



NJCU INCREASES TUITION AGAIN

by Haresh Oudhnarine — Editor in Chief

Comparing New Jersey Tuitions

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
New Jersey City University	\$12,414	\$12,848	\$13,168.80
Kean University	\$12,595	\$12,445	\$12,595
William Paterson University	\$13,370	\$13,770	\$14,210
Montclair State University	\$13,073	\$13,073	\$13,183.50
Rowan University	\$14,000	\$12,939	\$14,376

This chart is based on information from NJCU's chief of staff, multiple university websites, and the National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. This is for full-time undergraduates in state tuition.

The Board of Trustees approved a 2.5 percent tuition hike in June. Students spoke out against it at the April "Tuition and Fees" hearing.

This marks the second time during the COVID-19 pandemic that tuition has been raised. It is also the 16th consecutive increase on record since fiscal year 2007, based on data from the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education.

Information from Andres Acebo, interim chief of staff to President Sue Henderson and secretary of the Board of Trustees, said that NJCU is prepared to accommodate students' scholarships and financial aid.

Acebo said in an email interview that the university is giving out more money in support than it is receiving from students: "Collectively, the direct student payment support from CARES and institutional scholarship support provided by NJCU exceeds the revenue generated from tuition/fees in the last 2 fiscal years and the next 2 fiscal years."

State aid will be seeing an increase this school year. Acebo said, "The State of New Jersey also recently increased TAG allocations by approximately 25%. SGA President Thyquell Halley currently serves on the NJ Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA), which is great representation for NJCU. HESAA is the board that regulates TAG."

Benjamin Rodriguez, a junior Criminal Justice major, said in an interview, "This being the second increase [during the pandemic] is a reason many students I knew in my freshman and sophomore years aren't coming back, and it truly shows how greedy this university is."

Rodriguez also said, "I don't believe that [majority of students being covered by scholarships and financial aid] matters because there are still students who have to pay more in loans now to avoid paying out of pocket, and still students who have no aid, who are really having a rough time trying to figure something out."

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NJCU INCREASES TUITION AGAIN

When President Henderson was asked how she would respond to this criticism, she said in an email interview, “Across the state, NJCU continues to take a leadership role in providing and maintaining equitable access to affordable, high-quality educational opportunities to the most diverse undergraduate student population in New Jersey. NJCU remains committed to being a leader in this area and maintaining affordability and access. Of course, every higher education institution, including NJCU, must confront the economic reality that the cost to operate increases annually. It is important to note that for most of our students, a modest tuition increase is offset by the greater availability of federal and state financial aid and NJCU scholarships, which negate any increase in out-of-pocket costs. Additionally, the University is awarding more scholarship money to students than ever before.”

Acebo also pointed out that NJCU is advocating for New Jersey’s “Garden State Guarantee” program where students with family incomes of less than \$65,000 will be able to attend public universities for free for two years. It is “modeled after” the university’s “Debt-Free Promise Program” which launched in Fall 2016.

Student Representation and the Future

In addition to being vice-chair for HESAA, Thyquel Halley is a student trustee for NJCU’s Board of Trustees (although he is a non-voting member) and is the incoming president of the Student Government Association (SGA). Halley said that if the university is going to raise tuition then it should also increase services: “As the Student Trustee, I understand the rationale and depth behind tuition increases. I also understand

that while they are not ideal that they are also procedural and mandated. With that, I had the opportunity to speak during the Tuition and Fees hearing on April 26th in addition to the June 28th meeting before the vote took place. In each of these meetings, I shared my thoughts on a need for an increment in student services as the cost of education increases.”

The former voting student trustee member, Nermeen Girgis, was not in attendance as she graduated in early June. Acebo said that Student Affairs and SGA will be choosing a new voting student trustee who will be implemented before the September 13 Board meeting. The application for the new student trustee member has been sent out to students’ emails and is due on September 3.

Halley also said, “I believe NJCU should continue the work that has already been started, identify areas for improvement, and keep connecting with students to develop and innovate this institution. I am grateful to be in a position to partner with NJCU Administration and the Board to help address and meet the needs of students campus-wide. I take my role as SGA President very seriously and I will do everything in my power and reach to advocate for the voice of all students.”

Senior Sociology major, Yulissa Mota, said, “I think it’s a very negative thing considering the times we’re in with COVID-19. I feel as though there shouldn’t have been an increase, if anything there should’ve been a decrease in tuition or a pause in tuition payments.”

When asked if there would be a year when tuition would not be increased, Henderson said, “The decision to increase tuition or keep it flat is a year-to-year decision based on a multiple of

factors, primarily operating costs. Still, historically, NJCU’s tuition rate is at or near the lowest of any four-year institution in the State of New Jersey every year. NJCU students already graduate with the lowest rate of indebtedness of any other public college in New Jersey and is among the national leaders in social mobility.

“NJCU has always been committed to providing a high-quality education at a reasonable cost. In fact, we’ve been praised for it. Governor Phil Murphy recently highlighted NJCU as a pioneer in affordability when he announced the Garden State Guarantee because it builds on our very own successful multi-year Debt-Free Promise program and the Governor’s Chief Policy Advisor, Zakiya Smith Ellis, publicly thanked our institution for our efforts in this area.”

Maria DeJesus, a junior English Creative Writing major, said, “In regards to the tuition increase, I don’t think it’s okay because there are a lot of families who are less fortunate and can’t afford high tuition. NJCU is supposed to represent a university that isn’t so expensive and is for the community. If you increase tuition, you might have students go to regular community colleges in order to afford an education.”

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SUPPORT INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORES

by Julie Marie Frances DeVoe — Copy Editor



Little City Books. Photo Courtesy of Kate Jacobs

Supporting local bookstores help owners thrive and help aid the community by giving back to the economy. In the Hudson County area, there are three independent bookstores: The Little Boho Bookshop, Little City Books and WORD. Each one of these brings their own individuality and has a story behind it.

Independent bookstores serve the community differently than chain bookshops and gives customers another place to call home.

Sandra Dear, the owner of The Little Boho Bookshop in Bayonne, opened her store in 2017. She said her “lifelong dream of wanting to open a bookshop and working in the publishing industry for 15 years” were the reasons why she opened the book shop. While COVID had a substantial impact on the community, Dear

said that “we will be grateful to have survived 2020-2021 and look forward to 2022.” She is looking forward to reading *Island Queen* by Vanessa Riley and she planned on starting to read it on the night of July 20th.

Little City Books in Hoboken was opened in 2015 by Kate Jacobs and Donna Garban. Jacobs said, “our customers are loyal and supported us all the way,” in response to how they did during the COVID pandemic. She said that she “looks forward to reading Susan Orlean’s book *On Animals*,” which will be published this fall.

Vincent Onorati, the co-owner of WORD said that he opened up the location with his wife seven years ago in Jersey City because “friends and family lived there, and they felt that they had a chance to open a bookstore there since there had not been any bookstores in Jersey City.” The original

WORD bookstore was opened 14 years ago in Brooklyn. He is excited to read *Spike* by Spike Lee when it is released in November.

Unlike The Little Boho Bookshop and Little City Books, WORD bookstores were closed for approximately 4 months from March 15th to July 15th and had a “20-30% decline in sales.” However, “online sales spiked so it was a big adjustment to fill online orders and curbside pick-up.”

Interestingly, Dear, Jacobs, and Onorati all said that e-books are not considered a threat to their bookstores at this time because most people prefer print copies instead.

If you are interested in checking out these locations, here are the addresses and websites:

The Little Boho Bookshop –
164A Broadway, Bayonne, NJ 07002
www.thelittlebohobookshop.com

Little City Books – 100 Bloomfield St, Hoboken, NJ 0703
www.littlecitybooks.com

WORD – 123 Newark Ave, Jersey City, NJ 07302
www.wordbookstores.com

THE PANDEMIC MADE MY DEPRESSION WORSE HOW I BROKE THE CYCLE

by Ivana Estime — Contributing Writer



Photo courtesy of pixabay.

I found that school and Zoom became more and more overwhelming this past year during the pandemic. My anxiety made it worse for me to get things done. It became harder to focus and continue to work. I would begin unfinished assignments and my attention would be completely diverted and it felt impossible to force myself to work.

My thoughts would be racing about how my professors and bosses would be disappointed in me for not getting this work done in time. Ironically, this is the very thing that made it so stressful; I couldn't continue my work because I was so worried.

I couldn't explain it, but one day I was a good student who always handed in their assignments and then suddenly it felt like a burden to turn things in. It became progressively harder, and I couldn't understand why for the longest time. I began to blame myself and it became a cycle where I would be faced with deadlines, and I couldn't meet them. This would lead to me putting myself down and I was so depressed that I didn't feel like moving.

The worst part was that there were so many things that I wanted to do. I got frustrated that I couldn't do them, and I was falling behind with schoolwork. This also affected my learning during class on Zoom as well. It was harder to pay attention and sit still in front of a screen. I also didn't want to go to school physically because not only were COVID cases rising, but I also didn't feel like going outside at times.

I was extremely exhausted mentally and didn't really care for school at one point. It felt nearly impossible to do anything. This made me feel ashamed because I didn't want to be labeled as lazy.

Some adults may not understand this mindset and can be quick to shame a student or call them lazy. I even had one adviser basically tell me to suck it up. It was much deeper than that though, because it wasn't that I didn't want to get my work done. It was more like my body was refusing to make the effort because my mind was tired.

I learned that if your body and mind are refusing to get work done, maybe it's because you didn't take enough breaks. Pushing yourself for extended periods of time can make it difficult to recover. My body was telling me that a break was long overdue.

To be quite honest, the only reason I didn't reach out to most of my professors and my boss at times is because I was terrified that they would think less of me. I now know that it is important to reach out because professors and bosses can't read your mind and know what you are going through. It's best that you seek help because at the end of the day those who you work with, whether it be your teachers or bosses, can be part of your team.

I wanted to get better, so I reached out to the Counseling Center at NJCU and was given guidance and support. This was helpful because it was good to hear someone check in on me every week and advise me on how to handle my emotions. I eventually used all my sessions, and I am currently going to a private therapist.

Getting help is important because just like your body, your mind can get sick. It takes a professional to treat it and help your mental state feel better. Students should reach out because if the people around you don't know what you're going through, how would they know that you need help?

To Reach NJCU's Counseling Center
Location: Gilligan Student Union, Room 308
Office Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM
Phone: 201-200-3165
Email: counselingcenter@njcu.edu

THE BIOCHEMISTRY MAJOR: A NEW CAREER PATH FOR STEM STUDENTS

by Joy Akeju — Contributing Writer

Starting this academic year, students at NJCU have a new option for an undergraduate major in Biochemistry. This major offers students a more interdisciplinary approach to their education, which is essential for students pursuing careers in the medical, pharmaceutical or research fields.

The program requires students to take the same introductory courses as Biology and Chemistry majors, as well as numerous advanced courses.

Biochemistry majors will also be taking a novel course sequence in chemistry, which includes General Chemistry I, two semesters of Organic Chemistry, and then General Chemistry II (in that particular order). This "organic sandwich" was designed by professors to help students who struggle with chemistry courses.

Dr. Yufeng Wei of NJCU's Department of Chemistry led the development of the curriculum for the new program, working with faculty members from both the Chemistry and Biology Departments.

Wei described a collaborative effort his role played in the finalization of the program:

"[I] had been working through the approval processes, both internal and external, to finalize the program... The program was a team effort within the Chemistry Department, and we had been in consultation with the Biology Department for its interdisciplinary nature. The Provost's Office had provided guidance and support to secure State approval."

The process of establishing a biochemistry major was set in motion by student members of NJCU's American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) organization, who met with the Chemistry and Biology Departments to discuss their academic needs.

Joyce Ikedife, president of ASBMB and junior Biochemistry major, said, "The coursework is very intensive... By having a biochemistry major you are open to so many industries.



The biochemistry teaching lab. Photo courtesy of Dr. Yufeng Wei.

Before, I was a biology major and I planned to go to medical school, but then with biochemistry my career options are broadened..."

Sonali Rajurkar, a junior Biochemistry major and ASBMB member, described the purpose of the meeting with NJCU faculty and her perspective on the program. "In that meeting, they kind of asked us what fields we wanted to go into. Personally, I wanted to do research, so for me that's very helpful, because that way I can also look at lifeforms in the biology field but also do a lot more chemical work."

Ikedife advises students to carefully consider their options: "The main issue is trying to see if you can finish in four years if that's your plan, because the coursework is really extensive. It's like having a biology major and a chemistry minor. It's either you have to take more classes per semester or if you make up your mind before you enter a freshman, you can really plan out your classes and maybe be able to finish in four years. So for people who are a sophomore or entering junior year, I would advise them that they should take their time to see and they should plan their classes for a long period of time... the classes are really difficult."

With various additional pathways to professions students can look into different STEM industry opportunities.

TURNING HARDSHIPS INTO ART: SUNGSOON DESOUBA

by M. Blessing Akeju — Contributing Writer

Sungsoon DeSouza transformed her childhood adversities into a series of stunning, emotional drawings and displayed them during the NJCU BFA 2021 Thesis Exhibition.

Her pieces portray scenes from her childhood and gradually begin to depict images of her young adult life as she moved out of her parents' home and into her own living space. The scenes are bold and resolute as they tell DeSouza's story within a selection of frames, while still maintaining a cartoonish art style. The character's signature colors are green and purple, and she can be seen in some panels as a child drawing at her desk and pulling away from the aggressive behavior of one of her parents.

In the following panels, the character is depicted as older and in a more peaceful state as she experiences initial moments of independence in her new home and purchases her own groceries during the pandemic, wearing a mask.

DeSouza, who graduated in June 2021, described her first experiences with art in an interview. "My parents would have an encyclopedia... of different books and I was so interested in the illustrations. I remember one of the earliest drawings I did was dinosaurs. Later on, it developed when I got involved with drawing cartoon characters. After that, I remember in Pre-K... I started to get involved with drawing Dragon Ball Z. I got involved with drawing dragons and different anime."

Some of DeSouza's other inspirations and influences include manga artists,



DeSouza displays herself artistically in a state of freedom, with doves surrounding her and the sun high in the sky. Photo by Sungsoon DeSouza.

anime such as Naruto and One Piece, and other artists she follows on social media. Seeing their work helped her improve her style and her coloring. She attributes her artistic choices to her personal experiences and relationships with people in her life, such as family ties.

"For me, going to the library and seeing so many books was another resource. Throughout the years, I had my ups and downs because there were moments when I would stop drawing for a while. Then, I would see someone else drawing and then it just came back... the passion just sparked. Throughout the years, art has been an enjoyment for me, and seeing other people giving me a positive reaction to my drawings and supporting my art motivated me to keep going."

DeSouza admits that at first, she felt

unsure as to whether she could sustain a career as an artist. Some people recommended she try architecture as a career, for example. "There were a lot of people giving my influences and suggestions... I realize now it is different because my passion has become stronger, and I am more connected to artists than in the past. Seeing other people putting passion into their art has motivated me to be true to myself and the art that I am into, without having someone to box me in. Now, I'm focused on what I want to do," she declared.

Life Changing Event

DeSouza's art for the NJCU BFA 2021 Thesis Exhibition was an artistic representation of a life-altering decision she made ten months ago; she moved out of her parent's home to escape what



As DeSouza's character rides a bike on a beautiful day, signature birds flutter around her and she shows an expression of glee. Photo by Sungsoon DeSouza.

she described as religiously oppressive circumstances. "I moved out around September, and that was during the pandemic... it was a difficult decision to move out. What started it was that... I wanted to reveal some things that were floating inside of me. I grew up in a strict, religious household.

"Both of my parents joined a church movement, and all of my siblings were born into this different kind of culture and lifestyle. For me, it was a lot. I really tried.

There were two different worlds I was experiencing; the ideal daughter that my parents wanted me to be, and also, an urge to be free from that... I think a lot of the issues I had growing up was that I stopped believing the things that my parents held dearly."

Continuing to explain how she reached a critical point, DeSouza said, "There were a lot of restrictions including the person you had to marry... no drinking, and other things I wasn't allowed to do. Most of my friends didn't have these kinds of restrictions, so I was caged in. I didn't go through that rebellious stage, but there was a point where I couldn't hold myself back anymore. I was tired... of feeling like I wasn't allowed to express myself, to dress how I want, or go out as often as I wanted. My parents were really protective of us."

While she felt saddened that she was not able to have the same relationship with her parents as other people, she knew that the timing was right. "I needed to experience life," DeSouza said.

Advice for Other Students

To other students in similar situations regarding family ties and restrictive environments, DeSouza said, "The right time will come. When you notice an opportunity to change your environment

away from something negative or toxic... there will be a sign. Don't give up... also, save a lot of money! Learn about budgeting and know what you can afford or what you have to wait on. I ended up getting what I could afford temporarily. It isn't for the rest of my life. You have to strategize and determine how you can get an apartment or house... never stop learning."

"Friends and siblings are so important... without [them], I would feel so alone and depressed. Find your community and keep those people close... it helps a lot to express your feelings and get everything out of your system."

Looking Forward

When asked about her plans for the future, DeSouza said, "I plan on experimenting and expanding. I'm looking into animation; I did take one course on 2-D animation. I'm hoping to experiment using Photoshop or Premiere Pro. I am looking into 3-D art as well."

DeSouza already knows what she needs to work on and what her strong points are in her career as an artist. She has several projects she is working on involving her original characters and an original story, and she is determined to work on making more art in a shorter amount of time.

No student should ever suffer alone

Sometimes life is awesome. Sometimes not so much. TalkCampus is a safe student network that's all about support. Let's talk.

THE MIND OF ARTIST TED KIM

by Nicholas Felix —Features Editor



Ted Kim's mural drawn by sharpie. Photo by David Wilson.

One of our city's best gems to explore is the arts center Mana Contemporary. An easy walk from Journal Square, it features artists from around the country.

Implied Scale: Confronting the Enormity of Climate Change was a recent group show featuring works by five different artists. When I went to the exhibit this summer one of the first things that caught my attention was a 70-foot-long illustration by the Alaskan artist Ted Kim.

Kim was born in Hawaii but raised in Anchorage, Alaska. His favorite interests were comic books, anime, and skateboarding, but he's never had any formal art training, which makes Kim more impressive knowing he is a naturally talented artist.

The massive illustration which Kim titled "Relations" was drawn directly onto Mana Contemporary's wall. The Gallery

Director, Kele McComsey, told me that Kim spent non-stop hours drawing it, with nothing more than black Sharpie markers and his surgical attention to detail.

What stood out to me about this illustration was that I could tell the artist has empathy, loves nature, anime, and is a comic enthusiast. Kim shows us a vision of what kind of dystopia the world might become, especially if we don't change the way we treat the planet.

Kim constructed the entire illustration by freehand, working for hours at a time. There was no room for mistakes in this work and so no do-overs were needed.

As I was looking at "Relations," I recognized a landfill, a strange but serene interpretation of the elements, characterizations and especially when I thought I saw gravestones. As I looked closer, I realized they were skateboards. Continuing along the canvas was

somewhat of an adventure of the senses, followed by a girl who looks like she came from an anime, astounded by the scenery, all drawn to the center of the sun in a clever fashion.

There was a dystopian sensation to the artwork, a lesson to remember what our world could become, yet beauty still prevails in the end. A powerful vision of our times and what it can produce, whether sensational or disastrous, this vision was brought to life from the mind and talents of a unique illustrator who completed one of his best works with perfection.

I recently had the chance to interview Kim while he worked on a new commission in Alaska via Zoom.

Q: What was your strongest inspiration that drove you to become the artist you are today?

A: "If I had to narrow it down, I would say growing up as an '80s kid, I loved comics, skateboarding and anime, especially Japanese manga which was at its rising and highest back then. What drives me to this day is expressing my signature of being me, not trying to be others, not for money or recognition but for my passion that has saved me from dark places."

Q: Do you have any hopes that people will learn important lessons from your work?



"Relations" by Ted Kim. A tidal wave-like depiction of trash compacted objects, firing up your curiosity. Kim is an avid fan of skateboarding, anime, and comics. Photo by David Wilson.

A: "There isn't really a mission or agenda to what I do, but if anything, I'm proud that people who see my work are inspired to follow their own passions. There was a small story I was told from a colleague who said their daughter loves to draw and continues today after seeing one of my art pieces seven years ago. I've been told two different stories about my art, one of which comes with everyday life getting hate and negative criticism, that I'm not original. The other side of criticism I get is inspiring and positive, how much I have been told how my art makes people feel inspired and enlightened even... Follow what you love for yourself, not for the lone sakes of social media or money."

Q: The art I have seen from you is phenomenal, especially the time and dedication you put into them; for me as a writer, how do you find the inspiration or idea(s) to begin your creative process?

A: "This one is a little hard to describe, whenever I begin to pick up a marker or airbrush my imagination just runs wild, almost reflex. I've learned from drawing how a mistake can simply be re-made into

a new intricate design, which is how my artwork flows without end. Randomness becomes artistic, some mistakes can be made into purposeful patterns. With my interests in comics, manga art and skateboarding coupled with my interest in the environment, it all seems like my imagination is telling the same story through what I draw in many alternate versions."

Q: May I ask what you are working on now or do you rather keep your next masterpiece under wraps?

A: "The anonymity I keep on my work depends on who I do it for or if it's personal for me. I'm not about living in hype or flashiness, it's better to let the art speak for itself after completion. I have been very busy with a few commission projects, which is great. I enjoy how art can bring together a community or if I'm asked by a client to create a mural that is a reminder to them of their home and the people they want to help. To me I'm more reclusive in a way, if you ask, I will tell."

Q: Did you have any impressions of

Jersey City?

A: "I'm usually drawn by my work to cities like New York but coming to Jersey City is in no way less fun and it's one of my favorite places to stop by. It's a pleasure traveling to Jersey City for three things, new sites for fun experiences, great Indian restaurant spots and coming to Jersey to collaborate with the Mana gallery, who I absolutely love to work with."

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CROSS COUNTRY SEASON PREVIEW

by Tyshon Johnson — Contributing Writer



Following an outdoor track season that saw numerous athletes hit personal best times and a summer full of training, the Gothic Knights look to return in Fall 2021 better than they have been before.

The Men’s and Women’s Cross-Country teams are looking to return to their regular routines following a COVID-19 filled 2020-21 season. Under normal circumstances, the teams would have competed in seven meets for Fall 2020, including three championships. However, the 2020 season was postponed until February 2021 and the teams only competed at three meets (two regular season meets and the NJAC championship).

Despite a shorter schedule and competing in colder weather, both the Men’s and Women’s teams recorded their highest ever finishes at the New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) Championship. The men finished third overall and the women finished fourth.

Now, with the teams’ schedules returning to their usual length and time of year, the Knights look to improve on their progress from earlier in 2021. Many members of the teams have expressed

their eagerness to compete.

When asked about the upcoming season, junior athlete Adnan Kpodo emphasized the importance of self-care outside of running when he said, “I’m looking forward to my best season since I’ve been taking the necessary actions to better myself not just through running, but through other aspects of the sport as well.”

Fellow junior Jaime Tlatelpa said, “I’m looking forward to my second full cross-country season since it was cut short this year. Next fall will be our redemption season to get back into the shape we need to keep breaking our times and getting better as a team, not just individually.”

Head coach Patrick O’ Niell also expressed his enthusiastic outlook toward the upcoming season. He said, “Expectations are high as we enter cross country season. On the men’s side, we are returning 10 of our top 11 (Julius Libutsi, Jose Recinos, Jaime Tlatelpa, Topu Saha, Elvis Rosas, Erich Fennelly, Jake Sisk, Denilson Lopez, Adnan Kpodo, and Fahim Chowdhury). The experience this crew has training and racing together will play a vital role in our success this season.

They’ve accomplished a lot as a young team, and they aren’t done yet.”

For the women, they are looking to enter the season with a larger available roster to improve on last year’s performance. Coach O’ Niell said “On the women’s side April Gutierrez and Jackeline Lopez will be leading the way with support from both returners and newcomers. We have a couple student athletes that opted out last year due to COVID and a few freshmen that will play key roles. Additionally, April is coming off of a breakout year where she broke a number of school records and will be looking to continue her success in the fall.”

April Gutierrez said, “In terms of the fall, I look forward to how this season will approach, especially knowing the pandemic has had a huge impact. I look forward to everyone’s performance knowing that for many of us, it’s our last year.”

Some readjusting will be needed as things return to normal, but the Knights can look forward to a much more familiar season than last year.

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STUDENT ATHLETE DEFIES ODDS AND GRADUATES

by Suhas Vittal — Contributing Writer



Vasquez-Villalta. Photo courtesy of NJCU athletics.

Jerlis Vasquez-Villalta immigrated from Morazan, El Salvador to America along with his family at the age 8. They came to America hoping to improve their lives and accomplish their financial goals. Despite many setbacks, he played volleyball throughout his four years at NJCU and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration.

Making the move to a new country was difficult, one of the most difficult parts was learning the English language. Being a native Spanish speaker, it was hard for him to pronounce some English words.

The Deferred Action for Childhood

Arrivals (DACA) immigration policy, enacted in June 2012, helped him adjust in many ways. It gave him the opportunity to start working and to help his family with financial needs.

DACA was also a prime factor in his goal of obtaining a driver's license which allowed him to travel with friends like any other young adult, as well as provided other services to live a normal life.

During his first year at Memorial High School, located in West New York, New Jersey, Vasquez-Villalta started playing volleyball. He had to learn the sport quickly so he could have the chance to make it on the team because he never played the sport before.

Fortunately, he had motivating coaches that provided assistance over the years. His passion and dedication for volleyball grew as it helped him lose weight and keep him in shape.

Fast forward to his senior year of high school, his coach Jorge Rodriguez gave him advice about joining the men's volleyball team at NJCU. Rodriguez's recommendation factored into his decision of picking which college he decided to attend.

He ultimately chose NJCU, where he was offered an academic scholarship. When college began, Vasquez-Villalta was able to pay out of pocket for the remaining balance his scholarship did not cover by working.

As a student athlete, it was his responsibility to dedicate himself to both balancing athletics with academics. He utilized the Student Outreach and

Retention (SOAR) office where he was offered help with transitioning from high school to college.

Vasquez-Villalta said, "If it wasn't for them providing me with the guidance, I would not be graduating from NJCU. Veronica Garcia and SOAR's staff helped me find my passion and gave me the necessary tools to succeed at NJCU. Going from a 1.5 GPA my freshman year, to a 3.3 my senior year, it was one of my biggest accomplishments in life, and I could not have done it without them."

Vasquez-Villalta enjoyed being a part of a diverse environment. The NJCU Athletics program was honored by the National Collegiate Athletic Association recently for its work on diversity related projects in programming and initiatives occurring on Division III campuses and in conference offices. He said, "Being part of a diverse team has helped prepared me for the real world because we live in a world where people come from different backgrounds cultures religion and preferences, learning to adjust to the diverse group of men that I spent four years with prepared me to face what's coming to me in the real world."

In the future, Vasquez-Villalta hopes to work in the financial industry. He wants people to know that whether he took a plane or crossed the border, he is a proud immigrant of the United States and he cannot wait to break more barriers as a minority in the country.

MEET THE MEMBERS OF THE GOTHIC TIMES



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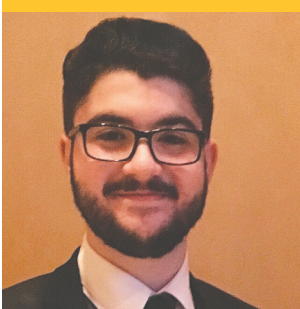
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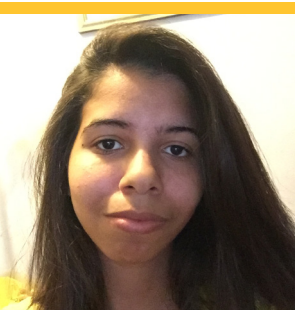
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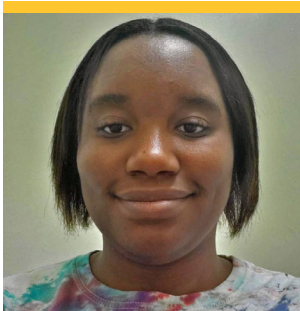
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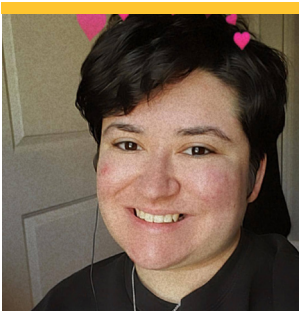
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TOP 10 TIPS FOR NEW COLLEGE STUDENTS

by Tyshon Johnson —Contributing Writer

College can mean newfound freedom and a steppingstone for a successful career. It can also be extremely daunting.

Here is a list of 10 tips to help make the transition a little simpler.

1. Failure is not the end of the world.

While it's certainly not ideal to fail, it's not always necessarily a bad thing in college. Sometimes failure can be a motivator for students to start taking their careers seriously. It can also encourage students to go down a different career path that they enjoy more than their original one. Failure can be the best teacher; don't look at it as a negative, but rather as a chance to turn it into something greater.

2. Don't be afraid to be undecided or change your major.

According to Hamline University's news site, The Oracle, about 80 percent of all college students change their major at least once. Many change it multiple times. If it becomes difficult to choose one field of study, don't be discouraged. Just keep looking until something sticks. Maybe even consider a double major.

3. Find something else to do outside of the classroom.

It's understandable to think that adding something on top of multiple college classes can be too much to handle, but it can prove to be beneficial overall. Spending everyday either in class or doing homework can get monotonous. Throwing something new into the mix will help keep things exciting. Join a club, play a sport, or take an extracurricular course. It's a great opportunity to make friends, experience something new, and

create fond memories.

4. Build relationships with your professors.

No, this doesn't mean be a teacher's pet. Building relationships with college professors can be highly beneficial both inside and out of the classroom. Even after finishing a course, professors can be great resources for students. It could be something as small as getting help with another class or as substantial as career advice and assistance.

5. Stick to a schedule.

Let's face it, college gets hectic. Term papers, exams, essays, etc. can pile up pretty quickly. One way to avoid this is to put everything on a schedule. Plan designated times for everything including time to do homework, time to study, times to eat, time to relax, and even nap times is necessary. A little structure can go a long way.

6. Get your work done as early as possible. Don't settle for make-up work.

Coming from high school, it's easy to think that homework may not take long to complete and that it can be pushed back for a while. However, college work can be time consuming and making the mistake of holding off on completing it can be detrimental. Suddenly an hour-long homework session has turned into an all-day project with the looming deadline approaching quickly.

7. Make use of your resources.

Colleges are full of resources for students to take advantage of, including libraries, gyms, counselors, advisors, tutors, career centers, etc. Any students

that find themselves struggling in any way are strongly recommended to make use of any resources that are available.

8. Don't be too quick to buy textbooks.

Just about every college course is going to have at least one required textbook in its syllabi. Don't feel like you must buy every book right away. The best way to avoid wasting money on a book is to wait for about a week or two before purchasing. This allows time to get a feel for the course and to make a sound decision.

9. At the end of the day, your major may not even matter.

Here's a fun fact, according to Inside Higher Ed, only 27 percent of college students ultimately end up working at a job related to their major. Many students branch off into something else after leaving school. The point of bringing this up is to keep students from feeling discouraged about pursuing their career interests. If someone's major doesn't exactly mix with their dream job, it is still very possible to get that job. Basically, the takeaway here is don't stress over your major too much.

10. Don't forget to have fun.

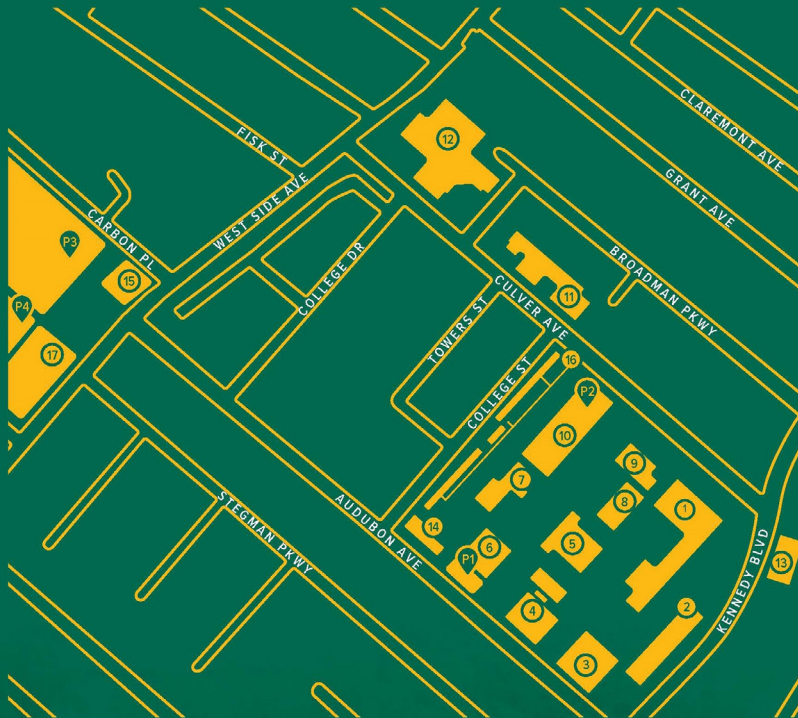
Even the most dedicated of students need time for a little fun. College is hard, yes, but it can also be a great place for students to enjoy themselves. With plenty of chances to make friends and a plethora of events and parties to attend, a typical day at school can turn into a great time!

Tyshon Johnson graduated from NJCU in June 2021 with a degree in Environmental Science.

CAMPUS MAPS

MAIN CAMPUS

2039 John F. Kennedy Blvd, Jersey City, NJ 07305



CAMPUS MAP KEY

1. Hepburn Hall
2. Grossnickle Hall
3. Congressman Frank J. Guarini Library
4. Vodra Hall
5. Rossey Hall
6. Education and Professional Studies Building
7. Science Building
8. George Karmoutsos Arts and Sciences Hall

9. Fries Hall
10. Gilligan Student Union
11. Visual Arts Building
12. John J. Moore Athletics and Fitness Center
13. A. Harry Moore Laboratory School
14. Co-Op Dormitory
15. Facilities and Construction Management Building
16. College Street Houses
17. West Village

PARKING

- P1. V.I.P. Parking
- P2. Visitor Parking
- P3. Visitor Parking
- P4. Faculty/Staff Parking

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Harborside 2, 200 Hudson Street, Jersey City, NJ 07311



TRANSPORTATION

- Hudson Bergen Light Rail to Harborside Stop
- PATH to Exchange Place Station
- Bus to Exchange Place

PARKING

- P1. Central Parking, 110 Plaza 5
- P2. Central Parking, 135 Greene Street

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