STOCKTON
UNIVERSITY
DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Stockton's ADA-504
STEERING COMMITTEE 5-YEAR REPORT

FALL 2018 THROUGH SPRING 2024

Prepared by Dr. Valerie Hayes, Esq.
Chief Officer for Diversity and Inclusion, University ADA-504 Coordinator

on behalf of the Steering Committee

Spring 2024

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INTRODUCTION

> "The university symbol of disability—found on parking spaces, restrooms, and doors of public buildings—is the wheelchair, yet most college students with disabilities do not have physical disorders. Improved understanding and diagnosis of mental illness has opened the opportunity for a college education to students who a generation ago might have either been unable to attend college or who would have faced hurdles to college completion. Few college leaders of the twentieth century, for instance, would have contemplated, much less sanctioned, the presence of animals—except, perhaps, for guide dogs for blind students—in residence halls, classrooms, or student centers to accommodate such students." (Lee, 2014, p. 40)

The ADA-504 Steering Committee ("Steering Committee") is charged with providing ongoing assistance to the Chief Officer for Diversity and Inclusion who is also the University's ADA-504 Coordinator. The Committee assist in the coordination of Stockton's effort to ensure that its (1) living, learning, and working environments are accessible to persons with disabilities and (2) procedures, practices, and plans for addressing disability issues are responsive to the current understanding of the ADA and Rehabilitation Act requirements.

The Steering Committee is comprised of individuals from administrative and academic divisions. Together, they have an important role in disability accessibility and accommodation at the university, touching the lives of our students, employees, visitors, and guests.

The Steering Committee meets four times a year, with much of its work being done in subcommittees. Conversations start in the five (5) subcommittees with verbal progress reports shared and discussed with the larger Steering Committee at its four meetings during the academic year.

The Steering Committee produced two previous periodic reports located on its web page under Plans and Reports. This periodic report covers the five-year period between fall 2018 and fall 2023, continuing the Steering Committee's work reported through summer 2018. Embedded within this report is reference to research and other articles related to the information contained in the headings. Additional references are provided as well.

MORE THAN COMPLIANCE: DISABILITY AND INCLUSION

Stockton continues to make good faith efforts to comply with the New Jersey Law against Discrimination N.J.S.A 10:5-3 et seq. Individuals with disabilities are protected from prohibited discrimination under the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination. Additionally, Stockton continues to make good faith efforts to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 42 U.S.C. §1211 (8) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1974, 29 U.S.C. § 701 et seq. As noted in *The Accessible Campus*, "Together, the Rehabilitation Act and ADA opened up academe to thousands of students, faculty, and staff members with disabilities, promising them equal access to education and employment." (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2023, p. 4).

Although issues concerning disability, accessibility, and accommodation are conventionally viewed as compliance, disability is an aspect of diversity and inclusion. In an exploration of the experiences of faculty with disabilities, one research study aptly stated,

"Higher education can be spaces of inclusivity and affirmative practices where disabled individuals can thrive" (Brown and Ramlackhan, 2021, p. 1227).

"Diversity is crucial to achieving the mission of a broad, liberal arts education. Structural, curricular/co-curricular, and interactional campus diversity creates an inclusive and respectful environment for all students and employees…. Stockton University strives to have an active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in its internal and external communities where individuals connect. Individuals cannot be characterized by stereotypes and overgeneralizations."
Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

All individuals possess one or more identities, and persons with disabilities are no different. Additionally, disability may not always be the prominent identity. As such, disability intersects with other characteristics and identities, such as race, ethnicity, age, religion, and so on (Burke, 2020).

As one researcher pointed out, "When campuses include disability in their conversations about diversity, they start to see that including individuals with disabilities as students, faculty and staff enhances the campus. This leads to creating a more inclusive environment" (Cory, 2011, p. 34). The *Celebrate Diversity Digest* produced by the Committee on Campus Diversity and Inclusive Excellence intentionally seeks to include conversations on disability as noted in the following:
- Class Project Highlights Campus Accessibility Issues
- Emotional Support Animals on Campus Reduce Stress, Anxiety

Student requests for emotional support animals are treated as housing accommodation requests. More information on how students request emotional support animals is in Procedure 3991 Emotional Support Animal Procedure on the University's Policy and Procedure page and on the Learning Access Program web page.

Last but certainly not least, words matter because words frame our thinking about individuals and issues. Changing our language from "handicapped" to "accessibility" is more inclusive of persons with disabilities.

TECHNOLOGY AND PURCHASING
Technology image https://in.pinterest.com/pin/715439090802023383/

The Technology/Purchasing subcommittee identifies accessibility issues related to technology and purchasing, which may include but not be limited to web pages, E-learning, purchases of accessible academic publishing material. Their work may interface with the work of other standing subcommittees. The current convener is Joseph D'Agostino, Director of Web Communications.

The Technology and Purchasing subcommittee learn about updates to Stockton.edu that enhance the look and operation of the home page, along with its accessibility features. Stockton's home page (Stockton.edu) is maintained by University Relations and Marketing's Web Communications team. In addition to managing Stockton.edu, Web Communications provides website content, development and any other inquiries concerning Stockton.edu and web pages.

Stockton.edu conforms to level AA of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0.[1] Of the three levels, AA is appropriate for colleges and universities (The Accessible Campus). Moving from WCAG 2.0 level A to level AA provides stricter flagging of accessibility issues on web pages when content managers are editing their pages. These guidelines explain how to make web content more accessible for people with disabilities. For more information, contact Joseph D'Agostino, Director of Web Communications.

Web Communications provides content managers with approved tools to ensure accessibility of content placed on the University's websites. The approved tools are within the Content Management System (CMS), a system built with accessibility in mind. When a content manager publishes a page of content, there is an accessibility checker which adds an extra level to assist with content accessibility.

Additionally, all web page texts are translatable in different languages—English, Spanish, Italian, and so on—in a modern web browser or device by default. As the web page is being read in the browser, the text is being translated by a modern device. URM created a web translation resource page, to inform individuals on how to enable or disable translations in the most popular modern browsers or devices that support language translation.

This subcommittee was engaged in the following activities to enhance accessibility in technology.
- Reviewed accessibility enhancements made to Stockton.edu.
- Reviewed upgrades to Stockton.edu that provide better readability and accessibility, especially for individuals who use screen readers and need to know the content of web-

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[1] In the digital world, "content must be perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust". (*The Accessible Campus*, p. 11).

based recordings. Stockton.edu was further upgraded for accessibility in use of color contrasts.

- Conducted a technology accessibility survey, the results of which led, in part, to the adoption and use of Blackboard Ally. Ally provides statistics on the accessibility of courses and shows instructors how to make their course documents accessible.
- Kathy Klein and Walead Abdrabouh collaborated to provide an online tutorial for instructors on Blackboard Ally. Ally is automatically turned on for instructors.
- Developed an Accessibility Statement, the link to which appears on the Stockton homepage. The accessibility statement includes information on reporting accessibility issues, offices to contact for accessibility assistance, emergency preparedness, and other site tools.
- Created a Committee Resource Page on narrated power points on accessibility and accommodation can be placed. The first narrated power point is on Reasonable Accommodation for Employees, also located on the Office of Human Resources page. The second narrated power point is Assistive Technology and Accessibility.
- Research on new mobile APPs that could be used university wide, e.g., pushing notifications for select purposes and allowing students to have easier ways to register, as well as Steering Committee initiatives.

Several years ago, the Steering Committee had the foresight to recognize that software vendors have a critical role in digital accessibility. As such, the director of Purchasing was invited to subcommittee meetings. As noted in *The Accessible Campus*, colleges and universities need to "hold vendors accountable" and not purchase software that is not accessible to standards. Educause's Higher Education Community Vendor Assessment Toolkit provides guidance to colleges and universities on the types of upfront questions that should be asked of software vendors.

 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Policy image https://uxwing.com/policy-icon/

The University reviews policies and procedures on a regular schedule. The Policy and Procedures subcommittee reviews and, where appropriate or requested, drafts new and/or revises existing policies, procedures, and other documents pertaining to visitors, students, and employees with disabilities. The current convener is Valerie Hayes, University ADA-504 Coordinator.

All current policies and procedures are available on the University's Policy and Procedure web page.

Policies are approved by the Board of Trustees. The subcommittee participated in first level drafts of and/or revision to the following policies approved by Stockton's Board of Trustees.

- I-67 Disability, Accessibility, and Reasonable Accommodation, effective May 3, 2017; December 9, 2020.

- I-125 Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals, effective September 21, 2016; September 22, 2021.

Procedures are approved by the President. The subcommittee also participated in first level drafts of and/or revision to the following procedures approved by the President with input from the President's Cabinet.

- 3990 Service Animal Procedure, Student and Community Procedure, effective, March 3, 2014; May 12, 2016; July 2, 2021.
- 6950 Internal Procedure for Disability, Accessibility, and Accommodation, effective May 25, 2021.
- 6921 Building Evacuation Procedure, including evacuation of persons with disabilities, and Residential Life Evacuation Procedure.
  Baker Tilley suggested that Residential Housing have their own evacuation procedures that is contained in their Guide to Residential life: Emergencies.

This subcommittee also was involved in developing the content of the Disability, Accessibility, and Accommodation page, a one-stop virtual place that brings together contact and other information on the following.

- University ADA-504 Coordinator
- Employee Workplace Accommodation
- Student Disability Services
- General Accessibility Assistance
- Blackboard Ally
- Facilities & Operations
- Technology Accessibility
- Policy & Procedures
- Campus Resources
- Disability Studies Minor
- Notice of Nondiscrimination

The subcommittee was involved in drafting and/or reviewing the following two procedures.

- Personal Care Attendant for Students with Disabilities (draft)
- Accessible Instruction (draft)
  The original charge from the Provost Office to the subcommittee was to create procedures on accessible instruction for faculty use, while the secondary charge was to incorporate those procedures into the Center for Teaching and Learning Design (CTLD's) sample syllabi located on Course Resources.

This subcommittee goes into hiatus once their task is completed to be revived when they are asked to review current or draft new disability-related procedures.

"Working with students with disabilities has become far more complex than simply ensuring that they receive classroom accommodations such as interpreters or extra time on tests." (Lee, 2014, p. 40).

The Academic Access subcommittee identifies needs of students with disabilities in Stockton's academic spaces and makes recommendations. The current convener is Anthony Thomas, Director of Learning Access Program.

Self-advocacy is the cornerstone that distinguishes high school from college for students with disabilities (Hadley, 2011). Students with disabilities are the architects of their college experience such that they are required to initiate the academic accommodation process. Similar to other disability service offices in American college and university (Cory, 2011), the Learning Access Program is an academic access point for students with documented disabilities. The Learning Access program is a place where students with disabilities share with a disability services coordinator their medical documentation and experiences, request academic accommodations, and seek help in navigating issues and concerns that might negatively impact their success in an academic program or course. For faculty and staff, the Learning Access Program is a place to learn about the mutual responsibility of faculty and students in the academic enterprise with respect to accommodating students with disabilities.

There was lively discussion about the words "independence, responsibility, and self-advocacy" as students with disabilities navigate the transition from high school to college. The Learning Access Program recognizes the transition from parental advocacy in secondary school to student advocacy in college. The Learning Access Program created a web page for parents/guardians that acknowledges the role of parents in their student's academic success in college (Lombardi, Murray, and Kowitt, 2016). For parents/guardians or other adults in the student's family, the LAP educates them on college disability services and student responsibility differs between high school and college.

From spring 2020 through spring 2022, members of this subcommittee focused on assisting students and faculty during and after the COVD pandemic. Members worked on ways to support faculty in a virtual learning environment and address some common concerns of faculty during the pandemic, such as tracking their students who had accommodations and adjusting student test time in Blackboard and remembering students who needed accommodation when the accommodation letter was provided at the beginning of the semester and tests were given later in the semester.

The subcommittee recommended the Center for Teaching and Learning Design to perhaps create a brief instructional video or post instructions on record keeping that would make it easy for faculty to reference all their student accommodations. Additionally, some thought was given to the creation of a "how to" manual for students because a return to face-to-face instruction revealed that students were adrift, meaning they were not going to office hours, advising, or accessing other support services.

Post-pandemic, the Learning Access Program prepared three power points for the Student Affairs staff discussed for narration. The first power point addresses disability awareness, etiquette, and the student accommodation process, which will be available to anyone in the Stockton community. The second power point addresses adaptive technology and various assistive technology devices. The third power point is on invisible disabilities that cannot be readily identified or recognized by others, e.g., food allergies. These power points are planned for narration and conversion to Youtube videos for inclusion on the Steering Committee's Resource page.

COMMUNICATION AND TRAINING

Communication image https://www.flaticon.com/free-icon/communication_3783018

The Communication and Training subcommittee identifies ways to publicize to the campus community information on ADA-504 topics. The current convener is Valerie Hayes, University ADA-504 Coordinator.

In August 2020, the Office of Diversity & Inclusion (ODI) was had the responsibility of processing employee accommodation requests. The ODI generated a renewed version of the Reasonable Accommodation for Employee page that was further enhanced when this process reverted back to the Office of human Resources in in September 2022. The reasonable accommodation process for employees is explained on the ADA-504 Steering Committee Resources page.

In spring 2024, the Learning Access Program provided for the Committee's Resource page a narrated power point on Assistive Technology and Accessibility.

This subcommittee has been working on a faculty instructional power point on accommodating students with disabilities is near completion. The power point will be another narrated and converted into video for inclusion on the Steering Committee's Resource Page.

FACILITIES, PARKING AND TRANSPORTATION

Facilities management image https://www.flaticon.com/free-icon/facility-management_10962223

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is foremost in the minds of this subcommittee. The Facilities, Parking, and Transportation subcommittee serves to identify accessibility issues associated with facilities, parking, way-find (campus navigation), and transportation. Their work might interface in appropriate ways with other identified Stockton committees addressing similar issues. The current convener is Cynthia Gove, Director Facilities Management and Plant Operations.

There were several conversations about the Building Evaluation Procedure, evacuating persons with disabilities in emergencies, places of refuge, and placement of the two evacuation

chairs on Galloway's campus. One of the evacuation chairs was placed in the Campus Center and the other was placed in the Sports Center.

Additionally, with the assistance of the Policy and Procedure subcommittee, the Building Evacuation Procedure 6921 was updated, with attention given to evacuation of persons with disabilities. Stockton's internal auditors, Baker Tilley, suggested that Residential Life have a stand-alone evacuation procedure. See Guide to Residential life: Emergencies for more information.

Facilities & Operations provided updates on its an exterior and interior signage initiative on Galloway's campus. The signage initiative is an ongoing project and includes signage for areas of refuge. Exterior site directional signs help visitors and others navigate the campus, supplemented by interior way-finding signage, all with consistent look.

Facilities & Operations has been upgrading signage throughout campus. Grade 2 braille is used on signage stairwells and vestibules throughout the Galloway campus, including Braille on emergency call boxes.

There is regulation signage for men's, women's, all-gender bathrooms, including signage on locations of lactation rooms. Restrooms have numbers with updated signage. Directories outside the vestibules also provide information on the location of accessible bathrooms. Bathrooms primarily in A to D wings have men's restrooms on the first floor and women's restrooms on the second floor. Signage for these bathrooms will be addressed.

The TRLC renovation included ADA-compliant restrooms. Both TRLC entryways will be reconstructed to allow full ADA compliance; kitchen to be reworked and updated. ADA accessible restroom facilities in H and J wings that continue the phased "Spine" restroom renovation. Parking Lot 7 was resurfaced and included sidewalks with accessible curb cuts by Housing 2 and 3.

At the request of the Student Senate, additional lighting and cameras were installed on the Lake Fred "Dark Path", for accessibility and safety, along with cameras for added safety.

Facilities & Operations also addresses specific requests, such as providing accessible desks in classrooms with LAP's assistance on locations, a new assessment of the Arts Garage in Atlantic City to ensure code compliance, since the last assessment was completed in 2013.

Atlantic City Phase II is fully accessible; however, Kramer Hall-Hammonton additional accessibility for persons with disabilities using wheelchairs is under review.

For FY 2023, Facilities acquired ADA funds to accommodate employee requests for varidesks with supporting doctor's notes, while other employees who request varidesks for ergonomic reasons must seek funding through their departments. A varidesk converts a regular desk into a standing desk. Some other purchases from this fund consist of the following:

- Materials for 4 bathrooms to receive hardware for ADA needs – push button to enter bathrooms.

- New door ID plaques to update with Braille standards – this is ongoing.
- Furniture for LAP testing room in the library.
- A Ramp/walkway to the flagpoles out front.
- Signage for Lactation rooms and other signage needs.
- Furniture in classrooms to accommodate various ADA requests.

The ADA funds also were used to accommodate individuals with respiratory illnesses with heating and air conditioning projects that increased air quality.

There is a Parking and Transportation Accessibility page. In addition temporary handicap parking permits (less than 6 months) and permanent parking placards (longer than 6 months), there is a Draft Campus Accessibility Map, a work in progress with a bountiful legend containing locations of the Learning Access Program, accessible parking spaces, wheelchair accessible routes, accessible building entries and those with door openers, accessible restrooms. The map legend also has such items as New Jersey Transit Bus Stops and Stockton Shuttle Stops, as well as elevator locations.

In collaboration with Web Communications, an Interactive Campus Map was created with images of the Galloway and Atlantic City campuses, Manahawkin, Kramer Hall-Hammonton, and The Sam Azeez Museum of Woodbine Heritage. The images contain different views of each building and a list of locations individuals, as well as a search feature should an individual want to know about the location of a specific campus building. The Atlantic City campus quad has a video featuring a student providing a virtual tour of the place.

> ## "With future developments come future accessibility."
> Charles "Skip" West, Director of Facilities, Planning, and Construction
> November 30, 2022

Future projects include accessibility to the flagpole area outside of A wing; a fully accessible Sports Center expansion; review of Campus Center spaces for additional accessibility; review of wheelchair access standards for shuttles; Bjork Library renovation project (state funding needed) that will be fully accessible; Coastal Research Center trailers that contain office spaces scheduled for improvement, along with the addition of a fully accessible third trailer; lactation room in Manahawkin; restroom renovations in upper and lower J-wing, including lactation areas and all-gender restrooms.

 ADA INTERNAL AUDIT

Audit image https://www.flaticon.com/free-icon/audit_8293467

In spring 2020, Baker Tilley conducted a confidential internal ADA Compliance and Accessibility Audit. The internal audit informed the University's administration how it compared to other similar colleges and universities. In the process, Baker Tilley applauded the ADA-504 Steering Committee for its efforts through the work of its five (5) standing subcommittees that address key areas concerning disability, accessibility, and accommodation.

Various Steering Committee members participated in the internal audit, including involvement in the completion of the managerial action items identified by Baker Tilley.

One of the action items from Baker Tilley internal audit recommended the Steering Committee host a virtual town hall which it held in November 2020.

Image courtesy of Stockton News – November 13, 2020.

During the Covid 19 pandemic from spring 2020 to sometime in 2022, the Steering Committee organized a 90-minute virtual Town Hall in November 2020 to educate the Stockton community about its mission and work since its inception in 2015. The topic was Disability, Accessibility and Accommodation at Stockton University and delivered in an accessible webinar format.

Panelists included members of the Steering Committee who could address the work of each working subcommittee. The Chief Officer for Diversity and Inclusion moderated the Town Hall, posing questions to the panel from the virtual audience. The Steering Committee shared its work with attendees, but also sought attendee ideas and suggestions that would inform the committee's work going forward. For a limited time only, the recording of the Town Hall was available for viewing on the Office of Diversity & Inclusion website.

 THE SAME PROGRAM

Image https://www.instagram.com/njcivilservice/

In January 2022, New Jersey adopted legislation to develop and implement the "State as a Model Employer of People with Disabilities" (SAME Program) to facilitate access to state employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Complementary to this program, Stockton continues to provide applicants with disabilities reasonable accommodation in the application process when requested by the applicant.

A WORD ABOUT UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Universal design is "the design of environments, whether they be physical or curricular, to be accessible to the greatest diversity of individuals as possible … creates an inclusive environment for all students and reduces the need for accommodations or specialized circumstances" (Cory, 2011, p. 33).

The NC State University Center for Universal Design published useful and thought provoking information on this topic useful as a guide for further universal design at Stockton. A poster further illustrates the guidelines with examples. The tenets of universal design follow.
1. Equitable use
2. Flexibility in use
3. Simple and intuitive use
4. Perceptible information
5. Tolerance for error
6. Low physical effort
7. Size and space for approach and use

Stockton's Center for Teaching and Learning Design provides additional information from the following sources:
The UDL Guidelines
Creating a Positive Classroom Climate for Diversity
Universal Design for Learning: A Guide for Educators (focus on K-12)
Faculty Information on the Americans with Disabilities Act
Neurodivergent Students Need Flexibility, Not Our Frustration

 Dr. Susan Fahey who was an Associate Professor and Program Chair in Criminal Justice (SOBL). She served as the faculty co-chair of the Steering Committee and convened the Facilities, Transportation and Parking subcommittee. Dr. Fahey moved on from Stockton University to other opportunities.

 Dr. Joseph Toth was Director of Library Services in the Richard E. Bjork Library and convened the Policy and Procedures subcommittee. Dr. Toth moved on from Stockton to become Dean of the Library at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington.

 Mary Beth Sherrier was Assistant Dean for the School of Social & Behavioral Sciences (SOBL). She convened the Academic Access subcommittee. She retired from Stockton University.

In Memoriam

Photos courtesy of University Relations & Marketing. Left, positioned front and center among friends, the late Lydia Fecteau is pictured wearing a superwoman costume with her devoted super service dog always by her side. Right, Lydia and her service dog.

On May 1, 2022, the Stockton community lost an avid advocate for individuals with disabilities, the late Lydia Fecteau. Among her many activities, Fecteau was an adjunct faculty, member of the ADA-504 Steering Committee, and a trained search advocate.

Fecteau's efforts, along with other faculty colleagues, were instrumental in establishing the Disabilities Studies minor at Stockton. As described, the minor is "an interdisciplinary field of study that examines the meaning, nature, and consequences of disability as a social, cultural, and political construct."

Academic Affairs

Alexander Marino, Director of Academic Operations, Atlantic City Campus

Center for Teaching & Learning Design

Roberto Castillo, Learning Designer & Technology Trainer

Kathleen Klein, Executive Director

Diversity & Inclusion

Valerie Hayes, Chief Officer for Diversity & Inclusion
University ADA-504 Coordinator
Chair of the ADA-504 Steering Committee
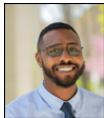
Education (School of)

Priti Haria, Associate Professor of Education - Special Education

Patricia Weeks, Director, Southern Regional Institute
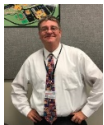
Enrollment Management

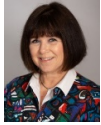Ryan Terrell, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management

Event Services

Laurie Griscom, Executive Director, Event Services & Campus Engagement
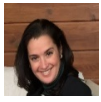
Facilities & Operations

John Fritsch, Assistant Vice President for Facilities & Plant Operations

Cynthia Gove, Associate Director, Facilities Management & Plant Operations

Donald Hudson, Senior Vice President for Facilities & Operations

Marcie Pallante, Executive Assistant for Facilities & Operations

Charles "Skip" West, Director of Facilities, Planning & Construction

Adrian Wiggins, Director of Campus Public Safety

Health Sciences (School of)

Rebecca Mannel, Assistant Professor of Occupational Therapy

Human Resources

Bart Musitano, Associate Supervisor 2, Human Resources

Information & Technology Services

Walead Abdrabouh, Director of Information Systems & Business Intelligence

Learning Access Program

Patricia McConville, Coordinator Student Accessibility and Support Services

Maria Spade, Coordinator of Adaptive Technology Services

Anthony Thomas, Director of Learning Access Program

Natural Sciences and Mathematics (School of)

Steve Evert, Director of the Marine Field Station

 Emma Witt, Associate Professor of Environmental Science

Stockton at Hammonton

 Christina Birchler, Director, Stockton University at Hammonton

Stockton at Manahawkin

 Michelle Collins-Davies, Director, Stockton University at Manahawkin

University Relations & Marketing

 Joseph D'Agostino, Director of Web Communications

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