

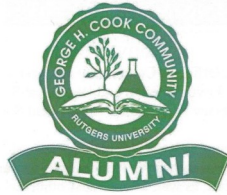


*Distinguished Alumni
Awards Luncheon
Sunday, April 26, 2026*

Hosted by:

Cook Community Alumni Association

Cook Community Alumni Association



Dave Singer, CC '01, President

Joe Martucci, SEBS '13, 1st Vice-President

Amanda Smith, CC '08, 2nd Vice-President

Carol Broccoli CC '84, Treasurer

Ted Wendin, SEBS '11, Recording Secretary

Margaret O'Donnell CC '93, Corresponding Secretary

Laura Lawson, Executive Dean of Agriculture and Natural Resources



**Special thanks to:
Brian McGonigle, Manager of Alumni and
Community Engagement**



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

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

Heather O'Rourke CC '92, GSED '18

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

Gary Sondermeyer CC '79, GSNB '84

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 2nd Vice President Amanda Smith

Greetings

Executive Dean Laura Lawson

Buffet Luncheon

Introduction of Committee and Prior Awardees

Recognition of George Hammell Cook Distinguished Alumni Awardees

Dr. Jennifer Nuzzo CC '99
Rev. Chuck Coblentz CC '80
Dr. James Applegate AG '64
Dr. Luisa Castro CC '92

Recognition of Dennis M. Fenton Distinguished Graduate Alumni Awardee

Michael Quinlan CC '76, GSNB '78
Dr. Qingyu Meng GSNB '04



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

Distinguished Graduate Alumni Award

Established in 2003, this award honors Dennis M. Fenton, GSNB '77, 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.

2026 George Hammell Cook **Distinguished Alumni Awardee**



Dr. Jennifer Nuzzo

Jennifer B. Nuzzo, a 1999 graduate of Rutgers University's Cook College, has built a career at the intersection of science, policy, and public service—helping the world better understand and prepare for infectious disease threats. Today, she serves as Professor of Epidemiology and Director of the Pandemic Center at Brown University School of Public Health, where her work focuses on strengthening global health security and improving how societies respond to outbreaks.

At Cook, Dr. Nuzzo discovered her passion for environmental and public health—an interest that would shape her life's work. She went on to earn advanced degrees from Harvard and Johns Hopkins, but she often credits her Rutgers education for grounding her in the real-world connections between environment, policy, and human health. Dr. Nuzzo focuses her work on global health security, public health preparedness and response, and health systems resilience.

Over the past two decades, Dr. Nuzzo has become a leading voice in pandemic preparedness. She co-led the development of the Global Health Security Index (GHSI), which benchmarks 195 countries' public health care capacities and capabilities, their commitment to international norms and global health security financing, and socioeconomic, political, and environmental risk factors. The GHSI was the first comprehensive assessment of countries' readiness to face infectious disease threats. She also founded the Outbreak Observatory to study how outbreaks unfold and how responses can improve. Her expertise has been sought by governments, nonprofits, and international organizations, and she has played a visible role in helping the public make sense of crises such as Ebola and COVID-19.

Dr. Nuzzo is known for her ability to translate complex science into clear, actionable insight. Her writings have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Fox News*, *Politico*, *The Hill*, and *The Boston Globe*. Her TED talk on “3 Ways to Prepare Society for the Next Pandemic” has been viewed millions of times. She was featured in *Debunking Borat*, a television series on Amazon Prime Video, and her work was featured on *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*. She served as COVID Advisor for the *Borat Subsequent Movie-film*.

Dr. Nuzzo has authored almost 100 journal articles and has made countless presentations. She has been elected to the National Academy of Medicine and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She was one of 100 new members invited by current academy members to join. Election to the academy is considered one of the highest honors in health and medicine, and recognizes individuals at the top of their field who have demonstrated “outstanding professional achievement and commitment to service.”

Throughout her career, Dr. Nuzzo has remained focused on finding pragmatic and effective ways to improve preparedness and response for public health emergencies. Her work has been guided by a belief that meaningful change is made possible through rigorous research and purposeful collaborations. It’s a perspective shaped early on at Rutgers—where she learned the values of curiosity, practicality, and a commitment to service.

“I have known Dr. Nuzzo in a professional capacity for over 7 years. We first met when I was the state Surgeon General and Secretary of Health in Florida managing the state’s pandemic response. I later was fortunate to work with her directly when we both joined the Brown University School of Public Health. Dr. Nuzzo’s work has been foundational to the establishment and shaping of the field of public health preparedness. Her expertise in epidemiology and her strong relationships with public health practitioners, civil society, private sector, and other non-governmental organizations is well recognized. She is nationally and internationally viewed as one of the superstars in the field of public health. She is someone that Cook College and Rutgers University should be very proud of.”

~ Scott Rivkees, M.D. CC’78 and George H. Cook Awardee

2026 George Hammell Cook **Distinguished Alumni Awardee**



Reverend Chuck Coblentz

Alex “Chuck” Coblentz is currently in his tenth year as Senior Pastor of New Dover United Methodist Church in Edison, New Jersey, the most diverse Methodist church in the state. Upon graduation from Cook in 1980 with a BS in Geology, Chuck received a fellowship from the University Delaware, receiving an MS in Paleontology in 1985. Following this, his vocational direction shifted and he attended Princeton Theological Seminary, graduating with an MDiv in 1990. Prior to his current appointment in 2016, Chuck pastored New Jersey churches in Auburn, Penns Grove, Asbury Park, and Totowa. In between he served from 1997 to 2011 as chaplain, religion department chair, teacher, coach, and director of community service at The Pennington School, a Methodist affiliated institution focused on students with learning differences. Chuck became the longest serving chaplain in the school’s history.

Born and raised in Quinton, New Jersey, Salem County, Chuck’s parents, Bob and Elaine, made sure he had a life that included both faith and science, two disciplines he has sought to balance throughout his life. He has been a passionate proponent of the biblical mandate of “stewardship,” our ethical responsibility to care for the earth and its environments, as well as for one another. Attending Cook only strengthened his passion for such a life pursuit.

Along the way, Chuck applied this conviction in numerous projects, all of which involved working with a team, whether it was a church, a school, a board, committee, or fellowship. Among those shared accomplishments:

- In 1992 his Penns Grove church began the highly successful “Community Lunch,” offering a free meal and fellowship to neighbors living in an economically depressed community.
- From 1991 to 1996, Chuck served on The Urban Committee of the Southern New Jersey United Methodist Conference, chairing the committee from 1995-96.

- While serving First United Methodist Church of Asbury Park, he and the congregation started “Safe House,” an after-school program for high school students.
- While directing the community service program at Pennington, the school had the greatest number of students participating in the school’s history. Projects included starting an after-school tutoring program for 3rd and 4th graders underperforming on tests in inner city Trenton, and restoring “Berry’s Chapel,” a historical African American cemetery.
- From 2002 to 2011 Chuck served on the board of “Interfaith Hospitality Network of Mercer County” recruiting churches to board and feed families struggling with homelessness. He served as board president for three years.
- The Totowa Church Chuck pastored received “The Presidents Award” for weekly volunteer service at CUMAC in Paterson, the highest honor from the largest United Methodist Mission in the state.
- In 2020, at the outbreak of Covid, the New Dover Church began “Bread Breakers” a food ministry that has fed over 380,000 neighbors and counting, garnering national and international acclaim. The church has also partnered with “Rise Against Hunger,” feeding over 100,000 global neighbors thus far.
- During the height of Covid in India, New Dover raised \$38,000 to purchase an Intensive Care Unit for its mission partner, Vellore Christian Medical College. In addition, last fall the church hosted a 5K fundraiser, raising over \$37,000 in support of that institution.
- Under Chuck’s leadership, New Dover began its social media ministry at the outbreak of Covid, and currently has over 21,000 followers online, with one of his sermons receiving over 2.6 million views.

In 2004 Chuck married Jean Wiskowski, and in addition to fully supporting one another’s career paths, together they have raised hundreds of foster kittens and dozens of puppies for adoption in addition to training dogs for The Seeing Eye and Canine Companions.

From freshmen year through graduation, one cannot overlook the positive impact Cook College has had on Chuck’s life. In addition to the academically challenging classes, the community that Cook provided had an everlasting impact on the person he has become. The support of lifelong friends like Don “Spank” Richman, Perry Pawlyk, John Little, John “Ukie” Kowaluk, John Rogan, Chris Motta, and above all, John Jengo, cannot be overestimated.

2026 George Hammell Cook **Distinguished Alumni Awardee**



Dr. James Applegate

Dr. James (Jim/Doc) Applegate was professor of Natural Resources in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Natural Resources at Cook College, Rutgers University from 1971 until his retirement in 2003. Sadly, he passed away on October 28, 2023 at the age of 81. He earned a BS in Agriculture from Rutgers University (1964) and a MS (1966) and PhD (1968) in Zoology from Penn State University. Graduate research and early professional publications involved the natural history of avian malaria. This research agenda was pursued further during active duty in the US Navy at the Naval Medical Research Institute at Bethesda, Md from 1968-1971.

Joining Rutgers College of Agriculture and Environmental Science in 1971, his research turned to human dimensions of wildlife management and later to innovations in education. Over the course of his career at Rutgers, his attention gradually turned from research to undergraduate education. He coordinated the undergraduate curriculum in Natural Resource Management for over 20 years and was involved in teaching seven courses every year. A major achievement of his career was the creation and coordination of a course for all incoming students to Cook College. That course was delivered each fall semester since 1984 to 700+ students in 30+ sections taught by faculty from throughout Cook College.

Doc was a beloved member of the Cook College community, well known as a tough, but entertaining, instructor and mentor—his top priority was always his students. He founded the student and New Jersey state chapters of The Wildlife Society and was active throughout his career, serving in volunteer leadership positions at the state, regional and national levels of this professional organization. Jim was a groundbreaker in the human dimensions of wildlife management and his research paved the way for what is now a critical aspect of the profession. He was also a charter member of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee, serving for nearly 50 years. He actively played a role in the future careers of hundreds of wildlife students, many of whom have also gone on to be leaders in state and national conservation policy.

Recognitions include twice being awarded Alpha Zeta's Professor of the Year, receiving Cook College's Academic and Professional Excellence Award and the Helyar House Distinguished Achievement Award, being named the New Jersey Chapter of The Wildlife Society's Conservationist of the Year, and, perhaps the most meaningful, presenting the convocation address at the 2004 Cook College graduation.

Outside of his work in natural resources, Jim's passions since childhood included fishing, hunting, and music. For many years, spring would find him in his Boston whaler, the Alley Slapper, angling for fluke or weakfish in Great Bay. Summers would include surf fishing for striped bass from the beach in Manasquan, NJ; and fall and winters would celebrate duck, goose, rabbit and deer seasons. His love of music led to being an original member of the Cook College Ramblers, a Rutgers-community Irish band, with a highlight of performing at Albert Music Hall in Waretown, NJ, and at the beach in Manasquan every summer.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Doc was known as a tough sports competitor at Cook. He regularly played "third period hoops" and won numerous coveted glass mugs as champion of intramural basketball, softball, and volleyball teams with his students and fellow faculty members.

Doc Applegate was active in student life on Cook campus, serving as "Dean Beaverslap" during senior week, competing in "Air Band" lip sync contests, and serving curly fries that were beloved by generations of students (and family members).

One of his more famous quotes, "What you make of your decisions will be far more important than what decisions you make." He also believed to paraphrase a borrowed quote, "There are only two permanent things we can give our students, one is roots and the other is wings."

Doc was loved and admired by many and is survived by his beloved wife of 58 years, Carol, his daughter, Katie Bobowski and her husband, Ben, his son, Jeff Applegate, his daughter, Jodi Stemler and her husband, Casey, his grandchildren, Taylor and wife, Amber, Ashley and Mia Bobowski and Sophie Stemler.

"Doc Applegate was the most influential and impactful professor I had during my undergraduate years at Cook College — in the classroom, in the field, and as a beloved member of our campus community. Even today, he continues to influence how I approach teaching, engagement with students, and service to the communities we serve through cooperative extension. His passing saddens me deeply, but I smile knowing how many people across the country — in the wildlife and natural resource communities and beyond — share the same fond memories and gratitude as they think about Doc's influence in their lives."

— Brian Schilling CC'92, Director, Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

"Like many of Doc's students, I have a memory from my undergraduate experience that stands out as impactful — Doc's home, where I was introduced to birds from his kitchen table and where I shared Brunswick stew for the first time. His professional legacy is his heartfelt engagement with his students and the curiosity about the world he inspired but what I appreciate most, is the inspiration for nature he nurtured in his grandchildren Taylor, Ashley, Mia, and Sophie."

— Ben Bobowski, CC'91, Doc's son-in-law and superintendent of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

2026 George Hammell Cook **Distinguished Alumni Awardee**



Dr. Luisa Castro

Dr. Luisa F. Castro is a dynamic force in food safety and agricultural innovation, known for turning complex regulations into real-world solutions that protect communities and strengthen the agricultural economy. As Division Director of the Food Safety and Consumer Services Division at the Washington State Department of Agriculture, she leads high-impact programs that ensure the safety of the food supply while helping farmers and producers thrive.

With a Ph.D. in Learning Design & Technology from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and a strong foundation in environmental and educational sciences from Cook College at Rutgers University, Luisa blends scientific rigor with creative problem-solving. Her work doesn't just live in policy documents—it shows up in safer farms, smarter systems, and more resilient food networks.

A passionate educator and connector, Luisa has authored more than 50 publications and trained hundreds of agricultural professionals, often leveraging innovative online tools to reach diverse and remote communities. From pioneering aquaponics safety protocols to supporting sustainable food practices in Pacific Island communities, her work reflects both global vision and local impact. Among her most meaningful achievements, Luisa secured a Hawai'i County grant to establish the Hawai'i Master Food Preserver Program, training over 150 residents in food security and preservation. This work led to a unique collaboration with Nā Kālai Wa'a - Hanauna Ola Project where she trained native Hawaiian crew members on safe food preservation to provision a voyage they took to the Northwest Islands, aboard Hawai'i island's double hulled voyaging canoe Makali'i.

Energetic, collaborative, and deeply committed, Luisa continues to shape the future of food safety—making it more accessible, effective, and impactful for all.

2026 Dennis M. Fenton **Distinguished Graduate Alumni Awardee**



Michael C. Quinlan

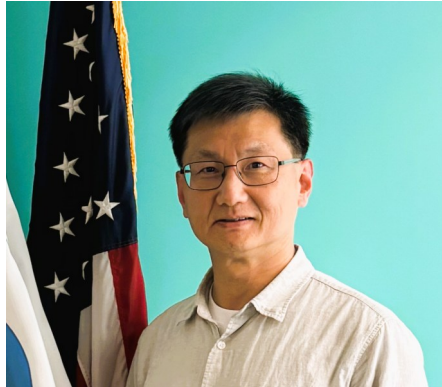
Michael Quinlan recently retired after a career spanning almost 50 years in the health, safety, and environmental profession. He graduated with a BS from the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences in 1976 and obtained an MS in Environmental Science in 1978. His career started with the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration as an industrial hygienist / compliance officer.

Michael has lived and worked overseas, with Aramco in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia in the early 1980s (together with a new bride of two months) and then with the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology at Thuwal, Saudi Arabia in 2008-2009. Between those jobs, he worked for approximately 20 years at his alma mater leading the Rutgers Environmental Health and Safety Department and also as Vice President for Business Services. His final career positions were with the US Department of State and with the Peace Corps, leading their health, safety, and environmental operations. In these roles he has been fortunate to travel to over 100 countries around the world.

His education at Cook greatly influenced his professional philosophy, which was quite simple, “we serve to protect people, protect the environment, and promote compliance with applicable regulations.” He always believed that if you were successful in this regard, you will have done your duty protecting your co-workers, the earth, and the institutions and businesses you serve.

Michael is very proud of his family, all with roots to Rutgers. His wife, Alma, is a graduate of Douglass College, class of 1975. His three children all have degrees from Cook - daughter Kelly, with a BS (2006) and MS (2009); daughter Kate, with a BS (2006); and son Matthew, BS (SEBS 2011). He enjoys golf, especially the links golf in Ireland, along with a Guinness!

2026 Dennis M. Fenton **Distinguished Graduate Alumni Awardee**



Dr. Qingyu Meng

Dr. Qingyu Meng’s journey in the United States began 26 years ago in his hometown state of New Jersey, when he first arrived at Rutgers and landed on Cook Campus – a place that helped shape not only his education, but also the values that would guide a remarkable career in public service and science. He earned both his Ph.D. in Environmental Sciences and M.S. in Statistics at Rutgers, and later returned to serve on the faculty at the Rutgers School of Public Health, where he taught, mentored students, and advanced research in environmental health.

Over the years, Dr. Meng has worked at the intersection of science, policy, and education with uncommon dedication. At the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, he served as Lead for Integrated Science Assessments, helping translate complex evidence into the scientific basis for National Ambient Air Quality Standards. At Cal-EPA, he has led exposure, hazard, and risk assessments that protect communities from harmful pollutants, while also advancing training and education for future professionals.

Dr. Meng’s impact has reached beyond the United States. Through research and collaboration in China, Mexico, Uganda, and Tanzania, as well as work connected to underserved communities, Dr. Meng has remained committed to improving health and well-being where the need is greatest. The education, mentorship, and inspiration he received at Cook/Rutgers continue to shine through that work. And in true lifelong-learning spirit, he reminds us that it is never too late to begin something new and challenging – after all, he took up fencing at age 50.

Dennis M. Fenton
Distinguished Graduate Alumni Awardees
2003—2025

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
H. Louis Cooperhouse
Dr. Anne L. Nielsen

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
Deron 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
Joseph 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
Paul Fischbach
Sara H. Shama
Margaret O'Donnell
Katie Bobowski

George H. Cook Distinguished Alumni Awardees 1976-2025