC, Central Pennsylvania's Community College



[Jessica Velazquez](#)

Jessica is a workforce student at HACC, and we congratulate her on being one of the 2025 All-PA Academic Team members. Good luck in your future endeavors.

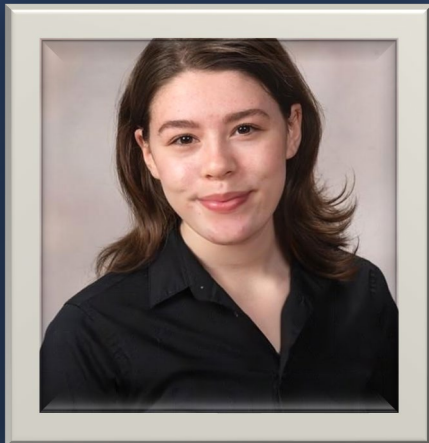


Lehigh Carbon Community College



Olivia DeMeuse (Coca Cola Gold Scholar)

Starting at Lehigh Carbon Community College, Olivia was uncertain of her career path. But after being introduced to the possibilities and opportunities available through the Honors Program and various organizations like Phi Theta Kappa and Student Government Association, she was able to discover her passions for Neuroscience and Biochemistry. Olivia is highly interested in research, specifically in fields of neuro-oncology. Preferred transfer university – Bucknell Olivia would not be here without the amazing support of her mom, dad, stepmom, my boyfriend Joey and his family, and her two cats, Kitty and Fuzzy, the most supportive of them all

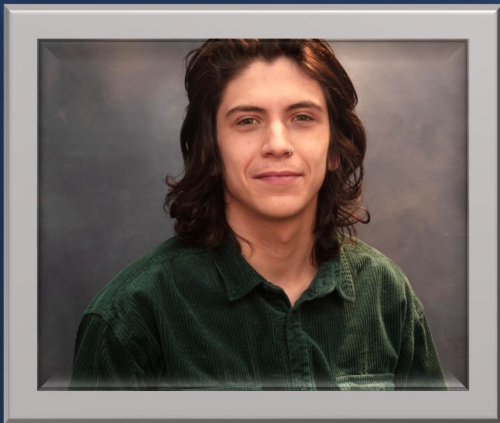


Heally Saltz

Heally is a transfer student at Lehigh Carbon, and we congratulate her on being one of the 2025 All-PA Academic Team. Good luck in your future endeavors.

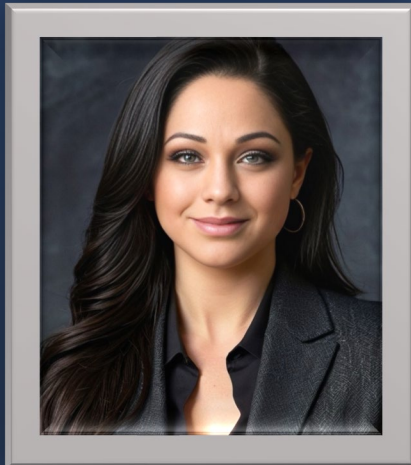


Luzerne County Community College



Anthony King

Anthony is a 22-year-old man from the Wilkes Barre area of Pennsylvania with goals to become successful enough in any field to lead a happy life, and is currently studying for engineering but he just wants to do anything that will make him and his future family happy and content in life. Preferred transfer university, Wilkes. "The things that are free in life always cost the most."



Lauren Marsico

Lauren wants to thank God for bringing her here today. As a first-generation Italian American, respect, determination, and excellence are engrained in who she is, her blueprint. It is such a blessing to have parents who instilled in her the dedication and resilience that helped carry her through college and helped her achieve Summa Cum Laude. Prior to earning her degree, she often waited for the "Aha" moment that would usher her into her next life path. The constant praise from Luzerne professors helped shepherd her into seeing what she really knew all along: she was a writer. A degree in professional writing opens so many avenues for her to excel and she's taking the next few years to learn a few of them and plans to eventually continue her education once discovering the specialized area of study that is best suited for her skills. Fun fact: Lauren's home is filled with over 30 potted plants; gardening is her passion



Luzerne County Community College



Emma Thomas

After graduation in May, Emma hopes to find an internship in journalism or communications. She would like to get her feet wet before attending Bloomsburg University in the Fall. After two years in the Journalism program at Bloomsburg, her goal is to start a job in public relations. One day Emma is hoping to go back to school to earn a master's degree, to work her way up to a public relations manager. "Success is going from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm." Winston Churchill

Valerie Tirado Torres

Valerie is a workforce student at Luzerne, and we congratulate her on being one of the 2025 All-PA Academic Team members. We wish you good luck in your future endeavors.

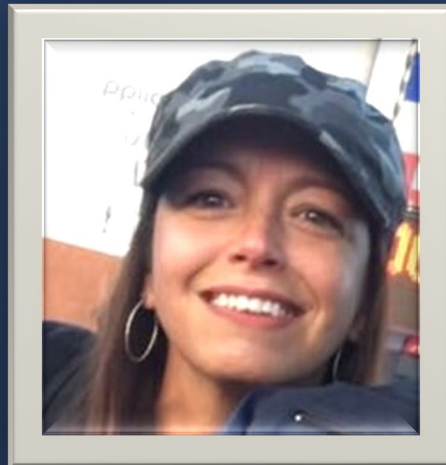


Montgomery County Community College



Colin Hogan

As a graduate of Montgomery County Community College with an associate's degree in psychology, Colin excelled at Montco as an individual and a student. He joined the theatre group, worked on campus, and found passion in pursuing his major. Colin has recently transferred to Kutztown University where he is completing his bachelor's in psychology with a minor in Sociology. After completing his bachelor's degree, Colin plans on enrolling in Law School, preferably schools in Pennsylvania, which include Drexel, Temple, and Villanova.



Julie Kerwood

Julie is a transfer student at Montco, and we congratulate her on being one of the 2025 All-PA Academic Team members. We wish you good luck in all of your endeavors.



Montgomery County Community College



Emilio Siguenza

Raised in a dual-cultured household, Emilio's identity has always been shaped by two distinct yet harmonious worlds-his mother's lineage as a Mayflower descendant and his father's Spanish Mexican heritage. Fluent in both English and Spanish, he has naturally embraced the role of bridging cultures, facilitating mutual understanding throughout his life. As a non-traditional student, he enrolled at Montco determined to elevate his academic standing and personal growth. Emilio's ambition is to transfer to a four-year university, continue onward to law school, and ultimately serve as a diplomat. Preferred transfer, University of Pennsylvania, University of Miami, Villanova or Drexel University. "We cannot solve our problems with the same thing we used when we created them." Albert Einstein



Massamiliano Simon

Growing up, Massamiliano moved around often because his dad was in the Army. The family settled in Pennsylvania when his dad retired. He chose Montco because he was interested in majoring in tech and provided many good programs close to home. Massamiliano is graduating with a degree in computer networking and cyber security in the fall and looks forward to becoming a network administrator. "I think, therefore I'm late for class." Unknown



Northampton Community College



Amanda Alfaro (Coca Cola Gold Scholar)

As a wife, mother of two daughters, and non-traditional student, Amanda is dedicated to making lasting, systematic societal changes through public policy. Her aim to achieve this is by conducting research in social psychology, focusing on social identity, pro and anti-social behavior, and attitude change and then use her understanding of why people and societies operate the way they do to create effective policies that improve the human experience for vulnerable populations. Amanda is devoted to developing applicable solutions to foster a more equitable and informed society and make intentional social and political progress, ultimately leading to a more compassionate world. Preferred transfer university, East Stroudsburg or Lafayette. Fun fact: Amanda is a serial hobbyist. She creates art through oil paintings, ceramics, design, creative writing, and poetry. Favorite quote: "if you cannot find your way out of the darkness, I will sit with you and show you the stars." N.R. Hart



Debbie Leedy

Debbie has always had a fascination with teeth. She enjoys the environment of the dental office and the patient experience; thus, pushed her towards a career in Dental Hygiene, and is loving the program so far! Debbie's current goal is to successfully graduate from Northampton and get licensed in Dental Hygiene and aspiring to help people be more confident in their smile, overcome fears of the dentist, and teach them the importance of oral health. "Life is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be experienced." Soren Kierkegaard



Northampton Community College



Julia Myo

Julia is an international student currently majoring in Biological Science. She has always been passionate about becoming a doctor and supporting children in need of healthcare, especially in rural areas. Julia's goal is to create a better world for everyone and reduce suffering through better access to medical care. Preferred transfer university, West Chester. It still feels like a dream – one that is too real to be just a dream. Little Julia wouldn't believe how far she's come.



Alexis Stapleton

Alexis is a transfer student at NCC and we congratulate her on being one of the 2025 All-PA Academic Team members. We wish her luck on your future endeavors.



Northampton Community College



Karolina Zakova

Karolina is an international student currently studying Liberal Arts-History at Northampton. She was born in the Czech Republic and grew up on the outskirts of Prague. During high school, she fell in love with history and, as history profoundly shapes the modern world. Karolina would like to become a teacher or a professor and pass her knowledge on to future generations. This aspiration was encouraged by her volunteering experience at Beyond the Literacy, where she assists with ESL classes for immigrants in the United States. Seeing students make progress has been incredibly motivating and has deepened her passion for teaching and helping others. Throughout her time at NCC, she became actively involved with student organizations, serving as VP of the Student Senate, and Public Relations Officer for Phi Theta Kappa. Her involvement in PTK had a significant impact on Katrina's future, as she was awarded a \$25,000 PTK scholarship at Moravian University, which will immensely help her family finance her studies. Katrina looks forward to continuing her academic journey and working toward becoming an educator. Katrina speaks Czech and English, and is currently working on learning Spanish.

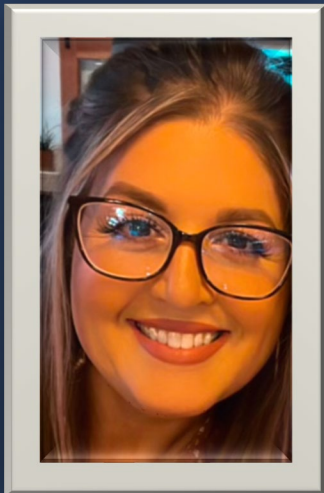


Pennsylvania Highlands Community College



Olivia Cavallo

Olivia is currently a second-year student at Penn Highlands Community College. She is majoring in Early Childhood Education and loves volunteering throughout her college and community. In her free time, she likes hanging out with friends and family, and spending time outside. After graduation Olivia is transferring to a 4-year university to obtain her bachelor's degree in early childhood education and hopes to teach either a kindergarten or a first-grade classroom, but her goal is to create a great learning environment for any age of children. Preferred transfer university, IUP. Believe in yourself and you will be unstoppable.



Sarah Debose

Sarah is a transfer student at Pennsylvania Highlands and we congratulate her on being a 2025 All-PA Academic Team member. Good luck in all of your future endeavors.



Pennsylvania Highlands Community College



Hannah Detterline

Hannah is currently attending her sophomore year at Penn Highlands. She plans to attend IUP to obtain a degree in Early Childhood Education. After that, Hannah hopes to teach in a third-grade classroom and would also like to get her master's degree in early childhood education and hopes that someday she will have a therapy dog trained that she can bring into her classrooms. "If you want to be the best, you have to do things that others aren't willing to do." Michael Phelps



Adelyn Dull

From a young age, Adelyn has always been fascinated with the criminal justice field. She and her dad used to watch about every show about law and justice when she was younger. Adelyn knew that between playing school as a child and being obsessed with the criminal justice field, she would find herself one day studying it in hopes to become a professor. An added bonus to her college journey has been the opportunity to serve as the Special Olympics bocce coach for her local high school. By taking on this role, she was able to experience the joys of teaching children while in college. Adelyn also presides as the president of her college's Student Government Association, which gives the opportunity to further her interest in reform and policy, often seen in the criminal justice system. Her favorite part of being president is working with other student and administrative leaders to edit the bylaws to better fit our current student body. Preferred transfer university, PennWest or Saint Francis. Fun fact: Adelyn loves to travel. Last summer she cruised down the coast of Alaska and visited Seattle.



Pennsylvania Highlands Community College



Kyle Feliciano

Kyle is a transfer student at Pennsylvania Highlands, and we congratulate him on being a 2025 All-PA Academic Team member. Good luck in all your future endeavors.



Lanette Rayman

Lanetta is a transfer student at Pennsylvania Highlands, and we congratulate her on being a 2025 All-PA Academic Team member. Good luck in all your future endeavors.

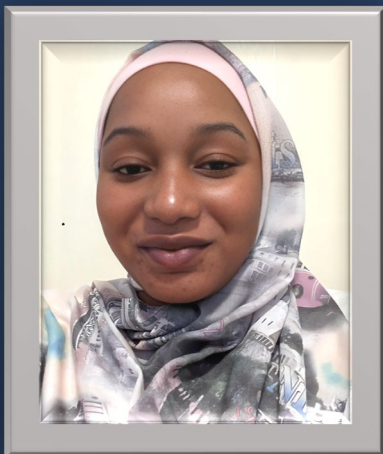


Community College of Philadelphia



Issa Kabeer

Issa's journey has been shaped by service, advocacy, and a deep commitment to justice. Growing up in a multicultural household and experiencing both hardship and healing has inspired him to dedicate his life to helping others, particularly those often left unseen or unheard. Issa has served in various roles—from being a chaplain and AmeriCorps member to working in education, and mental health—each one reinforcing his passion for human connection and systemic change. Issa's career goal is to become a licensed clinical social worker and an interfaith chaplain, using both spiritual care and social work tools to advocate for the marginalized and create inclusive, trauma-informed spaces in healthcare, education, and community-based settings. Preferred transfer university, West Chester. Fun fact: Issa has an IMDB page.



Fatoumata Sacko

Fatoumata's journey hasn't been traditional, but every challenge has shaped who she is today. As an immigrant, a student, and a mother, she's learned how to balance responsibilities while staying focused on my goals. Juggling school, work, and raising her son has taught her resilience, patience, and the power of perseverance. Fatoumata's passion lies in IT Project Management because she loves finding solutions, organizing chaos, and making things work more efficiently and wants to use technology to help businesses, especially small ones like her mother's, thrive. Transferring to a four-year university is the next step toward building a future where she can create real impact—both for her family and for the communities she hopes to serve. Preferred transfer university, Drexel. Fun fact: Fatoumata is passionate about storytelling, whether through data, writing, or real-life experiences. "Success is built on small wins, and I'm collecting them one step at a time."



Reading Area Community College



Angela Caldero-Perez (Coca Cola Gold Scholar)

Angela is originally from Syracuse, where she lived a quiet and peaceful life after a tumultuous upbringing. About three years ago, she found herself living a life outside of purpose, a purpose she hadn't discovered until she reached Reading Area Community College. Since then, Angela has found an unwavering passion for education, and the All-PA Academic Scholarship is the next step in accomplishing her goals. She hopes to help students who, much like she was, living in underrepresented and underfunded communities, beginning in Reading and eventually around the world. Angela will continue to pursue education, working towards a master's and, hopefully someday, a doctorate. While her career may begin with educating high school students and English Language Learners in Reading, Angela knows her passion for helping others will lead into the nonprofit sector in an effort to help students around the world. Preferred transfer university, Kutztown or University of Pennsylvania. "If you always do what you have always done, you will always be where you have always been."

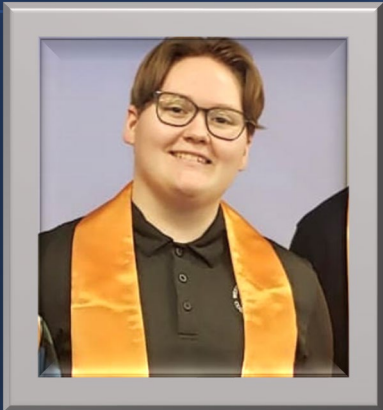


Noemi Gonzalez (New Century Transfer Scholar)

Noemi is an aspiring social worker, a passionate advocate for disability rights, an active member of Phi Theta Kappa, an editor for her college paper, a certified recovery specialist and family recovery specialist, and a dedicated mother. She served as chapter president of Phi Theta Kappa, spearheading an Honors in Action project focused on implementing playground accessibility, earning her chapter regional and international recognition. As a PTK regional officer representing Pennsylvania, her team will receive international awards for excellence in leadership and member engagement. In addition, she was honored with editorial recognition for her contributions to her college newspaper. Noemi, a mother of four, has maintained a 4.0 GPA while balancing academics, work, her children's sports, and community service. As an ambassador for the Ms. Wheelchair Pennsylvania Organization, she participated in podcasts and interviews, educating others about the intersection of addiction and disability, contributing to university training programs to expand understanding in disability studies, earning her a silver Presidential Service Award, a recognition award, and a Miss Congeniality award. Committed to disability advocacy and addiction recovery efforts, Noemi works to raise awareness of inaccessible treatment facilities while collaborating with legislators to push for improved services and meaningful reforms that address the needs of underserved communities. Preferred transfer university, Kutztown. "The wins do not define you; the losses do not confine you. It's the lessons that design you."



Westmoreland County Community College



Sydney Bodenheimer

Syd is an award-winning Graphic Design Major with expertise in logo design, presentation, and video editing. They are the winner of the Gregory Hricenak Graphic Design Scholarship and a third-place Finalist in the 2024 America250PA Direct Effect Innovation Challenge, a Graphic Design competition located in Harrisburg. In their spare time, Syd plays the drum set in multiple ensembles and groups and works out at their local gym. Their goal is to become a full-time freelance graphic designer specializing in bright, vivid designs. “I’m running on adrenaline and one-hour naps.” I Won’t by AJR



Sofia Francia

From the moment Sophia stepped into a classroom for the first field experience, she was meant to be an educator. As a college student pursuing early childhood education, Sophia had the incredible opportunity to work hands-on with young learners, gaining real-world experience that has only deepened the passion for teaching. In addition to studies and fieldwork, she works as a realtor helping families find a place to call home. It’s fulfilling to be part of such an important milestone, knowing that it’s helping to create an environment where memories will be made—just like the nurturing and supportive atmosphere Sophia strives to create in a future classroom. Balancing roles isn’t always easy, but each one teaches valuable skills—time management, communication, and adaptability—that will ultimately make a better educator. Every day; learning, growing, and taking steps toward the career she’s most passionate about: shaping the next generation. Preferred transfer university, PennWest. “The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you.” B.B. King



Westmoreland County Community College



Sierra Hauer (Coca Cola Bronze)

Sierra has always enjoyed being outside surrounded by nature, and the older she gets, the more she wants involved with it and being able to preserve ecosystems and teach families how to do the same. Sierra is not sure what type of job she will end up with as of now, but the overall goal is to educate people about their surroundings and give younger generations more opportunities to learn about their local flora and fauna. Preferred transfer university, University of Pennsylvania. Fun fact: Sierra presented a research project at NCUR 2024 where she grew Lions Mane and Turkey Tail mushrooms to analyze cost-effectiveness and ease of growing them at home versus buying premade supplements. It was fun but the dehydrated mushrooms were a little stinky!

