



Inclusive Excellence Annual Reflections FY25

Presented to the Board of Trustees and TCNJ Community
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Introduction

Dear campus community,

This past year has tested the resolve of higher education professionals in ways few could have predicted. Shifts in federal policy and public discourse have challenged long-held principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Simultaneously, economic and demographic pressures continue to reshape the landscape of who can access and afford higher education. At the heart of many of these tensions lies the work of inclusion and belonging; work that, by design, transcends boundaries, touches every part of campus life, and seeks to build a more just and affirming academic community.

While these challenges are real and, at times, heavy, they are not insurmountable. In fact, they have only strengthened our resolve. The mission of Inclusive Excellence is inherently a hopeful one, grounded in the belief that we can cultivate a more thoughtful and compassionate institution. In moments of uncertainty, it is our commitment to this vision that sustains us. To continue this work, despite headwinds, is not just a professional responsibility but a powerful act of principled leadership and collective care.

At The College of New Jersey, we remain deeply proud and steadfast in our commitment to Inclusive Excellence. We are moving forward, intentionally, boldly, and in community with one another. We know that progress is not linear, and that meaningful change takes courage, persistence, and unity. But we are not alone. We are lifted by you—our colleagues, our students, and our broader community—who continue to believe in this work and join us in creating a future that serves and includes us all. It is with that shared commitment that we offer these annual reflections—both as an affirmation of how far we’ve come, and as a promise to continue building together.



Dr. Tacquice Wiggan Davis

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely reading "Tacquice Wiggan Davis".

Vice President for Inclusive Excellence

Unit Summaries

The Division of Inclusive Excellence is composed of four interdependent units - the Office of the Vice President (VP), Accessibility Resources & the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC), Intercultural Affairs and the Intercultural Center (ICA), and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO). Below are summaries of their activities and accomplishments from Fiscal Year 2025.

Office of the Vice President

Inclusive Excellence Initiatives

In addition to the administrative and governance responsibilities associated with a college cabinet officer, the Office of the Vice President oversees a variety of special projects, sponsorships, and initiatives that advance inclusive excellence on and off campus. A particular focus on direct student/community support and professional development ensures funds are invested back into the key measure of a thriving campus: retention of, career success for, and personal advancement of TCNJ students and employees.

Nursing Mentoring Hub

Advising, networking, and mentorship are essential to all professionals, especially so in healthcare - yet most curricula do not emphasize this key element until late in the program, if at all. The Nursing Mentoring Hub established this year by **Dr. Yolanda Nelson** is an effort to bridge this professional development gap during undergraduate studies by connecting nursing students with active healthcare professionals. By fostering these relationships early, nursing students will: develop leadership, communication, and teamwork skills; enhance their professional network; internalize health equity best practices; and deepen their commitment to inclusive service in their career.

Currently located in Trenton Hall but with active plans to relocate to a larger space in the renovated Forcina Hall, the Mentoring Hub is staffed by two students and a select team of doctors, nurses, and post-grad students who serve as mentors for current nursing students. Funds were not initially available for this initiative, leaving it in limbo this time last year; but a successful partnership with Inclusive Excellence enabled the Hub to open its doors in September 2024, with staffing, branding, and material resources in place.

Academic Diversity Officers

The Academic Diversity Officer (ADO) program was launched in 2023 to recruit and incentivize faculty members to pursue unique, targeted projects designed to enhance inclusive practices on and off-campus. The Vice President for Inclusive Excellence sponsored 3 ADO projects in FY25.

Drs. **Dave Marzan** of Biology, **Brandi Diggs** of Music, and **Yolanda Nelson** of Nursing analyzed student attrition & retention data for their schools/programs vis-a-vis the student body as a whole. Their primary objective was to assess one-year retention outcomes for the Fall 2023 first-year cohort by disaggregating these data by Pell eligibility, race/ethnicity, gender,

and academic program. By analyzing early departure trends at both the school and departmental levels, their project generated actionable insights to guide advising practices, faculty development, and institutional interventions.

Across the campus, **Pell-eligible Hispanic students** exhibited the most significant retention disparity, with only 81.6 percent returning to campus the next year. Within the School of Science, the trend was particularly striking: **60 percent of Pell-eligible Hispanic males** left the school after just one year. This early attrition underscores the vulnerability of students at the intersection of racial and economic marginalization, particularly in STEM disciplines. For Nursing, overall retention of Pell-eligible females was relatively stable at 80 percent, but certain subgroups fell short - only **66.7 percent of Pell-eligible white females** and roughly two-thirds of Latinas—regardless of Pell status—remained in the Nursing program after one year. This highlights barriers within clinical and licensure programs that disproportionately impact underrepresented women, even within historically gender-dominant fields. Retention in the School of the Arts and Communication was comparatively higher, with 81.3 percent of Pell-eligible males and 86.7 percent of Pell-eligible females returning after one year. However, disparities persisted. Only **60 percent of Pell-eligible Black males** returned, compared to approximately **79 percent of Hispanic students**, regardless of Pell status. These findings highlight the heightened vulnerability of Pell-eligible students in the School of the Arts and Communication, where financial strain compounds existing structural and cultural barriers.

Dr. Marla Jaksch of Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies (WGSS) used her ADO project to explore the lived experiences of undocumented students; immigrant students from mixed-status families; immigrants of color; and queer, transgender, and non-binary immigrants. In response to the need for greater visibility, advocacy, and community support, Dr. Jaksch launched the **Immigrant Justice Fellows program** in Spring 2025. Fellows in this inaugural cohort played a key role in facilitating campus dialogue through the screening and discussion of the film *One Million Experiments*, which explores community-based alternatives to policing and healing from systemic harm.

The Immigrant Justice Fellows will continue their work by designing and leading educational workshops, organizing awareness campaigns, and partnering with campus and community organizations to advocate for immigrant justice. Their efforts include developing peer support networks, contributing to policy recommendations that promote inclusivity and access, and serving as ambassadors for a more affirming and informed campus culture. Through this initiative, students are not only elevating the voices of marginalized communities but are also actively shaping a more just and compassionate environment.

Dr. Glenn Steinberg of English's ADO project was to investigate and establish a **Faculty Allyship Support** program for bias incidents, centered on advancing student healing and success through the development of a robust support system. The initiative is designed to provide students who experience bias incidents meaningful support and guidance in areas of reporting, mediation, and mentorship. Dr. Steinberg introduced his research and proposal at the 4th Annual Excellence in Teaching and Learning Summit, where it received strong interest and engagement from attendees.

In collaboration with the Offices of Student Conduct and Title IX, the program aims to demystify institutional processes for impacted students - helping them understand official communications, navigate complex procedures, and make informed decisions that support their long-term health and goals. Trained Allies serve as dedicated advisors to 1–2 affected students

per semester and engage the broader campus community by facilitating educational sessions with student organizations. Dr. Steinberg hopes to officially launch the Faculty Allyship Support program in FY26.

Comprehensive Strategic Plan

In September 2024, the Committee on Inclusive Excellence (CIE) and the Committee on Strategic Planning & Priorities (CSPP) received a formal charge from President Bernstein to **merge four key institutional plans**: TCNJ 2027: Extending Our Excellence, We Are TCNJ: A Strategy for Inclusive Excellence, the LIONS Plan, and the CATS Plan into a single, unified strategic framework. This ambitious effort sought to align institutional priorities, eliminate redundancy, and elevate the collective work and aspirations of all constituent groups across the College.

Over the course of the academic year, CIE and CSPP engaged in collaborative analysis, intentional goal alignment, and integrative planning that honored the unique strengths of each original plan while creating a **cohesive vision for the future**. The merged and elevated strategic plan was formally submitted and presented to President Bernstein in May 2025, and the charge was successfully completed in June 2025, marking a significant institutional milestone for FY25.

The resulting plan is a **streamlined, mission-aligned roadmap** that articulates The College of New Jersey's shared values and strategic priorities for the next five years. It reflects a commitment to inclusive excellence, academic distinction, and long-term institutional vitality. Discussions are currently underway regarding the socialization and formal launch of the new strategic plan in the upcoming academic year.

Employee Affinity Groups

Since their establishment in 2020, **Employee Affinity Groups** have formed a key component of employee inclusiveness and community building at TCNJ. All faculty and staff are encouraged to participate in any affinity group with which they identify. These groups reflect the inherent diversity of our community, and as such vary in structure and mission. Inclusive Excellence currently sponsors five unique Affinity Groups:

The **Women's Professional Network** enjoyed another year of successful events, programs, and community thanks to its dedicated planning committee. As the largest affinity group at TCNJ, the WPN represents some of the best TCNJ has to offer in terms of passion, talent, and commitment. They hosted a number of panels and lunch n' learns that helped boost morale and engagement in the most stressful parts of the year. Inclusive Excellence offers a heartfelt thank you to outgoing WPN chair **Samantha McGraw**, whose innovative and energetic leadership helped keep the spirit of inclusion burning bright.

The **TCNJ Parent Network**, a support and community group for current and to-be parents, helped remind us all why we all choose work in education with their annual Take Your Child to Work Day. Held each April, this statewide initiative has become a signature experience for TCNJ staff and faculty - and hopefully future generations of TCNJ Lions! Departments across campus take their own time and resources to host dozens of events, shows, and demonstrations designed to entice and inspire. Over 120 young lions attended, making it the most successful Take Your Child to Work Day so far.

TCNJ PRIDE is the premier social and activism group for LGBTQIA+ staff and faculty on campus. Formed to support and enrich the experiences of all queer TCNJ employees, PRIDE sponsors a variety of social justice, professional development, and community-building initiatives and events. They are a notable and perennial partner in the annual Lavender Legacy ceremony. This year, PRIDE says farewell to its founder and chair, **Dr. Benny Chan**, who has been selected to lead the School of Theoretical and Applied Science at Ramapo College of New Jersey. While it is always sad to lose such a bright light in the TCNJ community, the community will be forever grateful to Benny's contributions. Be on the lookout for new leadership for PRIDE in FY26!

The **Minority Executive Council**, or MEC, is the oldest affinity group at TCNJ, long predating the term itself and representing a legacy of inclusion and resilience stretching back to 1968. They are committed to supporting and enriching the overall experience and professional development of faculty and staff of color. Their Legacy Ceremony, held each May in the Intercultural Center, is an annual celebration of this commitment. More than 50 employees attended this end-of-year, gala-style event to celebrate another year of professional and personal excellence.

The TCNJ **Asian & Asian American Pacific Islander Coalition** (AAPIC or "Aypick") is the newest affinity group on campus, founded in 2024 to form a safe environment for members of Asian and Asian American Pacific Islander heritage to share their thoughts, experiences, resources, and voices. With an inspiring energy, AAPIC hit the ground running in their first year by hosting both the AAPIC Symposium and AAPI Film Festival in April and May, respectively. These full-day events featured faculty research panels, student projects, alumni talks, film screenings, a staff-faculty roundtable, and other unique voices from across campus and beyond exploring racial dynamics in the US and the joys of the Asian American experience.

Legislative Outreach

In April 2025, President Bernstein, Vice President Davis, and Associate Vice President for Government & Community Relations Kari Osmond conducted an outreach visit with **NJ State Senator Shirley Turner** to advocate for continued investment in NJ student success through TCNJ's Office of Mentoring, Retention, and Success Programs (MRSP). The conversation centered on the transformative impact MRSP has on historically underrepresented and underserved student populations, emphasizing the program's vital role in student persistence, academic achievement, and overall well-being.

The following month, Senator Turner affirmed her support, stating: "I value TCNJ, not just because it is my alma mater, but because of **the first-class education that our students receive** from **dedicated educators and the contributions they make** to our community and state. I appreciate the opportunity to support your request for funding for the Office of Mentoring, Retention, and Success Programs."

As a demonstration of her commitment, Senator Turner introduced Budget Resolution #528 (\$250k), helping secure further legislative support for this critical initiative. Her advocacy highlights the importance of ensuring that TCNJ students are consistently seen, valued, and supported—principles at the heart of MRSP's mission and impact, and ones shared by Inclusive Excellence. This outreach effort underscores the power of collaboration between college leadership and state policymakers in advancing equity and student success.

Accessibility Resources

Access by the Numbers

1846 students were associated with ARC in Spring 2025, a new record. This was an increase of almost 200 students, or roughly 12 percent, from the previous semester. More than half of those were new requests from previously unaffiliated students. This follows an even greater increase seen in Fall 2024, which saw **1650 students** affiliated with ARC, 406 of which were new requests. ARC's three Accessibility Specialists therefore manage a caseload of between **500 and 600 students** each, and on the rise - 116 new requests have already been submitted for Fall 2025. A clear metric for this demand is the number of exams proctored by ARC staff: in FY25, they **administered 1721 exams** (33 in Summer 24, 902 in Fall 24, and 786 in Spring 25).

Affiliations with the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) **continue to grow rapidly**. Incoming students are increasingly likely to request accommodations, and existing students are more likely to renew them. Mental health and associated disabilities represent much of the increased demand for accommodations such as increased exam time, minimal distraction environments, and transcribed lectures. While in principle straightforward to enact, in practice these often prove to be a notable strain on financial, human, physical, and emotional resources for all involved. It is clear to leadership across the college that additional staffing is required in ARC for TCNJ to meet its commitments to accessibility and compliance.

New Accessibility Staff

The last two years have seen ARC resurge from a complete turnover in specialist staff to becoming a larger and more robust group than ever before. With a team of five specialists and dozens of support, part-time, supplemental, and student staff, it was time to identify permanent leadership. In **Megan Guiry**, TCNJ has found a Director of Accessibility Resources and ADA Coordinator that is up to the ever-evolving challenge of disability advocacy and justice. Megan completed her ADA Coordinator Certification in March of 2025 and has been implementing the strategies learned to support the campus community. Megan has proven instrumental to the reshaping of ARC from a small group of centralized experts to a collaborative and nimble team pursuing multiple projects and priorities at once. She has done so while shepherding ARC's essential functions with not only consistency, but steadily improving performance. All of TCNJ is grateful for her dedicated insight, and look forward to a more accessible community under her leadership.

However, with Megan taking on additional and substantial responsibilities, she could no longer maintain a full caseload of accommodated students. More accessibility specialists were needed. Because of this, ARC is currently in the very final stages of hiring a third accessibility specialist to support the students who are registered with ARC. The community can expect to hear a formal announcement before the start of FY26 next month.

Lions Plus Program

Reimagined and revitalized under the passionate stewardship of **Allison Larthey** and **Kartika Kumari**, the Lions Plus Program (LP) has become an exemplar of the innovative and equity-minded solutions advanced by TCNJ Inclusive Excellence. LP is a fee-based academic support and coaching program intended to close performance gaps for students with disabilities who, in

addition to ADA accommodations, benefit from extra guidance in college. Lions Plus students work toward developing and establishing habits and skills that promote independence, self advocacy, and forming positive social relationships by focusing on time management, tracking and organizing assignments, and addressing other challenges that arise throughout the semester.

Lions Plus enrolled its maximum number of students for the entirety of FY25, raising **over \$250,000** in program revenue and helping develop and retain students who might otherwise have dropped out or never even matriculated. Applications for Lions Plus FY26 will open later this summer, with preliminary interest already matching last year's.

ARC Week & Trainings

To align with the mission of the office, the Accessibility Resource Center spent this past year fostering understanding and respect for navigating education, community and careers with a disability. By promoting awareness of disability as a facet of diversity, and embedding social justice into its collaborative efforts, ARC has continued to support the Division's strategic goals of enhancing campus-wide accountability and effectiveness. This was exemplified in the inaugural event series, **ARC Week**, held March 10-14, 2025. ARC Week consisted of 5 days of events, with over **20 presentations** offered and a panel discussion held by the faculty of the Special Education department within the School of Education.

Outside of ARC Week, ARC provided **25 departmental trainings** to faculty, staff, and students. These included multiple student staff trainings for both Residential Education and the Tutoring Center on working with students with disabilities, specifically those who are neurodiverse. ARC also supported Admissions in 2 virtual orientation sessions in the Spring 2025 semester, as well as in all 5 on-campus events held throughout the academic year.

Genio AI

Countless technologies, both simple and sophisticated, form the basis of modern accessibility practices. With the recent explosion of AI tools, accessibility technology is likely to be revolutionized yet again, and far more rapidly. ARC has therefore partnered with **Genio AI** to bring a suite of academic AI tools to students receiving accommodations. The Genio platform includes transcription, notetaking, summarization, quizzes and Q&As, and other solutions in a single secure service, available across user devices and managed centrally by ARC and IT administrators.

Piloted throughout FY25, Genio (previously branded as "Glean") proved to be a highly effective supplement to - and in some cases replacement for - more established technologies such as CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation). Students with auditory and visual impairments reported greatly improved experiences with classroom engagement and comfort, while ARC staff themselves found it useful to summarize and track meeting notes and even conference presentations. Although currently limited to students receiving accommodations through ARC, this also represents TCNJ's first formal institutional usage of AI tools in academic settings. ARC will continue to work closely with its partners in Academic Affairs, Operations, and General Counsel to ensure this rollout is as responsible, equitable, and beneficial as possible.

Intercultural Affairs

Interculturalism by the Numbers

The Intercultural Center, located on the second floor of Roscoe West and first opened in 2021, is proving one of the most popular event venues on campus. It hosted **289 events** in FY25, more than one per operating day on average. There was clear growth from Fall 2024, with **121 events**, to Spring 2025, with **168 events**. It did so at no direct charge to the community, and with particular priority given to student organizations and student-driven academic & cultural events.

The Intercultural Center operations team, consisting entirely of students and overseen by ICA Director **Jordan Shyi**, also continues to grow in skill and scope. Originally a team of less than five, there are now more than a dozen Operations Assistants and Peer Educators working in Intercultural Affairs. In FY25 they partnered with **over 100 campus groups**, including 58 student organizations and 26 different departments and offices.

Summer Programs

Operation Justice & Equity entered its third year of the program with an enrollment of **12 students**, with approximately half completing the post-assessment. **100 percent of participants** polled indicated that the program exceeded or greatly exceeded their expectations and helped them feel more connected to the TCNJ community prior to their arrival on-campus. The strongest learning outcomes reported by the respondents were: *Thinking Critically about Social Issues*, *Deeper Self-Awareness* and *Increased Excitement about Attending TCNJ*. OJE participants have gone on to serve in a variety of campus leadership roles, serving as Student Government representatives, Amnesty International and PRISM executive members, peer mentors and community advisers, and in a variety of on-campus jobs.

Inclusive Excellence and the Office of Mentoring, Retention, and Success Programs (MRSP) introduced Operation First Scholars, a pre-Welcome Week program designed to prepare incoming first-generation college students for campus success. The program welcomed **19 participants** and held a staff of **5 student coaches**. The participants were introduced to a variety of self-efficacy skills, such as financial literacy, study habits, self-advocacy in the classroom and workplace, and mental health care. Respondents in the post-program evaluation indicated a greater confidence for managing campus obligations, increased sense of preparedness for dealing with challenges, and a stronger connection to the TCNJ community. Both program's participants also met their FYC 100 requirements, managed through the Center for Community Engagement.

First Generation Success

More than **30 percent of TCNJ students** are first generation college students, defined as neither of their parents/guardians having completed a four year degree program in the United States. The transition into undergraduate life is especially challenging for those experiencing it for potentially the first time in their family's history. As such, Inclusive Excellence maintains a number of programs and partnerships on campus to minimize this burden and foster a strong community of first generation students and faculty. ICA's Graduate Assistant for First Generation Success, **Kylie Suarez**, led more than a half dozen events dedicated to this goal, such as the First Gen Kick-Off, Mental Health Luncheon, First-Gen Parents & Families

series, and First Gen Fast Facts series. Over **250 first generation students** and dozens of first gen staff and faculty attended, attesting to both a growing awareness of First Generation identity and a huge number of First Gen students still to be reached.

Inclusive Excellence and MRSP also inducted its fourth class of **Alpha Alpha Alpha**, a national honor society for first-generation college students. In April 2025, TCNJ inducted its largest Tri-Alpha class yet, with 85 sophomores, juniors, and seniors being recognized. Additionally, Tri-Alpha established its inaugural Executive Board, whose membership served as content planners and volunteers for First-Generation Success initiatives throughout the year.

Women & LGBTQIA+ Success

Inclusive Excellence was proud to establish its first Graduate Assistantship for Women & LGBTQIA+ success. Graduate Assistant **Kayla Ailey** joined the ICA team in FY25 to help formalize existing efforts with this community and partners like PRISM and TCNJ PRIDE, and to bring their own flair to entirely new initiatives. Growing into the role both personally and professionally, Kayla hosted new and wildly successful events like Girls & Gays do DnD and the Empowered Women Slumber Party that saw over 200 attendees. Simple but sincere efforts like these, combined with more formal events like the Temple of You and Code Switching workshop series and the Empowered Women Ball, helped affirm a campus culture that is both welcoming and celebrating of all its members. Over 180 students attended these events, with a sense the surface is only being scratched.

For the last ten years, it has been the distinct privilege of the TCNJ community to **honor its graduating LGBTQIA+ and Allied students** with an annual Lavender Graduation ceremony. What began as an unofficial event organized by a small group of dedicated faculty and staff has grown into a key part of the TCNJ experience - and a signature event of Inclusive Excellence and its partners. In truth, it cannot be called anything less than a legacy: a Lavender Legacy. Reenvisioned in recognition of 10 years of achievement, the **First Annual Lavender Legacy ceremony** saw the largest ever Lavender Class with over 50 students recognized, and a standing-room-only crowd overflowing with love, joy, and pride.

Men of Color Success

Brother 2 Brother (B2B), TCNJ's chapter of a national organization focused on increasing the number of men of color that graduate from college, grew further into its own in FY25. The gentlemen of B2B hosted **eight events** throughout the academic year, bringing in approximately 150 unique attendees.

In an effort to introduce B2B to more male students of color at TCNJ and to strengthen attendees' leadership skills and self-defined concepts of masculinity, Inclusive Excellence sponsored the Men of Initiative & Impact Retreat in February 2025. 25 students applied and were invited to attend a day-long retreat with sessions varying in topics led by **Brenden Durell**, an intimacy expert, coach, mentor, and tantra guide specializing in mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

To conclude its year, B2B introduced its first **Rites of Passage ceremony**, a ritual honoring the graduating senior-class leaders of the group and formally passing responsibilities on to the following year's executive board. 4 graduating seniors were honored in front of an encouraging audience of 20 community members, including TCNJ faculty, staff, and students.

Signature Programs

The Office of Intercultural Affairs proudly continued its diverse series of signature events in FY25, most notably the Cultural Block Party, Social Action Summit, Fandom Fest, the Multicultural Fashion Show, and PAA Talks.

The **Cultural Block Party**, entering its third year and held early each Fall, brought in its highest number of attendees to date. The casual, creative, fair-like atmosphere brings together new and returning students in a uniquely TCNJ way. Since its inception, the Block Party has increased its attendance by approximately 25 each year. Involvement from partnered cultural organizations has become a key part of early-year recruitment efforts, attracting a little more than half of all registered and independent cultural and identity-based organizations - who themselves form the core of the Party.

The **Social Action Summit**, formerly called the Diversity Summit, hosted an audience of approximately 160 total students, staff, faculty, and guests from the Ewing and Trenton communities. In partnership with the Center for Community Engagement - several of whose Bonner Scholars facilitated sessions - attendees engaged in a group service project that prepared over 500 lunches for Trenton school children. With 15 educational sessions offered throughout the day, and a delicious and culturally expansive meal prepared by TCNJ Dining Services, the Summit was designed to attract both on and off-campus community members and stakeholders. Tailoring the Summit's program to appeal to non-TCNJ community members, especially educators and non-profit leaders, helped make this an especially impactful Summit in deeply challenging times.

PAA Talks 2025, a TED-talk style spoken word event featuring the voices and stories of Asian & Asian American students, enjoyed its highest audience since its inception in 2021. Over 140 audience members packed into Mayo Concert Hall to hear their peers' most sincere experiences with life and identity in America laid bare. ICA and the Pan-Asian Alliance were humbled to make space for **six incredible** undergraduate student speakers who took the stage in May. But getting on that stage required a series of storytelling workshops and coaching sessions throughout the Spring 2025. Speakers spent over 20 hours exploring the details and refining the delivery of their stories, and to great success. PAA Talk 2025 was also the first to feature an outside partner in AAPI New Jersey, an statewide advocacy organization, who presented on their work and shared opportunities to participate in various civic engagement initiatives.

Educational outreach informs all aspects of Intercultural Affairs, and its diverse team of **Inclusion Peer Educators** received 28 requests for workshops and sessions this year, an increase of 40 percent from last year. The Peer Educator team facilitated sessions for **18 unique organizations and groups**, including student organizations, academic faculty, and during campus conferences. Of those 18 requestors, 5 ended up requesting multiple follow-up sessions throughout the year. With a steady growth in peer education since 2022, it is clear that a more intentional approach of outreach to student organizers has begun to result in greater interest in such services.

Student Highlights

Inclusive Excellence also wants to proudly congratulate its student leaders on several accomplishments this year. Recently, **eight student staff** members presented research during eleven different sessions at the Celebration of Student Achievement (COSA). Also, three student leaders were inducted into the 2025 Blue & Gold Hall of Fame: **Naia Moore**, an Intercultural Affairs Intern and Operation Justice & Equity Facilitator; **Quincy James**, B2B Vice President and Operation First Scholars Student Coach; and **Joseph Soliwoda-Doan**, B2B's Education Chair. Student leaders like these represent the best of what the TCNJ community offers, and it is a privilege to have benefitted from their service in both Intercultural Affairs and all of campus.

Inclusive Excellence maintains some of the most robust graduate assistant positions (GAs) at TCNJ. These paraprofessionals are staff in all but title, working directly alongside their full-time counterparts to design and implement innovative new programs, projects, events, and more. They are the front line; the boots on the ground; the sergeants leading risky missions to advance strategic goals. Losing a GA, even under the best of circumstances, is felt by everyone in the Division and by hundreds of their campus peers. This year, Inclusive Excellence says farewell to **Kylie Suarez**, Graduate Assistant for First Generation Student Success, and **Victoria "Via" Varnavas**, Graduate Assistant for Men of Color Success. Kylie will be concluding her degree in clinical mental health counseling in 2026 while working as a mental health technician. Via will be starting a career as an English ESL & Spanish teacher. Congratulations - and a sincere thank you - to both of these exceptional leaders.

Equal Employment Opportunity

Equal Opportunity by the Numbers

The college's EEO Officer and Associate Vice President for Inclusive Excellence, **Dr. Crystel Maldonado**, leads both official EEO investigations required by statute and the Bias Caseload Team (BCT), a cross functional group that investigates community standard and student conduct violations affecting protected categories such as race, gender, sexuality, and age. She and BCT respectively reviewed **11 EEO cases** and **50 bias incidents** in FY25. The review process entailed determining if the College policy had been violated and what would be the best course of action to address the incident.

The number of **EEO investigations** was up slightly from FY24 (10, +1). The majority of EEO investigations (7) were initiated by complaints from staff (4) and faculty (3). Two (2) student complaints against college employees led to EEO investigations, while two (2) additional investigations stemmed from complaints brought forth by the institution. Staff composed the majority of respondents with eleven (11) staff being investigated in FY25, compared to only three (3) faculty. Race (4), disability (3), and retaliation (3) were the most common protected categories investigated. Incidents on the basis of sexual harassment, sex/gender, and age discrimination were each investigated twice (2). Outcomes for EEO complaints were diverse: three (3) were referred to Human Resources and one (1) to Title IX; two (2) were addressed satisfactorily by conversations with affected parties; three (3) complaints were voluntarily withdrawn/not investigated, and two (2) are pending outcomes as of June 2025. Of the remainder, one (1) was dismissed as it did not meet the policy threshold, and one (1) was addressed through an alternative education resolution process. It is important to note that there were instances in which a case had multiple outcomes/points of referral.

The number of unique **bias incidents** was down slightly from FY24 (54, -4). BCT reviewed 20 instances of biased harassment, 9 bias-based acts of vandalism, 3 cases of disorderly conduct, 2 of bias-based intimidation, and 16 other bias incidents not falling into traditional categories. Since bias incidents often cut across more than one protected category, there are numerically more complainants/victims (57) than incidents (50). As in years past, racially charged bias incidents against Black/African American were the most common, with 15 of 57 victims - more than a quarter - identifying as such. Bias against Jewish and Arab/Muslim students is also on the rise, with eleven (11) and (6) being victims of bias in FY25, respectively. The highest profile bias incident in FY25 stemmed from a group chat maintained by College Republicans, in which messages were exchanged and individual LGBTQIA+ students targeted - overall, 7 LGBTQ students reported bias incidents in FY25. Bias against Asian students was higher than in years past, with five (5) incidents reported, while physical and mental disability represented another five (5) bias incidents. Lastly, three (3) bias incidents against women were reported and investigated by BCT.

The most common resolution for bias incidents was a referral to Student Conduct for investigation, results of which are reported as appropriate by the Office of Student Conduct. Twenty one (21) bias incidents were referred to Student Conduct. A further nineteen (19) were resolved through educational interventions and conversations, usually reserved for those incidents in which harm was done but no clear violation of policy occurred. Ten (10) bias incidents were handled by Residential

Education staff and policies, while facilities affected the removal/repair of vandalism for seven (7) incidents. Five (5) bias reports were referred to Campus Police for follow-up. For the three (3) incidents involving non-matriculated students, Admissions investigated to determine if rescinding of acceptance was appropriate. Two (2) bias incidents were referred to Title IX, with one (1) additional incident resulting in an EEO investigation. Two (2) bias incidents each were referred to the TCNJ CARES team for additional outreach, and to Inclusive Excellence leadership for further consideration and intervention.

Professional Development

In January 2025, the College launched the "**Avoiding Discrimination within the Workplace**" online training as part of ongoing efforts to comply with state-mandated EEO requirements. This essential training equips employees with the tools to recognize, prevent, and respond to discriminatory behavior, helping to foster a more inclusive and respectful work environment. In addition to completing the training, employees were also required to review relevant College policies associated with workplace conduct, equity, and nondiscrimination - **1089 TCNJ employees** completed the module. This added step ensures that all employees are not only aware of behavioral expectations but are also familiar with the institutional policies that guide community standards. This training module remains live and accessible to new employees, ensuring all members of the TCNJ community, regardless of when they begin their employment, are given a clear understanding of their responsibilities in maintaining an equitable workplace where everyone can feel valued, respected, and safe.

As part of Inclusive Excellence's policy equity audit initiative, EEO hosted a series of **policy review and revision workshops led by Dr. Nicole Pulliam**. Designed specifically for TCNJ's governance and community framework, the 4 sessions equipped participants with the tools to evaluate college policies through an equity lens. **Over 130 attendees** explored the meaning of equity in policy development, learned how to apply TCNJ's new Policy Equity Rubric, and practiced conducting an equity-informed policy review. The training included two components: an overview of equity-centered theory and best practices, followed by a hands-on workshop using a current college policy. With a firmer understanding of how equity issues manifest in policy, and reliable measures for locating and tracking them, the campus community can more confidently plan its policy review practices with equity at the forefront.

Looking Ahead

The Division of Inclusive Excellence is encouraged by its progress this past year and is looking forward to maintaining the momentum towards its FY26 goals. These objectives reflect TCNJ's shared commitment to inclusivity and accessibility through strategy, partnership, and accountability. Such meaningful, unified actions will prove critical to future success and efficacy.

Goals & Priorities FY26

New and Renewed Partnerships

As the Division's units grow in reach and impact, Inclusive Excellence remains focused on two points of relationship building: strengthening current partnerships and establishing new pathways to other campus partners. Inclusive Excellence has benefited from tremendous success in co-directed initiatives with the Office of Mentoring, Retention, and Success Programs, Dining Services, Student Life, as well as individual academic departments. Some areas that Inclusive Excellence will introduce new initiatives will be between Intercultural Affairs with student-serving areas, such as Residential Education and Housing, Athletics, and Community Engagement; Equal Employment Opportunity Programs and Human Resources; and the Office of the Vice President for Inclusive Excellence and Academic Affairs and the Office of Government and Community Relations.

These efforts will be particularly effective when paired with external initiatives and work groups. They provide a higher level of decision-making and responsibility to groups like BEST, which will be charged with reviewing funding requests from campus partners and ensuring that allocated division resources are directly aligned with and actively advancing the Division's mission.

Implementing New Technologies

ARC oversees several substantial projects initiated in FY25 that they will carry forward, including wider implementation of Genio, an AI software platform designed to support learners with accommodations through notetaking, transcription, summarization, and test prep. If successful for student accommodations, and policy permitting, Genio could be implemented campus-wide for all students. Equally important will be ARC's expansion of ADA compliance training to include all TCNJ employees. These efforts will help actualize key physical and social infrastructure that expands the community's understanding of and access to accommodations, while enhancing quality of life for everyone on campus.

Assessment, Assessment, Assessment

Looking ahead to the coming year, a key area of focus will be leveraging assessment more effectively to inform best practices and drive continuous improvement. By utilizing a variety of assessment tools and strategies, Inclusive Excellence will aim to collect and collate meaningful data to better understand the experiences and outcomes of all members of the TCNJ community, identify areas for improvement, and tailor initiatives to advance inclusion and belonging for all. Inclusive Excellence will help foster a professional culture where data is actively used to guide decision-making at all levels. This enables setting measurable goals, monitoring progress, and ensuring initiatives have the intended impact on the intended

population. By making assessment the cornerstone of planning and reflection, TCNJ and Inclusive Excellence commit themselves to becoming a more data-driven institution, able to adapt and improve in response to community needs.

Enacting the Comprehensive Strategic Plan

The comprehensive strategic plan that resulted from year-long work by CIE and CSPP serves as a comprehensive and mission-driven roadmap to guide TCNJ over the next five years. Carefully designed through a collaborative and inclusive process, this plan encapsulates the institution's shared values and strategic priorities, ensuring that each initiative is firmly rooted in TCNJ's enduring commitments to academic excellence, institutional equity, and student success. It reflects a progressive vision that promotes inclusive excellence, fosters innovation in teaching and research, and safeguards the long-term vitality and resilience of the College.

In transitioning from planning to implementation, preparations are currently underway to broadly socialize the Strategic Plan across the campus community. This will include engaging stakeholders through a variety of forums, communication and promotion campaigns, and integration strategies to ensure widespread understanding, alignment, and ownership. The plan's formal launch is anticipated for early FY26 and will serve as a catalyst for collective action, accountability, and measurable progress in advancing TCNJ's mission and impact.

Executive Orders & Protecting Civil Rights

Inclusive Excellence and college leadership are acutely aware of risks posed by federal and state-level decisions. Proactive monitoring of and contingency planning for rapid changes in official policy are and will remain a top priority. The Division will continue to stay abreast of all executive orders and federal guidance - particularly those that affect higher education and campus civil rights, namely freedom of speech and academic freedom, biased speech and hate crime, and global/international studies. Attentiveness to these developments helps ensure that steps taken towards a respectful and open campus remain secure.

Executive Summary

The Division of Inclusive Excellence is composed of four interdependent units - the Office of the Vice President (VP), Accessibility Resources & the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC), Intercultural Affairs and the Intercultural Center (ICA), and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO).

Office of the Vice President

In FY25, Vice President Tacquice Wiggan Davis oversaw a number of new projects and initiatives designed to advance Inclusive Excellence: the **Nursing Mentoring Hub** led by Dr. Yolanda Nelson; the **Academic Diversity Officers**, mission-driven faculty projects on topics such as Pell-eligibility, immigrant justice, and faculty allyship; a **comprehensive Strategic Plan** designed to address the financial, societal, and academic goals of TCNJ; and the **Employee Affinity Groups** consisting of the Women's Professional Network, Parent Network, PRIDE, the Minority Executive Council, and Asian & Asian American Pacific Islander Coalition. Furthermore, Dr. Davis was instrumental to a successful meeting with NJ State Senator **Shirley Turner**, who introduced a resolution securing \$250k for TCNJ's Office of Mentoring, Retention, and Success Programs (MRSP).

Accessibility Resources

Under the directorship of Megan Guiry, Accessibility Resources grew to new heights. **1846 students** were associated with ARC in Spring 2025 - an increase of almost 200 students/12 percent from the previous semester. This reflects a caseload-per-specialist of **500 to 600 students**. ARC administered over **1720 exams** in FY25. All indications are that these numbers will continue to grow, and that incoming students will be increasingly likely to request accommodations. Thankfully, ARC has recently hired a third Accessibility Specialist in **Lolly Cheatham**, who brings a unique accessible tech expertise to the team. Her first day is July 1, 2025. **Lions Plus Program**, revitalized under Learning Specialists Allison Larthey and Kartika Kumari, enrolled its maximum number of students in FY25. Designed to coach students on independence, executive functioning, self-advocacy, and positive socialization, Lions Plus brought in over **\$250,000 in revenue**. Finally, ARC has therefore partnered with Genio AI (aka Glean) to bring a suite of academic AI tools to students receiving accommodations. The Genio platform includes transcription, notetaking, summarization, quizzes and Q&As, and more in a single secure service.

Intercultural Affairs

The Intercultural Center has proved itself one of the most popular event venues on campus. The IC hosted **289 events** in FY25, more than one per operating day on average. It did so at no direct charge to the community, and with particular priority given to student organizations and student-driven academic & cultural events. The Intercultural Center operations team, consisting entirely of students and overseen by Intercultural Affairs (ICA) Director Jordan Shyi, also continues to grow. There are now more than a dozen Operations Assistants and Peer Educators working in Intercultural Affairs - three of whom were selected for the Blue & Gold Hall of Fame this past May. In FY25 they partnered with over **100 campus groups**, including 58 student orgs and 26 departments, for events, training, and celebrations. These were supported by the efforts of the Inclusive Excellence graduate assistants for First Generation Student Success, Men of Color Success, and Women & LGBTQIA+ Success. They contributed to successes such as: the **most successful Lavender Legacy** ceremony for graduating LGBTQ seniors, the **inaugural Rites of Passage ceremony** for graduating men of color, and the induction of the **TCNJ's largest Alpha Alpha Alpha class** of First Generation student scholars.

Equal Employment Opportunity

The college's EEO Officer, Dr. Crystel Maldonado, oversees both EEO investigations required by statute and the Bias Caseload Team (BCT), a cross functional group that investigates community standard and student conduct violations affecting protected categories. In FY25, **11 EEO cases** and **50 bias incidents** were investigated, compared to 10 and 54 in FY24, respectively. The majority of EEO complaints in FY25 were referred to HR, addressed via mediation, or voluntarily withdrawn; two are still pending outcomes. The majority of bias incidents were referred to Student Conduct, Residential Education, or Campus Police for investigation and adjudication, with 19 incidents being addressed directly by BCT members. EEO also launched an **anti-discrimination online training module** in FY25, completed by nearly 1100 TCNJ employees.