



# RENSCONNECT

WHERE BUSINESS + COMMUNITY CONVERGE

RESPONSE, RECOVERY & REOPENING

## The View From Campus: How Colleges Plan to Attract & Keep Students

As our region approaches the new academic year, Chamber President Kate Manley asked leaders in higher education for a view from their campuses and to share their strategies for moving forward amid the ongoing reopening phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. Meet our leaders:



James N. Baldwin, Ph.D., was appointed president of Excelsior College in 2016. Upon Dr. Baldwin's retirement on July 31, 2020, David Schejbal, Ph.D., became the college's new president. Excelsior is a regionally accredited, non-profit distance learning institution providing educational opportunities to adult learners through continuing education, degree completion, and career readiness paths.



Roger A. Ramsammy, Ph.D., is the seventh president of Hudson Valley Community College. He has more than 30 years of higher education experience, including senior positions at three of the largest multi-campus colleges in the U.S. Hudson Valley Community College, founded 60 years ago and part of the SUNY system, offers more than 80 degree and certificate programs, credit-free training opportunities and state-of-the-art facilities.



Chris Gibson, Ph.D., Siena's 12th president, is a former U.S. Representative, a scholar, author, and decorated military veteran. Siena College is a private Franciscan liberal arts college founded by the Order of Friars Minor in 1937. Siena has 3,000 full-time students and offers undergraduate degrees in business, liberal arts, and sciences enhanced by internships, research and community service.

### Kate: What are your college's plans for instruction for the fall semester?

**Dr. Baldwin:** It's business as usual for us because Excelsior College is a 100% online degree completion college located right here in Albany. We offer nearly 100 degree programs that are readily accessible and safely delivered to students from anywhere, at any time. Excelsior College is committed to keeping our students on track with their educational plans during COVID-19. We're providing resources and strategies to help them stay safe and healthy, to discover best practices for time management and to use study plans to reach their goals. We are monitoring the COVID-19 impact upon our students, faculty and staff as events continue to unfold.

**Dr. Ramsammy:** This fall, we will be offering more than 1,500 courses, mostly online and remotely, with a portion on campus or in a hybrid format that combines online/remote learning with in-person instruction. All in-person courses have been designed to be delivered safely, with social distancing and enhanced cleaning and disinfection practices in place. Plus, we have contingency plans that will allow us to shift to a 100% online/remote learning format, if that becomes necessary. Extensive student support services will remain available to help throughout the summer, the fall and beyond. We are well-prepared to manage this semester safely, making sure our students can continue their education and reach their goals.

**Dr. Gibson:** Siena is committed to delivering in-person instruction and providing hands-on opportunities that are fundamental to the Education for a Lifetime we offer. We've adjusted our academic calendar and extended the time between classes to allow for enhanced cleaning. Saints can expect a mix of course delivery methods in the coming semester that may include hybrid and split class formats where students take a portion of their classes online. Our faculty members are working vigorously to ensure that every course is structured to meet the needs of our students while following best practice recommendations of New York State and local and federal health departments.

(cont'd on page 3)

Chamber President Kate Manley is talking with some of the key leaders in our business community about response, recovery and reopening in the wake of COVID-19. This is the third in a series of conversations published in our digital newsletter. For COVID-19 resources, visit [renscochamber.com/coronavirus-resource-guide](https://renscochamber.com/coronavirus-resource-guide).



ASK A BOARD MEMBER:

### Commercial Lending

David Krupski is NBT Bank's Regional President for Albany, Rensselaer and Schenectady counties. With more than 30 years of banking experience, he is responsible for NBT's commercial banking business and provides executive leadership for other NBT business units in the Capital Region.



**Q » What is the current climate for commercial lending, in view of the ongoing recovery from COVID-19?**

**A »** The unprecedented nature of this pandemic means that businesses are reassessing their strategies and we believe this will continue until there's more clarity about the future. With so many unknowns—will there be a vaccine? how long will we need to continue with protective measures? when will customers feel comfortable to go out in public?—it can be hard to plan. But businesses are trying to move forward and operate in the current environment. While the news from New York State has boosted confidence, resurgence of cases in other states has not been good for consumer and business recovery.

**Q » What trends in lending should businesses be on the lookout for in the months to come?**

**A »** As businesses identify their go-forward strategies, banks will continue to be prepared to support recovery efforts with commercial and small business lending. For those industries where COVID-19 has had a significant adverse impact, additional business ingenuity and flexibility will be required to adapt and overcome. We can also anticipate trends across the financial industry toward more conservative loan structures with increased interest rates and fees as a response to what will be widely considered a riskier lending environment.

**Q » What will be the top challenges for lenders as the economy moves forward?**

**A »** The top challenges for lenders are similar to those all businesses are experiencing—the unknowns. Will the Federal Reserve Board and Congress continue to provide stimulus money to support the economy? Will consumers have the confidence to keep supporting the economy? How will business and the economy adapt to a post-COVID environment? Our ability to remain flexible and responsive as a lender will be a key factor in a successful response as we continue to move through this pandemic and recovery.

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Welcome New Members

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Phone: 518.273.3753  
[VISIT ecovatedesign.com](#)

**LaBella Associates**  
Engineering & Architecture  
Rep: Reuben Hull  
25 Delaware Avenue  
Delmar, NY 12054  
Phone: 518.439.8235  
[VISIT labellapc.com](#)

**Ready's Transportation Enterprise, LLC**  
Medical Transportation Service  
Rep: Hendy Bynoe  
396 First Street  
Troy, NY 12180  
Phone: 518.203.7799  
[VISIT readysenterprisellc.com](#)

Please join us in welcoming our newest members by patronizing their businesses. You can invite businesses and organizations to join our growing Chamber by contacting us at 518.274.7020 or [info@renscochamber.com](mailto:info@renscochamber.com).

Member Milestones

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SEFCU

20 Years

MicroKnowledge, Inc.

3 Years

R.J. Valente Industries, Inc.  
Shaker Pointe

Get the Free Exposure Your Company Deserves

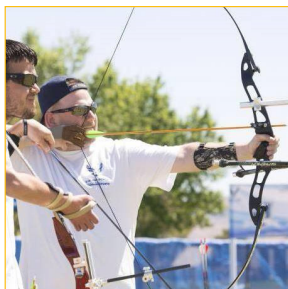
» Submit an upcoming event to our Member Events Calendar  
Reach a regional audience and drive visitors directly to your event information.  
[Visit \[renscochamber.com/member-events\]\(https://renscochamber.com/member-events\)](#)

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One of our top-visited pages!  
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» Submit your news and announcements to our website  
Uploaded news items are also considered for our e-Newsletter and monthly newsletter.  
[Visit \[renscochamber.com/news\]\(https://renscochamber.com/news\)](#)

Member News

**Pinnacle Human Resources, LLC's** headquarters moved to 418 Broadway in downtown Albany to accommodate the company's steady growth. Founded in 2009, Pinnacle HR has offices in Albany, Saratoga Springs and Syracuse, providing services to clients throughout the region and nationwide. The firm employs 20 HR professionals and has grown by 76% over the past three years. [VISIT \[pinnaclehrllc.com\]\(https://pinnaclehrllc.com\)](#)



**STRIDE Adaptive Sports** joined forces with USA Archery to become a Junior Olympic Archery Development Club and to grow the sport for youth and veterans with disabilities at STRIDE's Center for Outdoor Recreation and Education in Chatham. The 85-acre, tent-camping retreat includes a competition archery range fully equipped to accommodate all archers, including seated and visually impaired competitors. STRIDE recruited Wounded Warrior TSG Tim McDonough, a USAA Certified Level 3 Course trainer and former USAFW2 Paralympic coach, to instruct and certify new coaches. [VISIT \[stride.org\]\(https://stride.org\)](#)

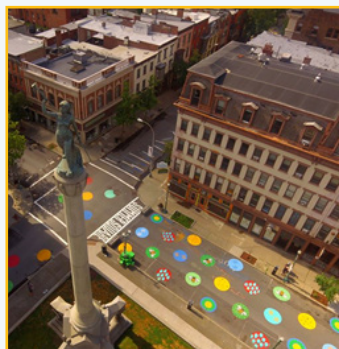


**SEFCU** worked during the COVID-19 pandemic to support healthcare workers and nonprofits helping to feed those in need. At the start, SEFCU donated thousands of protective masks to St. Peter's hospital, St. Catherine's Center for Children and other organizations. In April and May, the credit union collaborated with **BBL Hospitality** to provide a place of respite to **St. Peter's Hospital** and Albany Medical Center health care workers at the **Hilton Garden Inn** in Albany. In June, SEFCU and media partners held an online fundraiser called "No Neighbor Hungry," matching the first \$100,000 raised. In addition, SEFCU's Freight Farm, a 40-foot shipping container converted into a high-tech hydroponic farm, is donating 100% of its yield to nonprofits addressing hunger in local communities. [VISIT \[sefcu.com\]\(https://sefcu.com\) and \[bblhospitality.com\]\(https://bblhospitality.com\)](#)

**Russell Sage College** and the **Louis and Hortense Rubin Community Fellows Program** recently announced the 2020-2021 recipients of grant funding for cooperative projects with higher education faculty members. The agencies are **The Arc of Rensselaer County**, **Commission on Economic Opportunity**, **City of Troy Environmental Responsibility Project** and **Capital District YMCA - Troy Branch**. [VISIT \[sage.edu\]\(https://sage.edu\)](#)

**Pause Gallery**, located at 501 Broadway in Troy, is reopened to the public in accordance with New York State law and health and safety guidelines. The gallery, celebrating its second anniversary, shares the creative talents of more than 50 artists and a wide range of objects on display include glass, wood, photography, painting, encaustics and mixed media. New work includes paintings by Ali Herrmann, along with new jewelry, glass, and ceramics. [VISIT \[pausegallery.com\]\(https://pausegallery.com\)](#)

**City of Troy Mayor Patrick Madden** and the **RensCo Pandemic Response Committee** launched the return of "Summer Square" to downtown Troy during the months of July, August, and September. The initiative turns some public streets, parks, alleyways and parking spaces into outdoor dining, shopping and community programming spaces. Summer Square 2020 includes open-air public dining areas for takeout and picnicking, outdoor dining at local restaurants and bars and a series of diverse programs, including music, lectures, dance and poetry. The repurposing of outdoor public spaces, in accordance with COVID-19 safety and health guidelines, allows Troy's downtown and adjacent neighborhoods to safely reopen while boosting consumer confidence. [VISIT \[troyny.gov\]\(https://troyny.gov\)](#)



**BST & Co., LLP**, a financial and management consulting firm, announced the following new staff appointments: Lend Anadolli, senior associate in audit and accounting; Lindsey Bolton, administrative coordinator; Cindy Campopiano, associate in retirement planning; Heather Kennish, administrative assistant; Nytasha Leach, analyst in valuation, forensic and litigation; Kaylee Myint, accounts receivable specialist in internal client services; and April Turner, associate. [VISIT \[bstco.com\]\(https://bstco.com\)](#)

**architecture+** Principal Francis Murdock Pitts presented at the Design in Mental Health Network's international webinar on health care design and the COVID-19 pandemic. As one of four experts in health care design, he discussed how the pandemic is influencing the field in the United States. The webinar is available on the firm's website. [VISIT \[aplususa.com\]\(https://aplususa.com\)](#)

**Wojeski & Company CPAs, P.C.** welcomed two new hires. John Paul Di Giovanna has joined the firm as a staff accountant in the audit department. He holds a Master of Science degree in accounting from Siena College and has completed all the requirements to earn his CPA license. Bailey Pratt serves as client bookkeeper within the firm's tax preparation practice. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in mathematics from Siena College and has one year of prior experience. [VISIT \[wojeskico.com\]\(https://wojeskico.com\)](#)

The Power of Print

**The Eastwick Press, LLC** is beginning its fourth year since its refounding on July 7, 2017, with a pledge to continue to provide community news for Rensselaer County. In addition, Eastwick's Grafton office is now a pick-up site for the Rensselaer County Department for Youth Summer Food Program. Parents and anyone 18 years of age or younger (19 or older with a disability) can stop by the old Grafton Elementary School on NY Route 2 weekdays from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. [VISIT \[eastwickpress.com\]\(https://eastwickpress.com\)](#)

2020 ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC

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# spotlight



**POPEYES  
Louisiana Kitchen**  
220 Hoosick Street  
Troy, NY 12180

ph: 518.271.9112

drive-through and take-out customers. This was not an easy task, given the challenges of changing health and safety guidances, staff retention and shifting supply chains. But despite the rising costs of everything from chicken to face masks and gloves, the Savchik's have not raised prices in 2020. They continue

**POPEYES Louisiana Kitchen, with locations in Troy, Albany and Schenectady, serves up comfort food like fried chicken, biscuits and fries to customers from all over the Capital Region.** “We’re the Godiva of fried foods,” said Peggy Smith Savchik, who owns three POPEYES franchises with her husband, Tom Savchik. “We serve *really good* mashed potatoes and fried chicken and our sandwiches are over the top. We know that food is a very personal thing and it’s our mission to make it fresh according to the highest safety standards for the protection of our customers and our team.”

POPEYES, a Chamber member for 30 years, has remained open throughout the pandemic to serve

operating with the same positive business ethic they have always had. For example, POPEYES partnered with the Lions Club to deliver more than 2,000 meals to local hospitals for distribution to staff working with COVID-19 patients.

“It’s a new world for everyone. Every day there are problems to solve and we are constantly looking for ways to improve,” said Peggy. “The good news at POPEYES is that our team has made food safety and cleanliness a priority for the past 30 years — it is built in to our business model. And we serve the best comfort food at a time when people *need* comfort. We take pride in feeding our communities and keeping it safe during this difficult time.” [VISIT POPEYES.com](https://www.popeyes.com)



## The View from Campus (cont’d)

**Kate: How do you intend to reach out and engage returning and new students?**

**Dr. Baldwin:** Undergraduate students new to Excelsior College are starting off on the right track with personalized assistance from our admissions, financial aid and advising staffs. These students will also enroll in our new **Cornerstone Course** that helps them achieve success as on-line learners. This first interdisciplinary course positions Excelsior learners for success throughout their degree program, providing students with the foundational skills and resources for academic and career success. Cornerstone assures a “smart start” to the Excelsior academic experience. Returning students will jump right in to their next course of study with full access to their advisors and faculty. These students are working towards their Capstone, a project or paper that completes their degree program.

**Dr. Ramsammy:** All along, we’ve been communicating with students directly, offering virtual meetings, events and on-campus appointments. The most important thing we can do is let our students see that we value their safety, we value their education and we value their future. Our plans, approved by SUNY, are designed to keep students on track with their education, regardless of their personal circumstances. Hudson Valley has many strengths that make it an ideal choice. It’s close to home, making it easily accessible. We’ve frozen tuition, making us an even more financially responsible choice. Credits earned at Hudson Valley transfer easily to other colleges. For decades, we have been the local leader in distance education with more than 20 completely online degree and certificate programs.

**Dr. Gibson:** We’re in continuous contact with our Saints through many different forms of outreach — email announcements, newsletters, large-scale virtual town halls. But we’re also connecting on a more personal level through one-on-one phone calls and our “You are Not Alone” daily video series, created through Siena’s Mission Office. We will continue to keep the entire community informed as we near our reopening date. This summer, classrooms are being outfitted with the technology to provide live-streamed classes so students can participate remotely. In addition, approximately one-quarter of all classes will be delivered either completely online or remotely this fall. The expansion of online programming was a strategic goal of Siena.

**Kate: What positives have come out of the COVID-19 pandemic for your institution, faculty or students?**

**Dr. Baldwin:** We learned we could operate successfully with full business continuity through the remote work of all of our employees. In addition, overall course registration has increased as more students choose on-line learning opportunities. At Excelsior College, we specialize in adult degree completion. Education is tailored for individuals who need to balance their degree pursuits with day-to-day commitments, such as jobs and family. We connect students with experienced advisers, instructors and counselors, as well as 24/7 tech support. a vast online library, discussion boards and real-time tutoring. Individuals with some college credit, military experience or professional or occupational certification or license can earn credit toward a degree by contacting us. [VISIT excelsior.edu](https://www.excelsior.edu)

**Dr. Ramsammy:** I’m proud of how our faculty, staff and students have adjusted and adapted to challenges. Since COVID-19 hit, we have strengthened our distance learning initiatives. Hundreds of faculty members have voluntarily trained to deliver their coursework online or remotely. We’ve bolstered our workforce training with a “Career Launchpad” program to help students who are changing careers amid the financial landscape of the pandemic. The program also assists employers in essential sectors who need qualified, trained hires to perform at their best. Education is the key to our students’ futures and to the economic future of our county and our region. We are poised to be a driving factor in the economic resurgence of our region, post-COVID-19. [VISIT hvcc.edu](https://www.hvcc.edu)

**Dr. Gibson:** We’ve experienced a renewed and strengthened commitment to Siena’s founding principles. The pandemic has required our entire college community to embrace some big changes and everyone has been exceptional in adapting and adjusting to the new normal. I firmly believe Siena’s best days are ahead – we will not only survive these challenging times, we will flourish. We’ll take our mission and Franciscan approach to a broader audience and to national prominence. Our country needs this, now more than ever. The world needs more Saints – more Siena Saints. We will carry forth with educating and mentoring high quality graduates, empowered by the Franciscan spirit and prepared to lead the way in their chosen fields. [VISIT siena.edu](https://www.siena.edu)

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