

# CRAIN'S NEW YORK BUSINESS

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## Academic institution opening at the Brooklyn Navy Yard to feed the talent pipeline

CARA EISENPRESS □ □



Smith Miller + Hawkinson Architects

A rendering of the Research Yard, due to open early next year

The Research Yard brings Pratt and CityTech labs and faculty offices together, fostering collaboration

Caroline Eco works at Brooklyn Navy Yard company Nanotronics, where she is an electrical engineering associate.

Getting the job at the company—which uses advanced technology to inspect and control the quality at manufacturing facilities—was not a straight path for the 30-year-old, who moved to Sunnyside, Queens, from the Philippines in 2007 and pursued arts management, automotive studies and robotics before going for her bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering at the City University of New York’s CityTech campus in Brooklyn. There she applied to an internship program that places CUNY students each year at Navy Yard companies. After seven weeks, Eco’s internship turned into a job this year in late April.

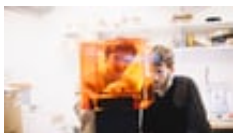
Now the Navy Yard has announced that a 27,000-square-foot hub—the Research Yard of Pratt Institute, City Tech and the Brooklyn Navy Yard—will open early next year in a bid to tie two city academic institutions and local innovative companies more closely together. The idea is to enmesh the institutions to a point where students such as Eco don’t have to rely on swerving paths toward serendipity to enter the much-discussed talent pipeline—one that can give local residents good jobs in the city’s robust technology and creative economy.

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“The clustering effect that has been key to the Navy Yard success can then be strengthened further with better connections to higher education,” said Eli Dvorkin, editorial and policy director at the Center for an Urban Future. “And then that helps graduates pursue careers at [innovation companies](#).”

The center is expected to house faculty offices and laboratory space for two Brooklyn schools: Pratt Institute and the New York City College of Technology, known as CityTech. (The Navy Yard already has a technical high school school on site.)

For CityTech, the new facility can help the school out of an important crunch: not enough lab space for undergraduate research.

Most of CityTech's research labs double as classrooms, said Gerarda Shields, dean of CityTech's school of technology and design. For undergraduates who receive funding for research through one of the school's several programs, finding the space is a challenge.

"You have to navigate [lab time] around current courses, which happen in the day, the night and over the weekend," Shields said.

At Pratt, the opening of the Navy Yard facility represents an official connection between two institutions that are already linked by proximity.

"This is literally our backyard," Pratt President Frances Bronet said. It also will serve as an important opportunity for students, and a draw to future applicants, she said: "People come to Pratt to be in New York, in Brooklyn—to be part of an extraordinary ecosystem. This opens another portal for them."

It's once the faculty labs and offices are up and running that collisions between students such as Eco and the employees or even founders of Navy Yard companies are likely to occur, said Katie Beck Sutler, the Navy Yard's senior vice president of workforce development.

"If a faculty member in robotics has a lab at Navy Yard, they might collaborate with Nanotronics"—Eco's employer—Beck Sutler said. That could lead to a research project with the class, for example—which, in turn, might lead to an insight on a business product back at one of the Navy Yard's 500 companies.

Bronet said she believes that the forged relationships will end up encouraging many more interactions, including coffee dates and guest lectures.

Although the center is scheduled to open early next year, the fall 2022 semester is expected to be the first with full programming at the Research Yard, officials said.

Borough President [Eric Adams](#), the City Council and the state contributed a total of \$6 million to get the project started; CityTech and Pratt plan to fund its ongoing operation.

The Navy Yard, which sits on city-owned land, has a mandate for job creation, but the new venture does not come with a specific job-creation goal.

In the past year, about 100 interns from CUNY worked at the Navy Yard, with one-fifth accepting a position afterward.

“As soon as our businesses have an intern from CityTech or another CUNY school, they see firsthand the level of talent homegrown in NYC that’s available, and they are interested in tapping into that [talent pipeline](#) more,” Beck Sutler said.

Inline Play

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