



*Distinguished Alumni
Awards Luncheon
Sunday, April 27, 2025*

Hosted by:

Cook Community Alumni Association

Cook Community Alumni Association



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Amanda Dougherty CC '08, GSED '09

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Special thanks to:

Brian McGonigle, Manager of Alumni and Community Engagement

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Cook Community Alumni Association

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George H. Cook & Dennis M. Fenton

Awards Committee Members

Co-Chair Dr. Linda Madison CC '80, GSED '94, '02

Co-Chair Dr. Lee Schneider CAES '70, GSNB '72, GSED '88

Joseph Charette CC '77

Dr. Donald Heilman CC '76, GSED '07, '12

Heather O'Rourke CC '92, GSED '18

Kerry Kirk-Pflugh CC '80

Dr. Mark Robson CC '77, GSNB '79, '88, '95

Gary Sondermeyer CC '79, GSNB '84

Dr. Brian Voynick CC '78

Dr. Brian Schilling CC '92 GSNB '94, '09

Dr. Paul S. Wichansky CC '93, GSNB '99, '08

All committee members are GH Cook Distinguished Alumni Award recipients

-PROGRAM-

Welcome

CCAA Co-President Amanda Dougherty

Greetings

Executive Dean Laura Lawson

Buffet Luncheon

Introduction of Committee and Prior Awardees

Recognition of George Hammell Cook Distinguished Alumni Awardees

Katie Bobowski CC '92
Margaret O' Donnell CC '93
Sara H. Shama CC '02
Paul S. Fischbach CC '87

Recognition of Dennis M. Fenton Distinguished Graduate Alumni Awardee

Dr. Anne L. Nielsen GSNB '08
H. Louis Cooperhouse GSNB '87



The George Hammell Cook Distinguished Alumni Award

The award, established in 1976, commemorates the life of George Hammell Cook (1818 - 1889) whose efforts helped to bring Land Grant College status to Rutgers and to create the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station. Dr. Cook's inquisitive and results-oriented spirit remains active in the ideals embodied by the Cook community which includes the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences and the George H. Cook campus.

This award is presented annually to an alumnus or to alumni whose outstanding accomplishments in professional or volunteer work reflects dignity and distinction on their alma mater. The George H. Cook Award is the highest honor presented by the Cook Community Alumni Association to undergraduate alumni.

Eligible alumni are those who earned an undergraduate degree from the School of Environmental & Biological Sciences, Cook College, C.A.E.S., the Rutgers College of Agriculture or alumnae of Douglass College or N.J.C. who earned a degree in agriculture or a related field during the years before Rutgers University embraced a coeducational policy.



The Dennis M. Fenton, GSNB '77

Distinguished Graduate Alumni Award

Established in 2003, this award honors Dennis M. Fenton, who is a retired executive vice-president of Amgen Inc. He is currently CEO of Fenton and Associates, Biotechnology Consulting and he remains a strong supporter of graduate education at the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, formerly Cook College, Rutgers University. Successful candidates have demonstrated a significant impact in their field of study. The Dennis M. Fenton Award is the highest honor presented by the CCAA to advanced degree alumni.

Eligible alumni are graduates of Rutgers University's School of Graduate Studies, who earned a Masters or Doctoral degree from a program or department currently or historically associated with the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, Cook College, the College of Agriculture and Environmental Science or the Rutgers College of Agriculture.

Nominees are not required to have earned an undergraduate degree from the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences or any other unit of Rutgers University.

2025 George Hammell Cook **Distinguished Alumni Awardee**



Katie Bobowski

Katie Applegate Bobowski is a dedicated environmental educator and community leader based in Glennallen, Alaska. Since graduating from Cook College in 1992, she has lived with her family in seven states (with three children born in three different states), from Maryland to Oregon, Arizona to Alaska. Everywhere she has gone, she has remained deeply committed to community volunteerism, particularly for organizations that invest in youth and their futures. She has meaningfully contributed throughout her life to a variety of community organizations in leadership roles, including, but not limited to, the Boy Scouts of America, the Estes Park, Colorado 4-H Club (founding leader), and board membership on multiple community organizations. In this service, Katie has received multiple awards and recognitions from the communities in which she's worked, including the 2022 Advocates for Victims of Violence Woman of Distinction Award and the Bette Maxine Cato Inspirational Award, for being an inspiration and role model to others.

Katie's academic background includes a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science from Cook College, where she graduated with highest honors with an Environmental Science major and two minors (Natural Resource Management and Animal Science), as well as teaching certificates in general science and agriculture. Since graduating, Katie has pursued opportunities in environmental education, contributing in multiple ways and

Katie Bobowski continued:

in various roles that emphasize science, nature, and community development. Along the way, she added two master's degrees from Slippery Rock University, both with honors.

Katie currently serves as the Administrative Manager of the Copper Basin Extension Center of Prince William Sound College, a community campus of the University of Alaska, Anchorage, where she has dedicated her time since 2017. She is passionate about place-based education for undergraduates that harnesses the power of traditional knowledge in tandem with western science. She has also scaled up her passion for all students K-12 through professional development courses for Alaska's teachers. Katie spearheaded the development of a Natural Resources Technician Occupational Endorsement Certificate program that emphasizes the development of core skill sets for young professionals at the beginning of their careers. She leads multiple, week-long professional development courses annually for teachers, that introduces them to place-based education, emphasizing how curiosity and science can be woven into any discipline. Her collaborative work contributing to rural communities of Alaska was recently recognized with the 2022 University of Alaska's Chancellor's Choice Award for Opportunity Creation. It was subsequently highlighted at the North American Association for Environmental Education National Conference.

Throughout all of this, Katie's first passion has been, and remains, her family, dedicating most of her time to raising those three children (including a decade of homeschooling) and encouraging them, through example, to take advantage of all the adventures life has to offer. When not volunteering for, or working with, her community, you can most often find Katie with her family, enjoying nature, whether through gardening, birding, fishing, sunning and swimming at the beach, or setting out on some new life adventure!

2025 George Hammell Cook **Distinguished Alumni Awardee**



Margaret O'Donnell

Margaret O'Donnell returned to Rutgers to work professionally 5 years after her 1993 graduation from Cook College. Beginning as a program coordinator at the University Inn and Conference Center, Margaret progressed through increasingly responsible roles in the Division of Continuing Studies and the Center for Management Development. She is currently an executive education program manager at Rutgers Business School. By far, the work most meaningful to Margaret has been her time spent in support of Rutgers student veterans and military-affiliated students. Recognized as a leader in this field, Margaret is still regularly an invited speaker at both regional and national conferences and workshops. In 2019, the STEM Veterans USA at Rutgers organization recognized Margaret's role in the academic and career success of student veterans and alumni with the "To Infinity and Beyond" Award.

In addition to her work at Rutgers, Margaret also frequently volunteers her personal time on campus. She was named a Loyal Daughter of Rutgers in 2014. A long-time volunteer at Rutgers Gardens, she was the recipient of the Gardens' DOC Award in 2009. It is so named for dedication and outstanding commitment, as well as being a sweet nod to longtime director, Bruce "Doc" Hamilton.

Margaret is a past president, vice president, and chair of numerous Cook Community Alumni Association committees. She is best known for running events (notably golf outings, murder mystery dinners, chocolate and wine tastings), as well as acquiring the association's "merch." If you have something with the Alumni Association logo, Margaret probably designed and ordered it – from the bags and pins graduates receive walking off the stage after getting their diplomas to every sweatshirt, t-shirt, or hat you've worn this weekend, Margaret surely had a hand in it!

Within her community of Milltown, NJ, Margaret is a past Planning Board member and Councilwoman. She is currently a district committee woman and the mayor's representative to the Library Board. Margaret also serves as the volunteer coordinator for Milltown Recreation's two volleyball leagues.

Spare time is precious, and Margaret enjoys spending it with family, friends, and neighbors. She is a fixture at "Alumnut" tailgates and Rutgers football games, as well as Cook Alumni events!

2025 George Hammell Cook **Distinguished Alumni**



Sara H. Shama

Sara Shama is a proud graduate of the Cook College Class of 2002, earning a degree in Nutritional Science with a Pre-Med option. During her time at Cook, she was deeply involved in the community, actively participating in numerous organizations. She served as Class President, chaired the Cook College Council, and worked as a Resident Assistant. Her engagement in college life and the opportunities she embraced shaped her into the person she is today, paving the way for her success.

After graduation, Sara found herself at a crossroads. Medical school was no longer her dream, and she was unsure of her next steps. Seeking guidance, she turned to Professor Malcolm Watford, who offered simple yet impactful advice: “Sara, you have a degree in Nutrition—go use it.”

Taking that advice to heart, she began working an entry-level job at Muhlenberg Hospital. It was there that she realized she needed further credentials to advance in the field of nutrition. Determined to follow her passion, she returned to Rutgers University to complete the Didactic Program in Dietetics. She then matched with her top internship choice, Sodexo NY, where she excelled and was honored for her academic excellence.

With five years of experience in both inpatient and outpatient nutrition counseling—and with the unwavering support of her husband, Mohamed Shama, whom she met while at Cook College—Sara took a leap of faith. Just six weeks before the birth of their first son, Zane, she launched her own private practice, SHS Nutrition, LLC.

Balancing motherhood and entrepreneurship was a priority for Sara. Two years later, she welcomed her second son, Tarek, and remained grateful for the organic growth of her business alongside her family. She cherishes the opportunity to be a class mom, a wrestling mom, and a small business owner, all while watching her children grow and become more independent. As her kids matured, her focus shifted further toward expanding SHS Nutrition, which she affectionately calls her third child.

Sara H. Shama continued:

As her business flourished, Sara began employing and mentoring other women, providing them with a supportive work environment that encourages work-life balance and personal growth. She takes great pride in guiding ambitious young women toward achieving their goals and finding their purpose.

Today, SHS Nutrition has become a trusted name in nutrition counseling, with numerous doctors and healthcare professionals referring patients due to the compassionate and personalized care it provides. The practice continues to grow, strengthening its media presence as "Simple Healthy Solutions", reinforcing the philosophy that better health is achieved one simple, healthy solution at a time.

Sara also plays an active role in the Monroe Township wrestling community, where both Zane and Tarek wrestled, and Mohamed coached. Naturally, she became involved in planning fundraisers and organizational efforts to strengthen the program. She worked closely with the school board and administration to allow 6th graders to compete at the middle school level, a change that significantly improved the town's wrestling program. This initiative contributed to the team securing second place in the county.

Throughout the different aspects of her life, Sara sees a common theme—guiding, educating, and caring for others to help them live their best lives. Her family, employees, and patients inspire her to be her best self and serve as an example of a healthy, purposeful life.

Sara remains committed to making her community proud, embodying dignity, hard work, and dedication. She is deeply grateful to her parents, Hesham and Alia Halim, for their love and support. She also thanks her husband, Mohamed, and her two sons, Zane and Tarek, for embracing and loving her through all of life's moments—the good, the bad, and the crazy.

Sara firmly believes that everything happens for a reason. She is grateful for the mentors who guided her, including Dr. Schneider, Dr. Watford, and the late Francine Corley, whose belief in her came at a pivotal moment in her journey. Their influence shaped the path she walks today.

In her own words:

"Everyone you meet teaches you something. The choice to pay attention and receive the lesson is entirely yours."

2025 George Hammell Cook **Distinguished Alumni Awardee**



Paul Fischbach

Paul Fischbach is currently the Director of Operations for Recreation at Rutgers University. He has dedicated his career to the health and well-being of the University community. For the past 35 years, Paul has worked with thousands of students to help them find their sense of belonging and success outside the classroom at Rutgers.

Paul graduated from Cook College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Physical Education in 1987. He then earned a Master of Arts degree from the University of Maryland in 1989. Paul was fortunate to return to Rutgers as a professional staff member, joining the Cook/Douglass Recreation Services team in October of that year.

Paul supervised the Intramural Sports program. He recruited and trained student employees and coached them on developing critical thinking and decision-making skills. He developed and led special events for the campus community, where he provided opportunities for student volunteers to learn and practice leadership, management and program planning.

When the colleges merged in 2008, Paul transitioned to a new role as the Associate Director for Rutgers Recreation. Overseeing the university intramural sports program across 4 campuses, his efforts led to over 10,000 yearly participants. He also developed and managed the Recreation Summer Camp program that serves children ages 5 to 11. Paul conducted all staff training, developed schedules, planned activities and implemented ongoing evaluation procedures for program assessment and employee development.

Prior to his current role, Paul was asked to take on a new responsibility to oversee the Student Success and Training for the Recreation Department. Here, he led the recruiting and onboarding efforts supporting a diverse staff of nearly 500 student employees.

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Paul Fischbach continued:

Paul is a recognized leader within the Division of Student Affairs and the larger university, having served as a liaison to university colleagues, including Academic Affairs, Campus Centers, Police, Facilities Maintenance, Athletics, and Alumni/Parent Associations. He has served as an Adjunct Instructor for Exercise Science and currently instructs the Transitions Course for the School of Arts and Sciences for those students who have transferred to the university.

Paul credits his longevity in making a difference in the lives of students to those who impacted him when he was an undergraduate student at Rutgers. Most notably, he recognizes Ed Levy and Lee Schneider, who both showed through their commitment that “students mattered.” Staying true to these values, his simple pledge remains to “pay it forward” and continue to serve as a role model who provides leadership which engages today’s Scarlet Knights and inspires them on their journey at the university.

H. Louis Cooperhouse continued:

Lou is a member of the Explorers Club, a prestigious international organization dedicated to promoting the exploration of land, sea, air and space, and to inspire new generations to pursue discovery and conservation. He’s also a member of the Society of Fellows at the Culinary Institute of America.

Previously, Lou served as a founder and the Executive Director of the Rutgers Food Innovation Center, and as Chairperson of the Center’s Advisory Board. He has also served on the Board of Directors of the International Business Innovation Association; President of the New Jersey Business Incubation Network; President of the New Jersey Food Processors Association; on the boards of the Refrigerated Foods Association and United Fresh Produce Association; and on the Board of Managers at the NJ Agricultural Experiment Station at Rutgers University.

Lou received his MS in Food Science from Rutgers Cook College, and his BS in Microbiology from Rutgers School of Graduate Studies. He has served as an Adjunct Professor at the Rutgers Business School.

2025 Dennis M. Fenton
Distinguished Graduate Alumni Awardee



Dr. Anne L. Nielsen

Dr. Nielsen graduated with a Ph.D. in Entomology in 2008. She then went on to post-doctoral positions at the University of California, Davis and Michigan State University where she studied a variety of invasive insect species. Dr. Nielsen returned to SEBS as an assistant extension specialist/assistant professor in entomology in 2012. Since then, she moved through the ranks and was recently promoted to Extension Specialist/Professor of Entomology. Her responsibilities have included working with invasive insects with an emphasis on those that damage tree fruit and wine grapes.

During her career, Dr. Nielsen has published over 70 publications and book chapters about invasive insects such as the brown marmorated stink bug and spotted lantern fly. Several of her publications are considered seminal works about these insects. She accomplished this work with the help of numerous graduate students, undergraduate students and post-doctoral fellows. Dr. Nielsen was able to do this by securing over \$8 million in grant funds from a variety of sources including the USDA, SARE, the Department of Defense and state agricultural groups. The true value of her work, however, is seen in terms of the impact her work has had saving millions of dollars in fruit losses with minimal insecticide use, which has avoided environmental impacts that historically occur with the overuse of insecticides. Her work has had similar impacts in other countries such as Canada, Italy, and New Zealand.

2025 Dennis M. Fenton **Distinguished Graduate Alumni Awardee**



H. Louis Cooperhouse

Lou Cooperhouse is founder, President & CEO at BlueNalu, the global leader in the development of cell-cultured seafood, that is replacing today's highly variable and supply-restricted seafood supply chain with one that will be vertically integrated, healthy, humane, safe, sustainable, secure, consistent, and delicious every time.

Lou is recognized as a leading global authority in food innovation and technology commercialization; and as a results-driven professional with the ability to build, develop and transform organizations and teams. His 40-year career in the food industry includes extensive entrepreneurial expertise leading cross-functional teams in a wide array of settings, including new business startups, multinational corporations, foodservice and retail operations, non-profits and trade associations, and university food incubation programs. A summary of his career experiences in entrepreneurship were featured in the cover story in *Food Technology Magazine*, titled ["Oceans of Innovation"](#), in December 2023. Previously, Lou served as President & CEO of Food Spectrum, LLC, where he provided a broad array of strategic consulting and business management expertise to the food industry; as President & COO of F&S Produce, a leading regional supplier of fresh-cut produce and value-added refrigerated foods; and as Co-Founder, President and CEO of MenuDirect Corporation, a unique health, wellness, and nutrition company. Earlier in his career, Lou held positions of increasing responsibility at Campbell's Soup, ConAgra, and Nestlé-funded Culinary Brands in areas of business development, product development, quality assurance, and operations.

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Dennis M. Fenton
Distinguished Graduate Alumni Awardees
2003—2023

Dr. H. Allen Tucker
Ajit K. Srivastava
Daniel Rossi
Dr. Stacey Angela Zawel
Dr. Carl Safina
Dr. Sonny B. Ramaswamy
Dr. Richard T. Dewling
Dr. Gilbert A. Leveille
Dr. Richard R-C Wang
Dr. A. Joel Kaplovsky
Dr. Bruce B. Clarke
Dr. Roy H. DeBoer
Dr. Peter Strom
Dr. H. Boyd Woodruff
Dr. Joseph Hunter
Dr. Prasert Chitapong
Dr. Junfeng (Jim) Zhang
Dr. George Hamilton
Dr. Wei Hua Wu
Dr. Margaret Brennan-Tonetta
Dr. Cynthia Rozenzweig
Dr. Jennie C. Hunter-Cevera
Robert H. Bruch
Dr. Chris Martine
Dr. Terrie Williams
Dr. Anne Marie Grover
Gregory DiLalo
Dr. Apostolos Pappas
Dr. Donald Knezick
Dr. Gene McAvoy
Dr. Robert Buchanan
Dr. Ronald Atlas
Dr. Frederick Tyson
Dr. Brian J. Schilling
Dr. Paul S. Wichansky
Dr. Gary C. Pavlis

George H. Cook Distinguished Alumni Awardees 1976-2024

John B. Schmitt
 Phillip E. Marucci
 Lester R. Brown
 Edgar T. Savidge
 George Vander Noot
 Phillip Alampi
 Charles Brown
 Lindley G. Cooke
 Hans Fisher

A. Robert Koch
 John M. Walsh
 Norman Waecker
 Sydney Evans
 Anthony Cerami
 Joan A. Sempkowski De Boer
 Gregory Kellam Scott
 Monroe Wall
 David Tudor
 Seymour Gilbert
 James Robert Lyons
 Albert Shatz
 Ralph Robert Anderson
 Carlton C. Dilatush
 Mary Lewnes Albrecht
 Richard M. Hale
 Ratemo Waya Michieka
 Richard D. Ilnicki
 Karyn Malinowski
 Ralph Brinster
 William J. Roberts
 Devon L. Cherry
 Julius Gyula Fabos
 David A. Meirs, II
 Edgar B Brannon, Jr.
 Morris S. Fabian
 Gary Sondermeyer
 Samuel Garrison
 Frederick J. Kroesen
 H. Boyd Woodruff
 William V. Chalupa
 Dennis J. Higbie
 Henry W. Indyk
 Bruce Hamilton
 Lee. D. Schneider
 Cindy Lee Van Dover
 Scott A. Rivkees
 Mark G. Robson
 Peter A. Seligmann
 Peter Jakab
 Steve Strom
 Barbara Bromley
 Jill Lipoti
 Neil Robson
 Joseph Cialone
 Linda A. Madison
 Robert E. Snieckus
 George Johannessen
 Brian Federici

Henry Izzo
 Bruce Poulton
 Charles Hess
 Richard H. Merritt
 Edward V. Lipman
 A. Elizabeth Sloan
 Roger R. Locandro
 Grant F. Walton
 John A. Pino
 Doug Blonsky
 John Seeley
 George Van Orden
 Joesph McGovern
 Murray Bakst
 Robert Langhans
 Brian Voynick
 Heather O'Rourke
 Anthony Broccoli
 Stephen Mahfood
 John Little
 Calvin Moon
 Sue Wicks
 Gary Brackett
 Hank Ebert
 Bethany Rocque-Romaine
 Richard Wolff
 David Rich
 John Jengo
 Chris Dorko
 Elizabeth Ryan
 Peter Tabbot
 Michael Hlubik
 Kerry Kirk Pflugh
 Marc Kollar
 Matt Weismantel
 Andre Cantelmo
 Greg Balog
 Jenice Sabb
 Susan Carson
 Joseph Charette
 Donald C. Heilman
 Timothy Burklow, Sr.
 Karen Ivanac
 Daniel Klein
 Vincent R. Caputo
 Terry Twitchell-DiCastro
 David J. Singer
 M. Donald Richman
 William C. Bailey
 Shannon Riehl
 Dennis C. Dagounis