



THE CENTURION

“The Voice of the Students”



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Welcoming President Jones to Bucks

Anna Sztenderowicz
Centurion Staff

On the presidential terrace of historic Tyler Hall overlooking Tyler gardens, sitting under a shady umbrella while indulging in blueberry muffins and biscuits, Dr. Patrick M. Jones reminisced on his past accomplishments and experiences and how they have prepared him to take on the presidency at Bucks County Community College.

Jones assumed the presidency at Bucks in July 2024. As an accomplished leader and a strong advocate of student education, Jones’s ambitious strategic vision will hopefully lay a greater foundation for the college’s future growth and success.

Prior to becoming the president of Bucks, Jones served in the military for 30 years, joining the Army right after graduating high school in 1981.

“The Army gave me structure, there were adults that really cared about me and gave me tough love



Photo of Dr. Jones Courtesy of Anna Sztenderowicz

when needed... I was sent to Germany where I learned German, and it opened my whole worldview. You learn how to be a team and learn how to be something greater than yourself,” Jones

stated. After spending three years of active duty in the Army, Jones commissioned as an officer in the Air Force where he completed Squadron Officer School, Air

Command and Staff College, and Air War College, which allowed him to gain knowledge in leadership, management, and strategic thinking.

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Upcoming Events



9/27
Big Laughs Comedy with Taylor Mason

8:30-9:30 p.m.
Zlock Performing Arts Center

10/3
Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration

12:15-1:30 p.m.
Gallagher Room
(Newtown Campus)

10/7
Pizza with the President

12-1 p.m.
Gallagher Room
(Newtown Campus)

Jones Faces Big Challenges in New Role

Anna Sztenderowicz
Centurion Staff

As Dr. Patrick Jones takes the reins at Bucks, he faces two key challenges – boosting enrollment and fixing the college’s finances.

During Covid-19, low enrollment numbers left the college with a \$5.5 million deficit. This deficit was eliminated through laying off six full-time employees and putting other cost-saving measures into place.

“The shortfalls from lower enrollment and other issues during the pandemic causing the deficit to the college were bridged back together by federal funding,” Bucks’ Chief Financial Officer, Niels C. Christensen stated.

Jones elaborated, “We are projecting a balanced budget this year, there is no deficit. That does not mean there is no debt that has to be serviced. We

will not spend more money than what we bring in.” Current student enrollment this semester is 5,281 students, up 2.1 percent from the previous year. Prior to the pandemic, enrollment was 7,000 to 8,000 students.

The number of United States high school graduates is predicted to climax in 2025 and is expected to hit a demographic cliff in 2026, posing serious issues for colleges throughout the country.

“There are just fewer 18-year-olds graduating, because they were never born. That’s the challenge, nothing we can do will make these people reappear,” Jones said.

“We need to help the people who aren’t coming to college. People who are considered N.E.E.T., not in employment, education or training. There are a lot of

people who don’t realize college is right for them, they will be the new target demographic, we need to show them that Bucks is right for them,” he said.

In preparation for this demographic cliff, Jones said first, “we need to make sure people know that Bucks exists, and that we are here for them.”

“Two, we need to have degree programs that are relevant to students’ interests and make sure our portfolio of programs matches employer needs. Three, we have to retain students once they are here, we are providing education and connecting students to resources.”

“Four, partnerships. We must collaborate with employers in the county who can then employ students.” Having the vision to educate and prepare students to make effective contributions to their chosen professions

will enhance the community.

Bucks’ projected goals for 2026 to 2028 include helping students meet their academic and career goals, prioritizing initiatives to foster well-being through culture, offering programs that are responsive to emerging students, community and employer educational needs and achieving sustainable financial health.

As for the possibility of staff reductions, Jones said, “I am hoping we will never have to get to the point where we have to lay people off.”

On Sept. 6, Jones announced that there will be a strategic hiring freeze. “Strategic meaning it does not mean we are not hiring; it means we are going to be very rigorous and careful in our hiring, so we don’t get to the point where we need a smaller work-

force. It would be irresponsible to not plan.”

Cross-training faculty and staff in other areas of expertise will enable them to have a more stable employment. “Rather than lay people off, can we help them cross train in areas if they are interested and capable to do so. Once you have a good employee, you want to keep them.”

On one recent late summer day, with the warm sun beaming off of him, Jones admired the Tyler Gardens below and let out a sigh. He knows the weight of the college is on his shoulders. There is much to be done.

Bucks News

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Bucks Clubs Provide Opportunities to Students

Samantha Davidson
Centurion Staff

Choosing to attend a community college is a multifaceted decision that offers education at a reduced cost, a flexible schedule, and the ability for personal growth. Despite the benefits of attending a community college, being a commuter student can be pretty alienating.

Typical college experiences like a roommate, or living independently generally do not exist at a commuter school. When classes end for the day, many students flow out into the parking lot, rather than staying on campus with friends or classmates.

As a result of these campus culture differences, it can feel like attending community college is a tad isolating. Getting involved with the clubs at Bucks can be a great way to combat these differences.

Three clubs on campus, the BC3 Music Society, the Chess Club, and the Biology Club, are all available for any student to join. Despite the broad range of interests and missions associated with these clubs, a common theme seemed to emerge:

the need for members.

Clubs and organizations are made great by the community that supports them, and what club wouldn't benefit from a little more support?

For the music lovers, the BC3 Music Society presents a unique opportunity to hone your craft- without the pressure of taking dedicated music courses. Club President Sophia Derstine made it clear that BC3 is a melting pot of musicians of all types.

The current club is made up of 30 plus singers and instrumentalists. Throughout the semester, club members meet every Tuesday and Thursday from 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. in the Music and Multimedia Center.

Eventually, these musicians split into smaller groups- with the end goal of forming small bands. Because the bands are formed and operated by the students, the students retain full power over the genre of music they play.

These bands will perform at 2 showcases- once in the fall, and the second in the spring. Additionally, if all goes according to plan, the bands will perform at a variety of smaller events throughout the semester.

Specifically, reviving karaoke nights and open mic nights are among club goals for the year. Aside from this, President Sophie Derstine simply hopes to bring people together- possibly the most important function of a club.

The Chess Club is another organization managed with the goal of togetherness. On Mondays -Thursdays between the hours of 12:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m., the chess club holds court in the cafeteria.

Unlike typical academic or service clubs, the Chess Club truly represents the term "social club."

The cafeteria does not have doors, but if it did, the proverbial doors would be flung wide open for new members.

No chess experience, supplies, or even knowledge is a requirement to join- everything you need will be provided by the school or by current club members.

Chess Club co-President Matthew Duffin said, "This semester I'm really hoping that a lot of people make friends at this club- because that's what it's all about you know? Anybody can pick up and play chess, that's the easy part."

"The best part in my opinion is getting to know people, because that's the connection. The connection is what you're really doing it for when it comes to clubs at Bucks County Community College."

The Biology Club is also seeking new members. Their first club meeting served as a brainstorming session for possible club events this year.

Ideas like fossil hunting, planter painting, trips to the zoo, trips to longwood gardens were tossed around. Biology club is filled with fun, friends, and applied learning of scientific concepts.

Any parties interested in Biology, or in fun, biology related experiences should contact club President Ruby Parker, or attend biweekly Tuesday meetings in the science center. Just like the other two clubs mentioned previously, the Biology Club would love to see some new faces- science major or not!

Check out Bucks+ on Suitable if you are interested in these clubs and many more. Available on the App Store.

Wordsmiths Series Begins with Nathan Spoon

Jordan Evans
Centurion Staff

The Wordsmiths Poetry Series began the academic year with poet Nathan Spoon, who recited some of his works on Thursday, Sept. 12 at Bucks in the Hicks Art Center.

Spoon is an autistic poet who paints a picture with his words.

The art displayed throughout the room was made by self-taught artists with disabilities, just like Spoon and his poems. The theme of the exhibit was "Dreams of Flora and Fauna" and was funded in part by the Cultural Affairs Committee.

Language and Literature Professor Ethel Rackin spoke before Spoon came up to read.

Rackin spoke of the importance of poetry by pointing out that "poems allow us to process our thoughts."

Upon coming up to the front of the room, Spoon was admittedly nervous. He described his written expression disorder, saying that it made it hard for him to put thoughts into language. But he added that poetry helps because it is impossible to do wrong.

Spoon started with a poem called, "Abraham Lake." It was an image of nature and the realization that every-

thing is not what it seems. Throughout, he expressed a longing for who he once was.

His second poem had similar themes as the first. He expressed a hunger for attention, a longing for knowledge, and a fear of himself buried in the soil of his own soul. "Cuddly Camo" was the title of Spoon's third poem. In it he describes holding onto the romanticism of the past while incorporating it into the present. He describes himself as being "tickled" into writing and the irony of being stuck between two worlds.

Spoon's poems captivated

the whole room. The poetry reading was a part of the annual Wordsmiths Poetry Reading Series held at the college. For more informa-

tion regarding the scheduled readings for this semester, visit <https://www.bucks.edu/academics/departments/languages/wordsmiths>



Photo courtesy of BCCC website

Welcoming President Jones to Bucks

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"The biggest thing that shaped my life is learning to appreciate being a part of a larger team and how you must be able to work together. There is rigor in being a part of a team," he said.

During 9/11, Jones was a Major in the Air National Guard. Planning on retiring before the terrorist attacks, he extended his contract and stayed in service for another 10 years and retired as a Colonel in October 2011.

The military gave Jones the opportunity to put himself through college. He studied Music and Conducting at George Mason University, Conducting at Uni-

versity of Calgary, Music Education at West Chester University and Pennsylvania State University, where he completed his Ph.D.

From 2011 to 2016, Jones worked at Syracuse University as Director of the Setnor School of Music, as the Special Assistant to the Vice Chancellor for Veteran and Military Affairs and Director of Veteran Enrollment Practice.

Until 2019, Jones was the Assistant Vice President at Drexel University. Before he joined Bucks, he was a college music professor and Chancellor for Pennsylvania State University-Schuylkill.

Having been involved

in higher education for his whole career, Jones knew he could do more.

"Like a lot of veterans, I went soul searching about what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I hired an executive coach. She helped me figure out that I had never thought about what I wanted to do. I wanted to have a bigger impact on life than running a music school," Jones explained.

Meeting with the Chancellor of Syracuse University, he was given the opportunity to become the Special Assistant to the Vice Chancellor for Veteran and Military Affairs, which he considered "a clean slate."

The Chair of the Board of Trustees, Thomas J. Jennings, has assisted Jones in making a smooth transition to the presidency. The former president of Bucks, Dr. Felicia Ganther, left nothing for a successor after abruptly resigning last year.

Possessing administrative and leadership experience from the military and academia enabled Jones to have the confidence to be successful at Bucks.

He maintains the philosophy of "Mission first, people always. Our mission is to change lives, that is what we do every day. Giving students access to education

and helping them achieve their dreams," Jones said.

The faculty and staff at Bucks are dedicated to that mission. "Here at the college, we focus on the mission to improve people's lives which are the students and take care of our teammates, which are the faculty and staff; they are not mission exclusive."

Entertainment



The Centurion Student Newspaper meets every Thursday at 12:30 p.m. in Rollins Room 127. Join us for free pizza and all things journalism!



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Around Bucks County

Fall Activities

Kassandra Castillo
Centurion Staff

Mornings are crisp, leaves are crunchy, football is back, and every coffee shop is selling pumpkin flavored lattes. This can only mean one thing: it is officially autumn!

The first official day of the Autumn Equinox begins at 8:43 a.m. EST on Sunday, Sept. 22. From this point on, daylight in the Northern Hemisphere will gradually grow shorter until the winter solstice due to the Earth's process of tilting away from the sun in the Northern Hemisphere.

It's time to put away summer clothes and get into some flannels and cozy socks. With the official kick off of fall starting, there are countless activities to do around Bucks to get into the spirit.

Bucks County, known for its vibrant farming and rural community is the perfect place to experience a beautiful autumn season. Bucks County stretches over 622 miles long, meaning there is much to explore:

Tyler State Park: Located right next to Buck's main campus, Tyler State Park is a great place for those who enjoy nature walks, a fresh breeze, and an outdoor blanket to lay and watch the leaves fall.

New Hope: Walking through New hope and window shopping through all the cute shops is a great

way to spend a free fall afternoon. Many bars and restaurants such as Havana, John & Peter's, and Bowman's Tavern offer live music on selected nights.

Peddlers Village: Located in Lahaska, PA, just 20 minutes from Buck's Newtown Campus, Peddlers Village is a great spot for those who like to spend some outdoor time with more than just trees to look at. Anyone who visits between now and Oct. 27 can enjoy the scarecrows in the Village, a free display of the most creative Scarecrows you can imagine.

Covered Bridges Tour: This self-guided tour is the perfect fall activity for those long-drive loving kind of folks. Pick the perfect playlist, roll the windows down and enjoy this tour which makes a large circle around through Bucks County and is designed so the travelers can start at any of the 12 remaining covered bridges left in the Bucks County area. Plan accordingly, as it can take up to four hours to complete the entire tour. (map outlines can be found on <https://www.visitbucks-county.com/things-to-do/covered-bridges/covered-bridge-tour/>)

Delaware Canal State Park: Grab a bike, and a picnic basket and head down to the Delaware Canal State Park, the only remaining intact canal in the area. Spend some outdoor time next to the water before it's



Photo of Tyler State Park, courtesy of Sami Dunkerley

too late!

Shady Brook Farm: From wagon light shows, pumpkin picking, apple picking, live music, and live animals, Shady Brook Farm has everything you need to fulfill your fall needs. The Fall Fest at Shady book runs now through Halloween, and with tickets starting at only \$15, it's a must for true Fall lovers.

Snipes Farm & Education: Those looking for a bit of a more authentic farm feel, Snipes Farm is the perfect place. They are offering horse-drawn wagon rides, pick your own flower fields, and giant hay pyramids for \$12 a ticket. Head over to pet the horses before they close at the end of October.

Ghost Tour of New Hope: Got a spooky side? Check out one of the private

tours offered on Main and Ferry Street in New Hope. Learn all about the phantom hitchhiker and hear all the scary stories carried on by residents who've lived long enough to tell the tale, over 40 years' worth! Based on the books of Adi-Kent Thomas Jeffrey, a best-selling author who research and investigated all her stories to bring you an accurate and haunting experience.

Bensalem Family Fall Festival: You cannot miss out on this community celebration in Bensalem. With live entertainment, music, food trucks, beer trucks and fireworks, this family friendly event is the place to be on Saturday Oct. 5. It's a one-day festival starting at 2:30 p.m. so make sure to mark your calendars!

Pumpkin Harvest Fes-

tival: Join Bountiful Acres on any Saturday and Sunday from Sept. 28- Oct. 27 to enjoy food trucks, obstacle courses, duck races, and so much more. Known as one of the few places in the area that cultivate pumpkins on site- it's worth the trip to Holicong, PA to pick out the perfect pumpkin.

Don't let fall slip away without checking out at least one of the many things Bucks County has to offer. This is a great time to enjoy the weather, make memories, and eat as many pumpkin and apple flavored things possible. Check out the Visit Bucks County website for more information on fall fun in the area.

Zlock Offers Exciting Fall Semester Lineup

Kassandra Castillo
Centurion Staff

Bucks Fall Semester 2024 has officially started, which not only means new students and new classes, but also new entertainment for the Zlock Performing Arts Center. This semester the Bucks community can look forward to almost weekly lineups of refreshing and exciting new talent.

With 15 events scheduled for this semester, there are a lot of interesting options for every type of audience member.

Kicking off the semester with a blue grass performance, attendees enjoyed the Po' Ramblin Boys on Sept. 7 at 7:30pm.

For jazz lovers, the Cultural Streaming Series brings showcases the talents of various artists such as Billie Holiday, Dave Brubeck Quartet, and Pat Martino. This series is spread out between September and November.

The Cultural Streaming Series is convenient for students, as they take place during the free hour on Thursdays at 12:15pm, so "it's a great place to stop in, eat lunch, no tickets need-

ed and enjoy the recorded streaming of different jazz artist" according to Peter Chiovarou, Director of Community Programming and College Events..

Chiovarou also encourages students to reach out to him if they have suggestions for what they would like to see come to the Zlock stage. He tries his best to gear toward the interest of the community and build a program for all to enjoy.

This year, Chiovarou was able to snag the talents of Richboro native Jake Schwartz who will be arriving the night of Sept. 14 at 7:30pm to showcase his skills in magic. Schwartz has won many international awards, and has appeared on television over 65 times.

Chiovarou is looking most forward to "SUGAR SKULL! A Día de Muertos Musical Adventure, I've never seen anything like it before... it's a vibrant, fun, family programming". Set just in time for spooky season, it is a must-see bilingual/bicultural musical scheduled for Nov. 9. It will be showcasing the Mexican cultural tradition of Día De Los Muertos; a day dedicated to deceased loved ones.



Photo Courtesy of the Zlock Performing Arts Center

The Zlock Performing Arts Center has an unbeatable lineup this semester, and it is free to all current Bucks Students. Alumni and faculty can purchase tickets at a 10 percent rate.

Bucks Live! Box office can be found just across the hall from the Zlock Center and is where anyone with any inquiries to ticket purchasing, event scheduling and questions should contact.

The box office also offers discounts to seniors 65+,

Active Military and Vets. Cash bar is open to all those who can participate (21+) which opens up 90 minutes prior to every night performance. Parking is free for all events.

The Zlock Performance Center cannot be successful without the help of the students. Students can be hired through Federal Work study to help out on performance nights by running the box office, check in at the doors, and ushering. Anyone interested in getting

more involved at the Zlock Performance Arts Center should contact Peter Chiovarou at peter.chiovarou@bucks.edu.

Check out a more detailed description on each artist, as well as FAQ, policies and more online at www.bucks.edu/tickets