

of achievement. This project was a seedling in 2015. That seedling took root, it grew, and it will bloom, I am sure, for generations of future Ramapo students."

Dr. Angela Cristini, Vice President of Institutional Advancement and Executive Director of the Ramapo College Foundation welcomed the attendees, and acknowledged special guests Bergen County Executive James Tedesco, Senator Holly Schepisi, Assemblyman Gordon Johnson, Mahwah Mayor James Wysocki, Commissioner Mary Amoroso, and Gene LePore of the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities.

Dr. Cristini acknowledged the significant support of \$15 million for the project, which was secured through the State of New Jersey Higher Education Capital Financing Grant program for the renovation of the George T. Potter Library and the addition of a new Learning Commons. "That grant and the generous support from so many others has led to this special day," she said. "When we broke ground a little more than two years ago, there was a vision of a place where students could learn and gather and fully experience college life. There was a vision of a place where staff and faculty and the community could meet and share ideas. Today, thanks to the dedication and hard work of so many people, that vision is now a reality."

Ramapo College Foundation Board of Governors Chair Roy Putrino applauded the fundraising efforts of the Goals in Common Campaign, noting that each donor was a "building block of the College Foundation." He added, "This beautiful building is proof of the power of community and teamwork."

Board of Trustees Chair Susan A. Vallario and her husband Nick Vallario were the lead donors for the project and participated in the project task force since its inception in 2016. Given naming rights, they announced in November 2020 that the building would be named for former Ramapo President Peter P. Mercer, who could not be in attendance for the ceremony. Chair Vallario read a statement from Dr. Mercer, which in part said... "I want to express my profound thanks to the Trustees, and especially to Chair Vallario, for bestowing on me this singular honor. In many ways, our expectations for the Learning Commons are congruent with those held by the builders of the Great Library of Alexandria more than one thousand years ago. Far from being merely a depository for ancient text and materials, it was widely known as a vibrant center for many subjects of academic study and debate. Perhaps even more important, was the diversity of scholarly inquiry that was supported by the Great Library patrons. It goes without saying, that the Learning Commons project has involved hundreds of supporters from donors to volunteers and I am grateful for your efforts."

New Jersey Secretary of Higher Education Dr. Brian Bridges said the Learning Commons will serve as a "beacon of innovation and academic discovery...for today's students and those that will follow."

