

The Cayuga SPARTAN extra

CAYUGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
MARCH 2026

CAYUGA CELEBRATES FIRST CLASS OF FREE COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

*SUNY Reconnect Program Empowers Adult Learners
Without a Prior Degree Looking to Pursue Careers in High-Demand Fields*

This winter Cayuga Community College officially celebrated its first class of SUNY Reconnect students, a transformative free community college program for adult learners designed to help New Yorkers aged 25-55 without a prior degree earn an associate degree in a high-demand career field.

SUNY and local leaders joined President Dr. Brian Durant and the campus community to highlight the benefits of SUNY Reconnect for Cayuga students. This bold new model supports Reconnect students at Cayuga enrolled in an array of programs, including Health Sciences, Nursing, and Liberal Arts & Sciences: Adolescence Education.

"Community colleges are engines of student success and economic prosperity, and the SUNY Reconnect program will help more New Yorkers access these essential institutions of upward mobility. This ambitious program launched by Governor Hochul and supported by our State Legislature means more adult students will have access to an affordable world-class education at SUNY community colleges starting now. Congratulations to all of the students beginning – or continuing – their educational journey through the SUNY Reconnect program during the Fall 2025 semester," said SUNY Chancellor John B. King Jr.

"Cayuga has always dedicated itself to offering exceptional academic and career pathways that connect our students with outstanding career opportunities. This commitment not only supports our students and their families, but simultaneously helps propel our regional and state economies forward," said Cayuga President Dr. Brian Durant. "Reconnect is an exciting new program that breaks down financial barriers and helps students set a new course for a successful career of their choosing."

"The Reconnect program reminded me that it's never too late to rewrite your story. Growth doesn't have an age limit — and sometimes, the best chapters come later in life," said Cayuga student Keisha Marcellus, who is majoring in Health Sciences and is in the Reconnect program.



SUNY Reconnect helps New Yorkers ages 25-55 without a prior degree earn an associate degree in a high-demand career field. Pictured from left are SUNY Vice Chancellor for Community Colleges Valerie Dent, Cayuga student Keisha Marcellus, and Cayuga President Dr. Brian Durant.

After all other forms of financial aid are applied, SUNY Reconnect covers the full cost of tuition, fees, books, and other supplies. Additional wraparound supports for SUNY Reconnect students provided by Cayuga include academic advising, career planning, and credit for prior learning.

SUNY Reconnect is part of Governor Hochul's broader agenda to lower costs, expand education, and build a stronger workforce. The program was created to help open opportunities that fuel upward mobility for hard-working adults throughout New York and bolster the state's workforce in key areas, including:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Artificial Intelligence
- Cybersecurity
- Engineering
- Technology
- Nursing and Allied Health
- Green & Renewable Energy
- Pathways to Teaching in Shortage Areas

For more details on SUNY Reconnect at Cayuga, visit <https://www.cayuga-cc.edu/freeCC/>.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDATION

We hope 2026 has gotten off to a great start for you!

Donations to the Cayuga County Community College Foundation make a difference in the lives of our students, faculty and staff every day, whether that gift is restricted or unrestricted.

Unrestricted gifts allow the Foundation Board to be nimble and meet emerging needs or take advantage of opportunities to leverage other funds to benefit your alma mater in both small and large ways.

As another option for the 2025-2026 Academic year we have created the **Spartan Student Success Fund**. With your support, we will assist students during unforeseen emergencies with the goal of helping our students remain enrolled at Cayuga. Your tax-deductible donation will go directly toward student emergency support, or if you prefer, to another designation. For your convenience, you can use the enclosed envelope to make a donation or you may give online at www.cayuga-cc.edu/giving.

We want to thank you in advance for being part of Cayuga's success – our communities are better because of your generosity!

Warmest regards,

Kevin LaMontagne
Board President

Guy Thomas Cosentino
Executive Director

SPARTANS EARN CONFERENCE, REGIONAL AWARDS



The Spartans celebrate after scoring a goal in an early-season match.

Student-athletes on Cayuga Community College Men's Soccer team earned conference and regional honors this fall following another strong season in 2025.

Seven Spartans earned Region III awards and eight earned Mid-State Athletic Conference (MSAC) honors for a season that saw the Spartans finish second in the region and conference to Finger Lakes Community College.

Freshmen Maxwell Bedford and Matthew Twigg and sophomores Joseph Edet and

Matthew Chitty all earned First-Team All-Region for the Spartans. Mr. Twigg led Cayuga with 13 goals and added 10 assists, and Mr. Edet had 11 goals. Mr. Bedford tied for the Region III lead with 14 assists and had seven goals on the season. Mr. Chitty led Region III with a save percentage of almost 90 percent and posted eight shutouts on the season.

Matthew Manton was named Second-Team and Kai Reading and Zander Wishart were named Third-Team All-Region. Mr. Manton keyed Cayuga's defense throughout the season while adding two goals and three assists. Mr. Wishart had nine goals and 11 assists, and Reading finished the season with three goals and six assists.

Messers Twigg, Edet, Bedford, Reading and Wishart were all named All-Conference along with Aidan Etuazim, who had six assists on the season. Mr. Manton and Mr. Chitty were MSAC Honorable Mention.

Cayuga ended the season with an 11-3 record.

CAYUGA & AREA HIGH SCHOOLS CELEBRATE REMARKABLE DUAL GRADUATES

Cayuga Community College and a trio of school districts celebrated six students in March for simultaneously earning their high school and associate degrees, an impressive feat made possible through academic partnerships at Cayuga and area districts.

Cayuga President Dr. Brian Durant and leaders from Dana L. West High School, Synergy Virtual High School at CiTi BOCES, and Union Springs High School praised the students, saying the dual graduates' impressive academic success is matched by their commitment to further their education.

"We're incredibly proud of these students, who challenged themselves to accomplish something that very few have done at Cayuga: Earning high school and college degrees simultaneously," said Dr. Durant. "Our partnerships with area school districts, led at Cayuga by Professor Sarah Yaw, created countless pathways for high school students to explore their academic options and earn credits toward an associate's degree. These students seized these opportunities, and have demonstrated to future students everything that's possible through our partnership programs."

The six students, their school districts and Cayuga degrees are:

- Nina Bartolotta, Dana L. West High School, Associate in Arts;
- Stephen Case, Union Springs High School, Associate in Arts;
- Gracie Chalupnicki, Union Springs High School, Associate in Arts;
- Ella Dougherty, Union Springs High School, Associate in Arts;
- Carissa Quagliata, Synergy Virtual High School at CiTi BOCES, Associate in Science;
- Lilyana Thornton, Union Springs High School, Associate in Arts.

The students are pursuing diverse pathways after earning their high school and associate degrees. Ms. Bartolotta is evaluating colleges but plans to study psychology and biology; Mr. Case will attend Le Moyne College to study business management; Ms. Chalupnicki will attend SUNY Polytechnic Institute to study biology; Ms. Dougherty will attend Villanova University to study biology on a pre-med track; Ms. Thornton

is evaluating colleges but plans to study marine biology; and Ms. Quagliata will attend RIT to study cybersecurity.

Cayuga partners with school districts across the region to create opportunities for high school students to earn college credits through programs like Cayuga Advantage, a K-12



Leaders from Cayuga Community College, Dana L. West High School, Synergy Virtual High School at CiTi BOCES, and Union Springs High School praised six students who simultaneously earned their high school and associate degrees this year. Above, from left, are the students: Nina Bartolotta, Lilyana Thornton, Gracie Chalupnicki, Ella Dougherty, Stephen Case, and Carissa Quagliata.

distance learning program, and on-campus courses. The College collaborates with school districts across Cayuga and Oswego counties, as well as in select districts in Onondaga, Seneca and Wayne counties.

The College also offers its Early College High School program, which allows students in select school districts in Oswego County the chance to earn credits toward an associate degree in Health Sciences or Information Technology. In 2024, the College launched its Early College Pathways initiative, which offers high school students and their families a guided route to earning extensive credits toward specific associate degrees.

For more details on academic pathways at Cayuga, visit <https://www.cayuga-cc.edu/academics/high-school-programs/cayuga-advantage/pathways/>.

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PROF. HOWARD NELSON HONORED

Professor Emeritus Howard Nelson established and nurtured the Visiting Writers Series at Cayuga Community College for nearly three decades. Through his vision, he enriched our college community by bringing a remarkable range of voices to campus—from literary luminaries such as Robert Bly, Lucille Clifton, and George Saunders to equally compelling writers including Antler, Jerry Mirskin, and Hal Sirowitz.

Professor Nelson built this series by cultivating genuine relationships with writers who shared his passion for literature and education. He understood the importance of providing transformative experiences for our students, and his dedication to the series reflected that commitment.

Perhaps Professor Nelson's greatest lesson was his reminder that meaningful human connections far outweigh professional accomplishments. His commitment to this college, to our students, and to the Visiting Writers Series has enriched countless lives and strengthened our institution and its mission.

In recognition of his profound impact on our college community, Cayuga Community College was proud to announce during the lecture of Dr. Mary Jumbelic, the author of *"Here, Where Death Delights"* last year on the Auburn Campus, that the prestigious Visiting Writers Series was named in honor of Professor Nelson, ensuring that his legacy continues to inspire future generations.



Pictured left to right: Prof. Emeritus Howard Nelson, Cayuga's first **Prof. Howard Nelson Visiting Writer Series** guest, Dr. Mary Jumbelic, author of *Here, Where Death Delights: A Literary Memoir* and Cayuga instructors Dr. Richard Bower and Prof. Mark Montgomery.