



**STEVE SWEENEY CENTER  
FOR PUBLIC POLICY**

For Immediate Release  
October 25, 2023

Contact: Mark J. Magyar  
856-256-5868 (office)  
908-246-8468 (cell)  
[magyarm@rowan.edu](mailto:magyarm@rowan.edu)

**Unique Partnerships Launch Academy for Neurodiversity at Rowan College of South Jersey, Breaks Ground on Housing for Developmentally Disabled**

*RCSJ, Rowan University and its medical schools, Gloucester County Special Services School District, and Gloucester and Cumberland Counties team up on collaborative model to provide lifelong services*

**SEWELL, N. J.** – In a partnership that could be a national model for the provision of lifelong services for the developmentally disabled, Rowan College of South Jersey (RCSJ), the Schools for Neurodiversity at the Gloucester County Special Services School District, Rowan University and its medical schools, and Gloucester and Cumberland County governments today announced the creation of the collaborative Academy for Neurodiversity on the RCSJ campus.

RCSJ President Frederick Keating announced the new initiative at a press conference today, joined by former Senate President Steve Sweeney; Chad Bruner, Gloucester County Administrator and Rowan University Board of Trustees Chair; Gloucester County Board of Commissioners Director Frank DiMarco; Gloucester County Special Services District Superintendent James Dundee; Dr. Jennifer LeComte, Director of the Rowan Integrated Special Needs Center at Rowan’s School of Osteopathic Medicine, and other officials, parents and students.

“What we have created with the Academy for Neurodiversity is a unique collaborative program that should be a national model for integrating lifelong services for the developmentally disabled,” said Sweeney. “In a single location, we offer multiple levels of education and workforce training, medical, mental health and behavioral services, legal advocacy, transportation, athletics and recreation, and today, we did the ground-breaking for an on-site housing complex.”

The three-story Residences at South College Drive will provide 24 one-bedroom rent-supported apartments for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities with a community room, lounges, laundry facilities and office space for an on-site Counselor of Special Services, said Kimberly Gober, Executive Director of the Gloucester County Housing Authority. The project is being funded with \$7.365 million in National Housing Trust funds and \$3.75 million in grants from Gloucester County.

“Rowan College of South Jersey is fortunate to be strategically positioned in the two counties of Cumberland and Gloucester, enabling the unique relationship between the Schools for Neurodiversity at the Gloucester County Special Services School District, the Vineland Public School District, our dual campus Adult

Center for Transition (ACT) programs, and the college's flagship partner, Rowan University, to facilitate connecting the groups and people that care about neurodiverse individuals," Dr. Keating said.

Dr. Guy Davidson, the RCSJ Dean of Academic Achievement & Special Services who will chair the new Academy for Neurodiversity, said the impetus behind the new initiative is "to strengthen, expand, and enhance the connections and partnerships that are already in place and create new relationships for the benefit of the students and communities that we serve."

"At RCSJ, we've been in the business of serving the disabled community in Gloucester County and the surrounding region for a long time," said Davidson, who will chair the new Academy for Neurodiversity. "With our expansion into Cumberland County and the creation of the Academy, we're more deeply connecting two regions of people and organizations that have made serving the neurodiverse community their lives' work."

Commissioner Director DiMarco noted that Gloucester County has been on the cutting edge of a wide range of shared services, from countywide tax assessment and ambulance services to jails, but said the partnerships that have been created to provide coordinated special services to the developmentally disabled have been the most rewarding.

"What's incredible here is the partnerships between RCSJ, Rowan University and our medical schools, the Special Services School District, the two counties and our housing authority that have teamed up so smoothly to serve the needs of those who need our assistance the most," said Bruner, Gloucester County Administrator and Rowan University Board of Trustees Chair.

Dundee, Gloucester County Special Services District Superintendent, said the Schools for Neurodiversity at the Gloucester County Special Services School District are excited by the new partnership.

"As Temple Grandin put it, 'the world needs all kinds of minds,'" Dundee said. "This joint collaboration being celebrated today will enable the Gloucester County Special Services School District to help neurodivergent learners shape their identity and help the world to see the unique strengths of each child's abilities rather than focusing on disabilities."

"Neurodivergent people experience, interact with, and interpret the world in unique ways and this partnership will enable our students, staff and families to gain the necessary medical, psychological, educational, and social services required in order for students to be successful during their entire academic career and beyond," he said.

Sweeney, who championed programs for the developmentally disabled as both Gloucester County freeholder-director and as Senate president, joined Keating in leading a tour of the Stephen M. Sweeney Center for Special Services' job training and placement programs and the Bankbridge Developmental Center's autism unit following the press conference.

###