

### Commencement 2021

Congratulations are in order for the Class of 2021 graduates of the independent colleges and universities of New Jersey. Our 14 member institutions were able to celebrate commencement this year with a series of socially distanced in-person ceremonies that were also live streamed to accommodate additional guests who, because of state mandated size restrictions, could not attend. About a quarter of our schools also invited the Class of 2020 back to have an in-person commencement experience. In every case, however, degrees were conferred and a crop of newly minted alums has entered society ready to help make valuable contributions to the world and to our state. Congratulations, graduates!

### Several Independent Colleges offering COVID Vaccines to local community

Bloomfield College, Georgian Court University, Saint Elizabeth University, Saint Peter's University, Drew University, Princeton University, and Seton Hall University are among the New Jersey independent institutions [offering the COVID vaccine](#) to their respective local community members.

### Merger News

The Independent College Fund of New Jersey (ICFNJ) was founded in 1953 as a cooperative effort involving business and academic leaders of New Jersey to broaden financial support for and awareness of independent higher education. The Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of New Jersey (AICUNJ) was founded in 1966 to collectively represent the individual colleges and universities of New Jersey at the state legislature. These two organizations are in the process of completing a merger – to the single non-profit organization, Independent Colleges and Universities of New Jersey (ICUNJ) – to build upon synergies and to more efficiently and effectively advocate on behalf of the students who are served by independent colleges and universities in New Jersey. The Boards of both entities have voted to approve the Plan of Merger in May. The Bylaws will go forward to the new Board of Trustees for review. Upon completion of the merger, the ICUNJ Board will be comprised of the 14 independent college and university presidents plus four executives from the New Jersey corporate community. The organization will also be supported by 60 corporate leaders from across the state of New Jersey who will serve as a Board of Advisors.

### Monmouth University President Recognized for Work in Diversity

Monmouth University president, Patrick F. Leahy has been named one of the [“Top 50 Leaders in Higher Education”](#) by the National Diversity Council. The award, which is given out at their annual National Diversity & Leadership Conference, recognizes people in higher education that contribute to the growth of their students, organization, and community, while being active in mentoring the next generation of education professionals.

“I am honored to be recognized among such a distinguished group of educational, business, and technology leaders who are committed to fully embracing diversity and inclusion,” Leahy said in a press release.

### Bloomfield College president recognized with NAACP award

Bloomfield College President Marcheta P. Evans was bestowed with a [President's Award as a “thought leader”](#) by the Oranges and Maplewood Branch of the NAACP at its 108th annual Freedom Fund Gala, held virtually on May 8. This year's event theme was “When We Fight, We Win.”

“The NAACP has made significant strides to advance our quest for justice and equality, for all people,” Evans said. “There is nothing more powerful and rewarding than to know you have had a hand in transforming someone's life, helping them realize their full potential. At Bloomfield College, we have the opportunity and responsibility to be those change agents.”

### More Campuses Mandating the Vaccine for Fall 2021

[Saint Peter's University](#), [Saint Elizabeth University](#), and [Seton Hall University](#) have now joined the 5 New Jersey independent colleges previously requiring the vaccination ([Fairleigh Dickinson University](#), [Princeton University](#), [Stevens Institute of Technology](#), [Drew University](#), and [Rider University](#)). These institutions have decided to mandate the COVID vaccine for students in the fall. Stevens and Seton Hall University have also required that faculty and staff be vaccinated before returning to campus in the fall. This effort will help to ensure that students returning to campus are protected from the virus, and will lend to a more vibrant campus life than last year.

### Student Corner

Congratulations to ICFNJ Scholar, Matthew Marquardt, Princeton Class of 2021! Matthew graduated in May as a chemistry major and an entrepreneurship minor and was the recipient of the BD Advancing Healthcare Scholarship. Matthew says “Receiving the ICFNJ scholarship will help me pursue my dreams of becoming a physician. Medical school is notoriously expensive, so any opportunity to reduce the burden of those costs is an incredible gift that I cannot thank the ICFNJ enough for.” Matthew will be starting Medical School at the Ohio State University in August and intends to pursue a career as an orthopedic surgeon or neurosurgeon. Congratulations and best wishes to Matthew and all of our to all our graduating ICFNJ scholars as they continue to pursue their future endeavors!