



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 25, 2025**

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### **Human Remains Found in New Jersey Identified with Assistance from New Jersey College Students**

*This is the first announced cold case identification between the New Jersey State Police and the Ramapo College of New Jersey Investigative Genetic Genealogy Center*

Mahwah, NJ– The identity of a woman has been confirmed after she went missing a decade ago, thanks in part to students in the Ramapo College Investigative Genetic Genealogy (IGG) Center who analyzed the genotype profile created from human remains found near the Delaware River in Warren County, NJ. The New Jersey State Police (NJSP) partnered with the Center after years of not being able to identify the remains.

On May 21, 2017, a foot with a sock and shoe were discovered by a resident in Pohatcong Township. No other remains were found, and without additional evidence, no other characteristics about the person could be determined. Traditional methods of investigation, including traditional DNA testing, did not produce a positive identification for years.

In 2023, the [New Jersey State Police](#) (NJSP) partnered with the [Ramapo College IGG Center](#) with a request to use investigative genetic genealogy to hopefully identify the person. Bone remains belonging to the person were sent to [Astrea Forensics](#) in Santa Cruz, California and a genotype profile was successfully developed.

In March of 2024, that profile was uploaded to the [GEDmatch](#) and [FamilyTreeDNA](#) databases and genealogy research was conducted by students in the [Ramapo College Investigative Genetic Genealogy Certificate Program](#) during that spring semester.

Despite the challenges presented by this case, the students were able to deliver Maria Quinones Garcia as a candidate. Maria was only 54 years old when she went missing in 2014, and was last seen at her home near the Lehigh River in Allentown, PA. The Lehigh River flows into the Delaware River close to where the foot remains were recovered.

Because Maria's children had their DNA tested, her identity was able to be confirmed, bringing closure to this 10-year missing persons case.

"Although the outcome for the Quinones family is tragic, we hope that Maria's identification brings answers to her loved ones," said [Dr. David Gurney, director of the Ramapo College IGG Center](#). "We are grateful for the opportunity to have made an impact here in New Jersey."



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[Cairenn Binder, director of the IGG Certificate Program](#), added, "Our students performed outstanding research in this case, not only related to the genetic genealogy for this unidentified individual, but extending to the origins of her footwear, geography, and river drainage patterns. This case is an example of how our students' love of difficult research can make a difference."

This is the first announced cold case identification since the New Jersey State Police and Ramapo College IGG Center began partnering on cold cases. There are 17 cases the center has worked or is working on in New Jersey since [opening its doors in 2022](#).

"The identification of Maria Quinones Garcia is a testament to the power of innovative investigative techniques and strong partnerships. Thanks to the dedication of our detectives and the groundbreaking work of the students at the Ramapo College Investigative Genetic Genealogy Center, a decade-old mystery has been solved, bringing long-awaited answers to Maria's family," said [Colonel Patrick J. Callahan, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police](#). "This case highlights the invaluable role that investigative genetic genealogy plays in solving cold cases, and we remain committed to leveraging every available resource to bring closure to families still searching for their loved ones."

Nationwide, the IGG Center, which is the only center of its kind to offer case work, research, and hands-on learning, has helped solve [22 cases and has 58 active cases](#).

To learn more about the IGG Center's work, visit [ramapo.edu/IGG](http://ramapo.edu/IGG).

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## ABOUT RAMAPO COLLEGE

Ramapo College of New Jersey is the state's premier public liberal arts college and is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and international and intercultural understanding. The comprehensive college is situated among the beautiful Ramapo Mountains, is within commuting distance to New York City, was named one of the 50 Most Beautiful College Campuses in America by *CondéNast Traveler*, and boasts the best on-campus housing in New Jersey per Niche.com. Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, data science, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include business, education, nursing and social work. In addition, the College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels, and offers graduate programs leading to master's degrees in Accounting, Applied Mathematics, Business Administration, Contemporary Instructional Design, Computer Science, Creative Music Technology, Data Science, Educational Leadership, Nursing, Social Work and Special Education, as well as a Doctor of Nursing Practice.